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Title: A Mock Idyl

Author: Percy Ross

Release date: February 28, 2014 [EBook #45042]

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A MOCK IDYL ***

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Note: This story was originally serialized in two parts in *Longman's Magazine* in 1886; it was later reprinted as filler material in the *Favorite Library* edition of *Little Golden's Daughter* by Mrs. Alex. McVeigh Miller. This text is derived from the later reprint, beginning on page 141 of that volume. Images of the original pages are available through the Digital Library of the Falvey Memorial Library, Villanova University. See <http://digital.library.villanova.edu/Item/vudl:322376>

A MOCK IDYL.

—
BY PERCY ROSS.
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I.

THE PRAISE OF FRIENDSHIP.

Tregurtha and Roscoria are friends. Tregurtha is, as his name sufficiently indicates, a Cornishman. He was also a sharp lad, and, before his term of residence at his first dame's school was fairly run out, he cut his cables and escaped to sea. To this act of insubordination he had been instigated mainly by Louis Roscoria, a small schoolfellow, his junior by several years, and his staunch adherent. The two had shared a room, done each other's lessons, worn each other's hats, taken each other's floggings; and, in short, the devil himself had never come between them. But they parted pretty soon, for, encouraged by his young friend's energetic support, Dick Tregurtha made haste to follow his destiny and infuriate his parent by running away to sea. Small Roscoria, who was the good boy of the school and always got the prize for conduct, saw his friend well on his way, wished him God-speed, exchanged pocket-knives with him, and then lay on the grass kicking his heels, and howled in his grief until he got caned for refusing to tell what had become of Tregurtha. The friendship thus grounded on mutual services has never been broken.

Dick once wrote from foreign parts an elaborate apology. He said he was sorry, but the sea was his god, and he hoped his father would overlook it. He added that, whether on sea or land, he trusted to be no discredit to the name Tregurtha, and ended by very properly observing, as boys do, that, since he had carved out his own line of action, he should feel his honor engaged to make it a successful one.

Tregurtha's rather crusty parent did not overlook it. On receipt of this letter he presently called the rest of the family together and thanked God that he was rid of a knave.

Meantime, Roscoria went to Eton, thence to Cambridge. He behaved after the manner of most brilliant men: showed a reluctance to give his mind to what was definitely expected of him, and scored heavily in exams, by some thoughtful rendering of a knotty point in Plato, or by striking ideas based on private reading of the German metaphysicians. He was far from being idle, but he took too æsthetic a pleasure in his work, and vexed the souls of middle-aged dons.

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Subsequently Roscoria (who of course left Cambridge without an idea as to his future) went abroad to tutor the sons of an Englishman in Rome. He remained there a year, after which time his father died, and left Louis Roscoria, sole descendant of an old family, owner of a meager estate in Devonshire, and possessor of means perhaps in proportion to his merit, but nothing over.

Even scapegrace Tregurtha was better off, for his bodily wants were provided for on board a ship; and though promotion loomed very vaguely in the distance, yet his immediate salt pork and future were assured.

Suddenly a brilliant and Utopian notion occurred to Louis the Philosopher. He was a bit of a philanthropist, and hopelessly romantic, and had been pained by public-school immorality. He was also an unpractical man by nature. So he resorted to his present employer, Mr. Rodda, also a Devonshire man, and said, "What if I set up a school?"

"On your own account, man? Why, you would be ruined!" cried old Rodda, over his port.

"I doubt it, sir," responded Roscoria, gayly. "You forget that moldy old house of mine. I shall never be able to let it, unless to an incurable lunatic, and it is too large for any decent bachelor to live alone in. Good! I fill it with a set of boys. I teach them on an entirely new and original system—and make a little money, which I need not tell you, sir, is wanted in this quarter."

"I would lay you any money, if you had it, young man, that you fail," said Mr. Rodda, comfortably (he was a little "cheered" by this time;) "but if you are bent on the experiment, and as I have a high opinion of your principles, though none of your judgment, there is my youngest son, Tom; we can make nothing of him at home, and I don't believe he will ever be any good, so you may just take him as a beginning."

"No, really, sir? You are too good," said Roscoria, flushing grandly with the inflatus of ambition. "I believe much can be done with boys by taking them young, and if I succeed with dear Tom—nothing ought ever to baffle me again."

Roscoria settled down in his ancestral home at the head of a collection of such boys as a private tutor will generally get—awkward boys in temper, vicious boys, hopelessly dense boys, backward boys, idle, wool-gathering, foolish, blockish boys. Two lads had been expelled from Eton, but Roscoria thought himself a born reformer. A third youth had been recently superannuated: he was for ballast, Louis said. At first the young schoolmaster governed the wild set gently, having great faith in boyhood. Afterward he fell one afternoon upon a passage in Plato: "If he is willingly persuaded, well; but if not, like a bent and twisted tree, they make him straight by threats and blows."

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Blows! Happy thought! "The influence of my mind and character on theirs has failed," Roscoria thought. "Go to, now; let us see whether there be not some animal magnetism by which a lad may be drawn toward the good." And Roscoria felt up and down his strong young arm, and knew a complacent sense of muscle.

At this time Roscoria met again, and liked as well as ever, Dick Tregurtha.

Tregurtha had grown sun-browned, tall, and broad. Tregurtha had merry blue eyes and a winsome grin. One was happy to shake hands with a man who was obviously on such good terms with his own heart and conscience.

"You helped me to run away from school, you know," he said, holding out his hand to Roscoria when they first met again.

"Yes; did I serve you well by that?" asked Roscoria, who had grown into what our ancestors called "a pretty fellow," with features as correct as his own morality, and a pair of dreamy black eyes.

"You did; I've not forgotten it. Here is your knife in token."

"And here is yours. Come and dine with me."

And the two young men got into a corner and foregathered together, and the friendship renewed by romance was riveted firm by reason.

This is the one important feature in these two young men, and the one point that distinguishes them from others. Now passionate natures know no "friends," nor commonplace ones either. A friend is only granted to philosophers.

When a sociable hunting-man asked the other day, "How do you make a friend? I never had one; I never wanted one," at least he knew what he was talking about. And indeed, few people want a friend, and there are many other sentiments to satisfy the unworthy. Is not love perennial, a thing as common as June roses? Acquaintanceship is necessary; affection is a partially inevitable state. But friendship ever was, as it is now, the rarest gift beneath the sun. Ask any one, all the same, who has ever known an assured friend, whether he would give him up for any pleasure or profit.

Why, see how the theme of Friendship makes even Montaigne serious and eloquent. Observe how it has attracted great minds of all descriptions. If Byron could be brought to affirm that "Friendship is love without his wings"—well, there *must* be something in it.

Friendship is for two of the same sex, during the difficult period of middle life. Of course the friendship should have been formed during youth, but then it will have been kept in abeyance, as it were, gradually forming into a solid rock to rest upon after the quicksands of love have been settled somehow. Then will it be found:

"A living joy that shall its spirits keep
When every beauty fades, and all the passions sleep."

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No wonder it is rare, for if such a glowing glory of content were often known among us, this world would grow too orderly, and men would all be angels for the sake of Friendship!

II.

ARLETTA OF FALAISE.

"Tregurtha," said his friend one summer evening, "to-morrow is a holiday. The boys are all off on various expeditions, assisted by boats, donkeys, butterfly nets, or tins with worms. Even that little plague Tom Rodda is going, under the charge of a trusty sailor, for a day's shrimping. Now, in the midst of this general mouse-play, what is to become of the cat—meaning me? The pedagogue ought to go off on the spree like every one else. I am sure he is the hardest worked. You are with me; let us somehow celebrate your arrival ashore. We must go somewhere not haunted by the boys. Boys are my aversion, as you know; besides, if one meets them abroad they are in mischief. One has to cut up rough, and the result is that greatest of earth's failures, a spoilt holiday. What say you, O comrade, to a day's fishing in the Lyn?"

"I don't say much," replied Tregurtha; "but if you will excuse me, I shall go and look up my flies."

"6.30 A. M. Don't oversleep yourself," said Roscoria, chuckling youthfully, as he shook Tregurtha by the hand.

Hard as disciplinarian Roscoria ever found it to arise on work-a-days, when getting out of bed meant reading prayers in a stentorian hoarse voice, and then administering an hour's Greek before breakfast, no such difficulty attended his leap from the arms of Morpheus when he heard Tregurtha's thundering knock on this most halcyon Saturday.

"Propitious heavens, keep but this face all day!" was Louis' greeting to as fair an angler's sky as ever ushered in a holiday. Off clattered the companions in a hired and rakish-looking vehicle; Tregurtha in the front seat chaffing the driver, and Roscoria on an insecure perch behind, swinging his legs, beaming on his fly-book, and altogether presenting an aspect of radiant boyishness wholly incompatible with his grave scholastic calling. Up and down they went, walking up the hills to spare the worthy horse, dashing down them in true Devonshire fashion; past woods and down to the sea at Lynmouth, there to alight, drink cider, and buy fishing tickets. Then on again, rolling along the beautiful road to Watersmeet, where the trees were all in brightest foliage and the wildest flowers thick amidst the grass. The morning sun was sucking up the rain of last night from the glittering leaves, and a pensive breeze hovered in the air, causing the birds to sing.

"Hey, Roscoria! but I hope it's not too bright!" was the remark the glory of the day evoked from his companion.

"Tregurtha, do not tempt the gods; the day is heavenly, and if we do not dine on trout to-night ——" The remainder of Roscoria's song of praise was abruptly cut short, for in assuming too

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negligent an attitude for greater convenience of harangue he had overbalanced himself, and now lay prone on the road some twenty yards behind. Having picked himself up and dusted his hat, Roscoria reascended in more cautious vein, whilst the driver cheered on his horse, reflecting on the probable results of matutinal cider on a youth whose ordinary "habit" was the Pierian spring.

After what seemed to these artists of the greenheart-wand an unconscionably long, though lovely drive, the lowest point was reached where it is of any use to rig up a rod—namely, that nice little field through which the river runs so sweetly, just before you come to Brendon. Here our two holiday-makers descended, with many a parting gibe at their good-natured jehu. Then down they sat in the moist grass, after the manner of men under thirty, and out each drew a bulging pocket-book. Thereafter, silence, save for such murmurs as: "Hallo, I don't believe this reel runs smoothly!" "Where *is* that penknife?" "Tregurtha, lend us a blue upright if you value my happiness!" and so on in that delightful, half-excited talk that precedes trial of one's luck.

Noon approached; the two young men were fishing steadily, separated by several pools; now and then they passed each other with a cheery jest or an absent-minded greeting, according as they happened to be engrossed in their sport, or only idly lashing at the water. Now Tregurtha was on in front, in a fragrant meadow, with some interested lambs for his spectators. He was musing sleepily as he cast his line, for fish in the Lyn do not run very large, and Tregurtha's sport, though he had a dozen nice trout in his basket, was not of a nature to claim the highest powers of his intellect. An unexpected rousing came to him, however. A large and goodly fish rolled over suddenly and took the fly well in his mouth, then plunged for the lower depths and lay there sulking. Tregurtha was at once all promptitude and energy. He threw a stone to move the wary trout; he left it alone; he gave it a tentative jerk; he tried every means to persuade or frighten his victim into stirring, but it all seemed useless, the fish was obstinate. Tregurtha was just beginning to wonder whether he should have to walk in and *fetch* his trout, or whether he would take a seat and wait its pleasure, when the matter came to a crisis. One of the inquisitive young lambs, which was very tame, and thought Tregurtha was the farmer's lad, dashed suddenly in between his legs with a bound, after the sportive manner of its race.

Tregurtha stumbled, let the point of his rod down for an instant, recovered his footing, and hastily rectified his position. Alas! is it necessary to state that the line flew up flippantly into the empty air, and the fly settled on the top bough of an alder hanging over the opposite bank. The fish—well fishes, unlike human beings, know how to use an opportunity; this trout was off to the dentist to cure him of a toothache. Tregurtha was not an irritable man; he did not swear; he did not stamp; he turned to the mischief-working lamb and said: "Is this your vaunted innocence, you horrid little meddling beast?" and then he whistled softly to himself, rubbed up his rough hair all on end, and stood still, looking rueful.

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"Oh, tell me how to woo thee, love!" sang suddenly a sweet voice round the bend of the stream, and then a break occurred in the song, and the singer petulantly exclaimed, "Oh, bothered be these stones forever; they are so slippery!"

Tregurtha's rod fell from his paralyzed hand as round the corner came, wading through the shallow part of the running stream close to the head of the very pool he was fishing, a maiden! Yes, and a lady too, though her gown was caught up and thrown over one arm, displaying as its substitute a short striped skirt of brilliant coloring, and her lovely feet shone white through the sunlit waters as unconsciously she stepped along.

"Heaven have mercy on me!" Tregurtha thought wildly, as he stood rooted to the spot, marveling meanwhile why he did not cast himself into the deep pool before him. The inevitable moment came; the damsel lifted her large dark eyes and saw him.

"Oh, I beg—I beg—I *beg* your pardon!" almost roared Tregurtha in the excess of his manly bashfulness.

What did the maid? Blushed crimson first, and stared at the intruder with a speechless horror, letting drop, by instinct, her pretty overskirt. Then she turned quickly, seized the branch of a large oak-tree and tried to raise herself by it to the opposite bank, where, once arrived, she could have vanished in a second through the wood. Alas! as she clung to the bough, the traitor broke, and down went the maiden, with a shivering cry, under the surface of the water. Well, at any rate, here was an occasion where a man need not feel an idiot, nor like Actæon before the wrath of Artemis. Tregurtha felt a sense of positive relief as he plunged in after the lady, and dragged her out and on to her much-desired bank, all breathless, faint, and frightened.

"I wonder now what on earth you would like me to do for you?" Tregurtha asked, depositing his burden respectfully upon a mossy seat.

"Oh—ah!—thank you. I think you had better perhaps go," the maiden answered, panting still for breath, and shaking her dripping hair.

"You are faint. You would like—at least, no, not some water—you have had enough, and I—I dare not offer you some whisky. There's your poor hat still in the water. Oh, gracious! to think of my spoiling all your pleasure in this way."

Tregurtha seized upon the hat, squeezing the water out of it (much to the detriment of its shape) as if it were the juice from an orange. Reduced to a pulp of straw and muslin, he brought it to its mistress, who, smiling, said, "This hat has seen many a wild frolic, but I sadly fear this most embarrassing, though amusing, incident has finished my companion, and it will cover my foolish head no more. I must go home, or I shall catch a cold."

"But pray accept my apologies—my most sincere and humblest apologies," began Tregurtha.

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"I beg you will not mention— Oh dear, dear!" The damsel burst suddenly into uncontrollable, resistless laughter. "Please *could* you keep away, right round the corner, until I fetch my boots? I am so sorry to have interrupted you in your, no doubt, successful fishing." Here she glanced inquiringly at the line caught and mazily entangled in the alder bush. "Good-morning, sir."

Tregurtha blushed deeply, bowed and strode away as though avenging Fate were at his heels—away over the meadow, through its little gate, along the road, down to the river again, where Roscoria stood coolly, immersed in hopes of monster trout.

"Well, old fellow; why, you've been wading! Fish gone?" asked Louis.

"Fish be — I've had such an experience, Roscoria. I have seen a lady!"

"Mercy on us, Tregurtha! is that so unusual? Why, man, you are almost pale! Tell us your wonderful story."

Tregurtha did so, "with stammering lips and insufficient sound," whilst Roscoria opened his basket and took therefrom an ample lunch, besides displaying the trout he had caught. "They are not large," he said, surveying the fish affectionately, "but they are very beautiful. And now, friend, are you too much overcome for mutton sandwiches, or will you try a limb of that blessed duck that old Rodda sent down?"

"But, Roscoria," murmured Tregurtha, as he ate, "I am afraid you don't quite enter into the extreme indelicacy of the situation!"

"Far be it from me," retorted Louis—"cake, Tregurtha?"

"Not with duckling, thank you. The lady—her feet—I should say her boots——"

"Were off, I understand," quoth Louis, dryly. "Hallo! is this the lady?"

He alluded to the appearance of a very small girl, bare-foot, grave, and chubby, who wandered into the meadow from an adjacent farmyard, and stood as near as she dared go to the sportsmen, gazing with friendly, covetous eyes on their outspread repast.

"Child," said Roscoria at last, "do you like cake?"

The infant nodded her head solemnly, her big eyes brightening the while.

"Then take hold of this and be merry," replied the pedagogue, extending an ambrosial slice. The small child hesitated after the manner of her sex and age, hung her head, bit her tiny fingers, and finally advanced and received the donation. She did not seem at all inclined to go, but stood solemnly munching by Roscoria's side as he reclined on the grass, and she did not prevent the crumbs from falling down his neck, which was not pleasant.

"Child," said Roscoria again, "you may sit down." Down sat the wee lass comfortably enough, and gazed into Roscoria's fine black eyes as if she had not often seen so goodly a gentleman. Roscoria endeavored hard to meet her stare, and for five minutes or so he succeeded; but those two serious blue eyes embarrassed him at length, and, turning to Tregurtha, with a somewhat nervous laugh, he observed, in Greek, that the infant was alarming to him, and that he should be compelled to hide his eyes within his robe. "Who gave you—I mean, what is your name?" Tregurtha asked the baby. True to her training, the child arose, shook out her frock, and made a courtesy, whilst she answered, with effort to remember:

"Hanner Marier."

"Then Hannah—or Anna—Maria, would your mother give us each a glass of cider, think you?"

"Should *you* like some?" inquired A. M., as she sought Roscoria's face again.

"Dearly, my lass."

Anna Maria showed she could move; she positively darted home, to return much slower, and with a portentous gravity of demeanor, bearing in tremulous hands one glass of cider held very tight. But to whom to give it? There lies a sad struggle for her between duty and inclination. She glanced yearningly at Roscoria's dark head, propped up expectantly on elbow, then she measured Tregurtha's noble length stretched out beside his friend. Slowly, reluctantly, but overpoweringly came the truth upon her youthful mind: Tregurtha was the taller, *ergo*, in her infant logic, he—the elder—must the first be served. Without waiting an instant, wee Hebe gave the Cornishman his due, and fled away again. Once more she came, more careful even than before; and, with a nascent spark of coquetry in those rustic eyes, she smiled and said: "And this, sir, is for *you*!"

"Here's your health, my bonny lass!" cried Louis, raising the glass to his lips. "Long may those cheeks of yours retain their roses, and may you ever be as able to look a decent man in the face!" Anna Maria, not quite comprehending this ovation, turned so earnestly serious, and so riveted her intent gaze on the handsome countenance of Louis, that the unfortunate young man could stand fire no longer, and ended his refreshing drink by the most ignominious fit of choking.

"You had better go, my dear," interposed Tregurtha hastily, slipping a shilling into the child's hand; "he isn't used to so much admiration."

Anna Maria reluctantly departed, with many a backward glance at Louis, who, when the firm young feet had borne his small admirer solidly away, threw out his arms with a groan of intense relief and said:

"By Heaven, Tregurtha, there is great power in the human eye! I feel completely mesmerized."

"What a thing it is to be good-looking!" observed Tregurtha, lighting a cigar. "Now, I wonder how

stands the heart of this young Adonis? Has he yet learnt that the proper study of mankind is woman?"

Roscoria laughed, tumbled down into the soft grass again, and meditatively responded:

"I shall end like Shelley by finding all modern love unsatisfactory, because of an ideal attachment to Antigone. The lady of this century talks too loud; she cannot laugh either. She is matter-of-fact; she has an eye to the main chance." [Pg 149]

"You are fastidious, my boy. Case of Narcissus over again, I imagine."

"Don't you be an old fool, Tregurtha," said Louis, more pleased than he liked to show by the implied compliment. He rolled lazily to the verge of the river, and was just about to examine his own visage, when he suddenly caught his friend's eye of malicious criticism, and, after affecting to have seen a trout in the water, jumped up and said "Come along!"

"Hallo! my rod. I forgot. It is still adhering to an alder."

"Fetch it, then."

"I daren't."

"Still fearing the silver-footed Thetis? Why, man, she will be far enough by this time! But if that is the case, matters are easily settled; I'll go."

Roscoria went off accordingly, wondering what on earth he would *not* do for Tregurtha, and, when he had waded the stream, climbed the tree, disentangled the line, and substituted other flies for those which had been jerked off, the two anglers started at a brisk walk to go further up the river.

It is a pleasant country this, in which to spend a summer day. The trees are very magnificent and full of foliage; the glens are bold and varied; and the river-courses glittering through many a winsome spot. With good sport, light hearts, intense capacities for enjoyment, the two young men spent a rare afternoon, to be long remembered in their winter evenings as one of the brightest of their holidays. They were approaching toward six o'clock the boundary of the famed Doone Valley, where they owned the fair spell of the enchanter Blackmore, who, with his poetic wand, has conjured up the past for us, and haled dead men out of their coffins to live again and be famous beyond the wildest hopes of their lifetime.

Then, whilst musing by himself, Roscoria chanced to notice a churlish coolness in the air, a depth of shadow from the neighboring oak, a meaning hush and quiet stealing all about; and all he said to the deepening beauty of the summer eve was this:

"Hang it all, I must put up my rod!" Sitting with his back turned to the river that he might not be tempted, Roscoria did so slowly, to give Tregurtha as many extra seconds as possible. He then went to fetch his unwilling companion, who had to be hauled from the bank by the coat-collar; then off and away to the place appointed for Jehu to meet them, and home in contented silence to the Young Gentlemen's Academy. The supper consumed within the halls of Torres that night was truly Homeric. Witness the behavior of the cook. She was an energetic woman; but she sank down at last upon the nearest chair, and, wringing stalwart arms in desperation, cried, "May the Lord stay their stomachs, for I cannot!"

III.

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THE GODDESS.

One sultry afternoon Roscoria—the vices of boyhood vexing overmuch his burdened heart—betook himself to green meadows with a volume of Plato. He had announced his intention of reading in the same until he had cooled down, a process which usually took him precisely three hours. Long before he was expected, however, he was heard by Tregurtha coming along the bridge over the moat toward his front window, and presently he sprung in by the same, with an excited look in his eyes and the manner of a man who has a fact to tell.

"Save you, Tregurtha! I am hit hard," was his greeting.

"I beg your pardon," said Tregurtha, politely, looking up from a piece of carpentering.

"Did you ever hear, Dick, of love at first sight?"

"Yes; and a very shady proceeding it always seemed to me, if, indeed, it be not a chimera. But, Roscoria, you are not feeling anything in your head, are you? Giddiness, perhaps? A feeling as if you had lost your memory? I hope it's nothing serious; but, my dear fellow, the sun was rather hot when you started."

"You great ass! I tell you it is not the head that is affected; it's the *heart*."

"Same thing, dear boy."

"I have seen, Tregurtha—I have seen an Olympian goddess treading the grass of a nineteenth-century field!"

"You've seen a milkmaid!"

"Richard, if I thought I could annihilate you, I would try. She was majestic, pensive, golden-

haired, distracting; a daughter of the gods, I swear."

"My dear sir, I think you had better take it easy," interposed Tregurtha anxiously. "Take the armchair near the window, and open your grief. There really is no hurry."

Roscoria was at last induced to sit down, Tregurtha standing by him, with bent brows of perplexity, in his shirt-sleeves, with his hammer still in his hand. Louis began his recital by a torrent of Greek, comparing his mysterious goddess to almost every heroine of antiquity, and using so great a multitude of compound adjectives and fantastic turns of speech that his hearer faintly seized a newspaper and fanned himself therewith.

"As it is some time since I was at school, Roscoria," interpolated his friend on the first opportunity, "you will excuse me if I do not quite follow you. If you could speak English mainly, I would pardon the use of a few Grecisms."

"I am sorry," said Roscoria, "and, by Jupiter, will try to speak of her in English. Listen. I was taking my solitary ramble through a field skirting a beautiful little wood of Sir John Villiers', filled with wild hyacinths. I had my eyes fixed on my book for a long while, but when I lifted them, what think you, friend, they saw?"

"From the way in which you have carried on, I should imagine a woman."

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Roscoria looked up in admiration at his friend's sagacity.

"She came straight by me, walking softly and dreamily, looking aside at the blue hyacinths, and her hat was held in her hand, so that the sun shone on her wonderful hair till it scintillated like a shower of gold. She was tall, yes; but she had an air so ethereal, and in her white dress she showed so like a cloud, that I held my breath lest she should vanish. I thought, indeed, she was some mystic vision I had conjured up from Plato's pages—the Absolute Good she might have been—she was so fair, so spiritual, and the air was so still around us; and there were we alone in the summer silence."

"Did she speak?" inquired Tregurtha (for he was a sailor, and his friend's manner was impressive).

"When she saw me standing still before her she dropped her eyes and made for a gate leading into the wood. The fastening was troublesome, so I went and opened it for her. She turned as she passed through, and bent her head—with a queenliness, heavens!—and smiled and whispered a word of thanks. I saw her eyes then for an instant; they—but I ought not to speak of them, and, after all, I don't know what color they were. She walked a short distance whilst I was shutting the gate again, and I was not the man to spoil her solitude, so I went off very fast; but looking back just once—only once, Tregurtha—I saw her standing amongst those blue-bells, gathering them, whilst the sunbeams slanted through the pale green larch boughs on to that glinting, golden head. After all, what immense possibilities this world contains! I believe this—this vision to have been the daughter of a mortal man who was once a *boy*, probably also a schoolboy! But then there was a woman in the case."

"Thank you, old fellow," said Richard, consulting his watch: "this has been very instructive; just as good as 'Half-hours with the best Poets;' but I suppose we must all descend to commonplace. You must tone yourself down and come to supper."

"Supper!" gasped Roscoria, blankly.

"Supper," retorted Tregurtha, firmly. "You shall note that not all your boys are overcome by an *affaire de cœur*, and that if you keep them waiting much longer there will be a bread riot. Here is comfort for you. The Tremeneheeres give a tennis party; hie you to it, and if this Oread of yours be mortal, she will surely there be found. It is a good way to distinguish women from angels: the former, if young, can scarcely resist a party."

IV.

THE WAY TO TAKE A PARTY.

In the interval between the evening mentioned and the day of the tennis-party, Roscoria was out early and late, whenever his calling permitted, roaming restlessly in the woods, haunting the sunny fields like a dark shadow, seeking for his goddess in the spot where he had seen her, and in every other romantic and flowery nook that he thought likely. Of course he never saw her. If he had been his own cook, the venerable Mrs. Tartlett, if he had been his youngest pupil, small Tom Rodda; if he had been the parish blacksmith, or cowboy, or even the parson—a *paterfamilias*—he would assuredly have seen her. But as he was her lover, and was searching for her high and low, he never caught so much as the glimmer of her fair white robe dim in the distance.

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Consequently, Roscoria grew irritable, knowing the pangs of baffled will, but he did not lose his hope. He could have sworn that he should meet her again. So on the important day he got himself up in white flannels and pre-Raphaelite red cap, caught up his racket, and ran off. Half-way toward his destination he wisely slackened his pace, lest, meeting his charmer, he might be too much out of breath to speak to her. As he crossed a field not far from the hallowed locality where he had lost his heart, he stopped short and passed his hand across his eyes. Yes; surely she was no other! A tall form, walking in that dreamy, quiet, contented way that he had noticed before; in

a white dress—the white dress—and there came the sunlight down on her golden hair as she passed from under the shade of that oak. She held as a screen a large horse-chestnut leaf, and she stooped often to gather or to scrutinize some wild flower. It was the same lady, and the charm was the same. Roscoria began by an impulsive start after her, then he stopped again, for what could he possibly say? He could not rush forward and exclaim, "Lady, you are the most adorable creature beneath the sun—what is your name?" for that would sound *bizarre*, not to say impertinent. As he was thus musing, however, a chance occurred in his favor; drawing out her kerchief the unconscious maiden let an envelope slip from out her pocket and fall noiselessly in the grass. She walked on unwitting, but Roscoria saw his opportunity, ran up and seized the letter. It was addressed to "Miss Lyndis Villiers."

In the first fervor of his satisfaction Roscoria imprinted a chaste salute upon the letters of her name; then, looking again at the handwriting, he observed, with a sharp revulsion of feeling, that it was rather manly in character. Perhaps he had kissed his rival's ink! With a shiver Roscoria proceeded to make the most of his time. He walked up after the lady, doffed his small cap, and said, "Excuse me—this is your letter, I think?" The lady gave a slight start, and received her property with a gratitude much tempered by the haughty surprise of the Englishwoman when addressed by a stranger. Then she blushed, for she recognized the handsome stranger. And then there seemed nothing more to be done, and Roscoria's wits were hampered by his admiration of her, so she bowed and went her way. This was well; but her way happened also to be Roscoria's, and he walked faster than she did; moreover, there was before them a stile, and beyond that stile the only lane, a narrow one, toward the Tremeneheeres. He walked behind, like a footman, until the delay at the said stile obliged him to come up with the lady. Then, as he clomb the barrier and noted the narrowness of the lane below, a sense of the comic struck him hard, and he burst into a cheery, irrepressible laugh. Much pained he was with his own irreverence when he had done so, but Miss Villiers turned at the sound, and smilingly accosted him as she stood in the lane, looking upward:

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"I fear I detain you; go on, you walk more quickly than I."

So brilliant an idea now flashed into Roscoria's brain that he saw blue sparks before his eyes for several minutes afterward.

"You have a racket to carry; as we are bound in the same direction, apparently, may I—?" Her lips parted for thanks, so Roscoria was over the stile with the dexterity of an acrobat, and next moment was walking by his goddess' side, her rackets in his hand, in the most blissful tremor.

"I ought to tell you my name to show you that I am respectable," he began. "I am Louis Roscoria, an instructor of youth, and owner of that curious, moldy building, Torres Hall."

"That beautiful, ivy-grown, moated mansion, with willows growing all round?"

"The same, if you call it beautiful."

"I have sketched it several times from a distance already" (beatification of Roscoria!), "although I have only recently come to live here. Of course I know your name. Have you not a great friend, a Mr. Tregurtha?"

"Rather!" cried Louis, "and I am glad that people connect the fact with my name."

"Why, of course," said Lyndis, looking up with kind eyes; "you two are called 'Damon and Pythias.'"

"I dare say. I am awfully proud of Dick (that's Tregurtha, Miss Villiers); he is a fine fellow, and he manages me completely. Whatever he suggests seems to be better, somehow, than what I can think of myself. It's his *nature*, you know; there's no system about it whatever: that's just where it lies. He has a way with him; I have no way with me; and all the Philosophy in the world won't give me one. Only, I hold that he makes one radical mistake in judging of my system of education: he won't let me thrash my own boys when he can help it, which I think is rather hard on any preceptor."

"Oh, it is!" said Lyndis, sympathetically; "but I dare say you are too fond of correction, or whence this dudgeon at being debarred from it?"

"Well— But if there is such an anomaly as '*righteous indignation*,' what a fervor of godliness must the sight of the average boy excite in the breast of the right-minded schoolmaster! And can indignation find a better vent than blows? Why, even the long-suffering Moses had to break something when he found his Hebrews dancing round a calf!"

"I would not adopt a profession which develops the indignation to so great an extent," said Lyndis, rather amused by her companion's impetuosity.

"Do not say that, Miss Villiers; whatever we have most at heart will disgust us sometimes. We have our ideal (or we ought to have), and the reality is coarse, indeed, in comparison, but it is better than nothing at all; and is it not in itself an ennobling thing to be constantly engaged in a tremendous struggle, whether the vantage be to you or no?"

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Roscoria looked at Lyndis with a far-away intensity and a sad determination of expression, which made her think she had never seen so enthusiastic a young man.

"It is a glorious vocation, teaching," said Lyndis, gently.

"It seems so when you praise it."

Lyndis here grew a little absent-minded. She could follow him when he talked of his boys, but

when he began on this new vein of sentiment she knew she must begin to dictate to him what he should say next. So she observed that the weather was fine, a fact that Roscoria had noticed before.

"It is the finest day I ever saw in my life, as well as the happiest," he replied loudly, and with fervor.

Beautiful Lyndis! she looked up with those starry eyes of hers and—begged his pardon! So the poor young man was obliged to pretend he had said something else. And there they were at the Tremeneeres' gate already, and Lyndis, with a somewhat more distant smile, took her racket, passed through the tiresome gate, and was lost amongst the laurels, whilst Roscoria hesitated. He did not attempt to follow her, but, after speaking a few words to his host and hostess, went in search of Tregurtha.

Now Tregurtha, though he had started a quarter of an hour after his friend, and taken the longer route by the circumambient road, instead of going across country, had—for some reason inexplicable except to very young people—arrived long before Roscoria, and was disposed to be foolishly jocose upon the subject. Louis checked this tendency in his friend, though with some difficulty; and Tregurtha grew somber as he recounted the boredom of his experiences over a set of tennis, wherein his antagonists had dawdled about without any manner of spirit, whilst, as he himself was the best player on the ground, his partner naturally was the worst. Observing that Roscoria grew lax in his attention to these complaints, Tregurtha went and hovered aimlessly around a tea-table. He was speedily dislodged from this refuge by the hostess herself, who stormed up to him with a rustle of silk akin in sound to the spray of a mighty cataract, and an all-conquering inflation of demeanor peculiar to the grandees of Devonshire and Cornwall, and, seizing him by the arm, bore down upon the other end of the long *salon* with him in tow.

Tregurtha was a Cornishman himself, so he was equal to the occasion—drew up his height and adopted an attitude of breezy and elegant ease as he listened to Mrs. Tremeneere lisping something about a "Miss ——" (he could not catch the name), "introduce—very clever—not my style—pretty though——" etc., until she stormed off again, leaving Tregurtha anchored opposite a small but rather stately foreign-looking damsel, of pleasing exterior, with a pair of great soft blue-black eyes, which were gazing up at him with an expression of absolute fright. The occasion did not seem to warrant this nervousness, and Tregurtha was just thinking to himself, "What a shame to bring her out just yet! she looks so young and shy," when the maiden before him turned hastily round and slipped out by the French window on to the lawn, laughing consumedly. That laugh! he knew it. Dick pursued in hot curiosity and identified her. This was she—the heroine of the stockingless episode—this was Thetis—this was Arletta of Falaise.

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"I think we have met before," quoth he, not without relish of the joke. But the lady of the hyacinthine eyes was too deeply conscious of that fact to enunciate a syllable. So there they two stood together on that almost deserted lawn (let us not be compelled to explain that every one else was drinking claret-cup!), under the heat of that summer sun, for several silent moments; and the man was losing his heart.

There was magic in the air that afternoon, for out came Roscoria presently (looking very much *en l'air*), and with him a tall, fair-haired woman, who only wanted wings. Tregurtha forgot himself in an instant, and, laying his hand on Louis' shoulder, led him up to Thetis, impressively and proudly observing:

"Miss ——, allow me to introduce my friend" (with emphasis) "Louis Roscoria!"

"Keeper of the Wild Beasts' Asylum, Torres Hall," murmured the said Roscoria, irreverently. "I have been deputed to arrange another set; shall we four play?"

Tregurtha gave vent to a muffled cheer, and the quartet marched (with some unseemly haste, lest other men should take their bishoprics) to the best ground, and there began. Tregurtha and Roscoria were noted players; together they were, in Devonshire at least, invincible. In a single, Tregurtha had the best of it.

The set was exciting. At first the two sides won game for game. Lyndis, as a tennis-player, was grace personified. She looked so lovely and moved so lightly that it seemed a marvel why hers was not always the winning side. Roscoria, too, exerted every muscle, and writhing about with the cleverness of a lively cobra, ought to have done wonders, but he tried too hard, and lost. Tregurtha, with less grace, had a longer reach and a greater power of hard hitting, so he turned to his partner about the fourth game, saying, "We will win this set, I think," and proceeded to do so. His partner was a capital player, shirked no balls, and had a prompt little way with a back-hander, which looked spirited and was useful. It was she who won the set (said Tregurtha), for it was she who returned Roscoria's last serve, with the twist on, by a malicious little slant just over the net, where the ball fell almost a yard before the feet of the goddess Lyndis, who beamed with gracious impotence upon it.

The baffled pair, Roscoria and Miss Villiers, strolled to an arbor, and there sat talking. It might have been ten minutes that they sat there—as Roscoria thought it was—or it might have been an hour and ten minutes to boot. Anyhow, it was heaven. There sat Lyndis Villiers in a low wicker chair, all embowered in fragrant honeysuckle, and looking herself like pink eglantine with her gold hair and soft rose cheeks. The admiring sunlight played on her dress, all snowy white, save where a pretty caprice had moved her to place a bunch of glittering buttercups. There she rested, one hand round a branch of honeysuckle, her eyes still, kind, and peaceful; her voice sweet and calm, speaking her very thoughts, and those such wise and pure ones! There was Lyndis, the Ideal realized, and there opposite sat Roscoria, clasping his knee in his hands in deep

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preoccupation, not himself at all, nor conscious of himself, but "a self aloof, that gazed and listened like a soul in dreams, weaving the wondrous tale it marvels at." He only knew from time to time, as her voice ceased, or her head was turned away for a moment, that he had come under one of those divine madresses which the gods send upon men; that life grew more wonderful every moment, and that ever after he should be able to say—I have once been happy.

Meanwhile Tregurtha and his partner of the white face and dark eyes were eating strawberries in an adjacent hayfield. It was pleasant there also, and the damsel, for all her grave looks, was playful, and conversation was uninterrupted. "Tell me a sea story," she asked, after a little desultory persiflage had been exchanged; and Tregurtha settled himself on a large haycock and began to recount his own adventures in various storms and casualties on the ocean, just as he told them to Roscoria's boys at night. And as he did so, his blue eyes kindling, and his hands closing and unclosing with the excitement of memory and the thought of the wild sea wind, he caught full sight of the blue-black eyes of his hearer, who had come nearer and was watching and listening to him with parted lips. She reminded him of a woman he had known years ago in Spain, who died; and those eyes struck a sharp pain to his heart, so that he finished his story with his hand over his brow to keep them from him. So, as he did not look again at her, Rosetta quietly finished all the strawberries, for she was, as yet, very young.

A loud, impatient halloo aroused them both, as a stout, warlike, flurried, elderly gentleman came puffing indignantly through the tumbled hay (most like a threshing machine), much encumbered by a large feminine shawl, which he carried on his arm, and shouting to Rosetta:

"Why, why, dash it, my love, I call this insubordination, you know. Didn't I tell you an hour you should have and no more? And how long do you suppose you've kept the horses waiting? I can tell you, madam, you're the only human being who dare keep Admiral Sir John Villiers' carriage and himself waiting in this way. How d'ye do, sir? I'm glad to make your acquaintance. Sailor, I see. Of course! didn't I know what the tattooing on your wrist meant? Got an anchor on mine, sir. Confound your impudence, miss, what are you laughing at? Oh! the shawl—stuck to my coat-button, has it? Well, and if it has; have you no reverence, you saucy minx? Put it round your neck, treasure. I hate a woman who catches cold!"

Thus was Rosetta swept off from the glances of her first admirer by Admiral Sir John Villiers, the owner of Braceton Park, renowned as the most awkward customer in Devonshire. [Pg 157]

V.

THE GODDESS IS HUMAN.

The friends found their way home together in the cool of the evening; both very quiet, but Roscoria evidently meditating some deep design. At night, growing confidential as they patrolled the garden, smoking, Louis proceeded to rave of his goddess "for an hour by his dial." Tregurtha heard and nodded in silence. He was a more reserved man than his friend, so he did not even mention the maid who ate his share of the strawberries. Indeed, he forgot her whilst listening to the outpourings of his ingenuous comrade.

"I shall never be any good at my work, I'm afraid," complained Roscoria; "that beautiful face is the only thing my mind will comprehend."

"Well, if I were you, as you seem so far gone, I should take some steps," advised Dick. "I'm no friend of shilly-shallying. If you love the girl, go and tell her so, I advise."

"I wish I'd more money," sighed the schoolmaster.

"Many a good *paterfamilias* has wished that before you, my lad," observed Tregurtha, with a laugh. "How does the country curate get on with his six children, do you suppose?"

"Eh, I don't know. O Lord! I hope I never shall be the father of a *boy!*" exclaimed the pedagogue, with a sudden agitated glance up at the bedroom windows, as the dread crossed his mind that he might have been overheard all this while.

However, all objection melted before the warmth of Roscoria's attachment, and one night he gave up his keys and authority to Tregurtha, bade him bolt the shutters and troll out prayers to the household in his jovial bass, for Louis Roscoria was going to a ball to "declare himself."

He had found out all about Lyndis (or thought he had). She was the niece of Admiral Sir John Villiers; her father dead; her mother married again to a hunting, racing type of man who wanted no stepdaughter about. So fair Lyndis was staying with her uncle for the time, looking after the housekeeping in return for his kind protection. But Roscoria gathered much hope that his suit might possibly be the means of relieving her from any unsettled feeling that she might have about her future. And thus it came to pass that at the termination of their fifth dance together they were sitting in a ferny grotto—the goddess was all robed in blue this time, as if she had brought down a piece of summer sky trailing after her—and Louis began all at once to show the tenderness he felt.

There was a little of the usual fencing with the subject, and then Roscoria came out with a few leading questions. He had heard rumors—very disquieting rumors—in short, would she set his mind at rest? [Pg 158]

Lyndis bent the glory of her mystic eyes upon him for an instant, whilst she said:

"I was going to be married, but we were obliged to put it off. Where are you going, Mr. Roscoria?"

"I don't know," said Louis miserably. He had risen and taken a few steps away, but he came back again and leant against the wall by her side, breathing quick and brokenly.

"What is the matter?"

"Oh!" groaned Roscoria, "I wanted you."

He heard no answer, so he straightened up and took her kind hand and said, "Never mind; I was a fool not to be silent; but—but—if you had known your own charm, would you have made me so unhappy?"

Then there seemed a light in her eyes which was not there before, and a whisper was borne to him low and far away as if it were the echo of the voice of Fate thousands of years ago:

"By the favor of Heaven I am free!"

Shortly afterward Louis believed he heard himself saying, "Why did you forsake him, for *he* never did it?"

"The admiral forced the match upon me—he is so arbitrary! I consented in a cowardly moment; but that was before I had seen you. The gentleman I was betrothed to saw I was not contented before even I knew it myself; he himself volunteered to release me. Of all the unselfish men I know, Mr. Rodda is——"

("The deuce he is!") thought Roscoria to himself. "*Not* Eric Rodda, Miss Villiers—the young fellow I tutored at Rome! Brother of Tom? Poor fellow! I feel like a brute, somehow."

"No use to feel so, Louis; it was all over before ever I saw you."

"'Louis'—you darling! Could you put up with a very modest style of existence—at Torres? You said you admired the situation."

"Oh! are you poor?"

"The proverbial church-mouse is a Rothschild to me."

"What a cruel thing that is!" sighed Lyndis; "when the admiral, my mother, my stepfather, all insist on my marrying a rich man."

"Then, my dear lady, go and do it in Heaven's name!" cried Roscoria, and at sight of her surprised face he said, repentantly, "I beg your pardon—Lyndis—darling."

"Which do you put first?" asked Lyndis, smiling sweetly, "Obedience or Love?"

"Love," emphatically responded Louis.

"Oh, Mr. Roscoria, and you a schoolmaster!"

"And you, Miss Villiers, tell me, do you prefer the main chance, or me?"

"Alas! I am no lover of abstractions."

She came a little toward him as she said it, and he had her hand again.

"This dear hand—shall it be mine?"

No answer, save that propitious starlight in her eyes.

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"Lyndis, one kiss, that I may know you are mortal."

"I daren't," she said, and gave him one. "If the admiral *were* to come round the corner—— I say no more."

She gave him a stephanotis from her hair to keep as her favor, and then whispered apprehensively:

"You have no idea what a naval officer can be when he takes to match-making. I shall have to fight this out some day with him."

"No; allow me," said Roscoria.

"If you dare; but—*this* is after supper."

("Oh, how *can* you?") expostulated the lover.

Then, being a serious maiden, who knew what she was doing, Lyndis pressed his hand and quietly, but finally, spoke:

"Mr. Roscoria, go home and think it over."

She had stepped into the brilliant light of the ballroom, and vanished from his sight. Roscoria went home as in a dream. A shifting picture was before him—in front, smiling scenes of bliss and love; in the background, Nemesis, in the garb of a naval officer.

Admiral Sir John Villiers was of all landowners the most peppery. He could not keep on terms with the farmers, his tenants; he never attempted to be on terms with his relations, and his warlike attitude toward the owner of the adjacent property of Torres was notorious. A man so revelling in storms as the admiral must needs have *some* quarrel with his next-door neighbor, and the subject-matter is easily found. A bit of land contested, a dubiousness of fence, and behold Sir John Villiers rampant. The makings of a despot had the admiral; he was kindness itself (in his imperious way) so long as he was not crossed; but oppose the most reasonable of wills to his and England itself, let alone Devonshire, was not large enough to contain him.

Unfortunately, it was Roscoria who happened to be the next-door neighbor, and very warm the admiral made the neighborhood.

Roscoria loved every inch of Torres, and held his own with an iron grip. The admiral took it into his head that a corner on the boundary of the two properties belonged to himself, and he set himself to wrest it from Roscoria. A little representation and cajolery he tried first, then threats, for he did not mean to be ousted by an impudent young puppy like Louis Roscoria. But the owner of Torres stood firm.

The relations were thus a little strained, when a glorious piece of strategy occurred to Louis the lover. He had just declared himself to Lyndis, and had received her assurance that she loved him in return, and would marry him gladly could the admiral be squared.

So Roscoria arranged a dinner at Torres Hall, Tregurtha and two or three others to be present, and then went over himself to invite the admiral. Sir John Villiers hemmed and ha'd, and would have curtly declined to enter the young man's house, but, scenting the battle afar off, and hoping for a good rousing tussle, he consented, grimly.

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Some fine old port came up from the cellar of Torres, and a very jolly party Roscoria and Tregurtha managed to make of it. The admiral, who came in at first snuffing haughtily and twirling his eyeglass with the most warlike aspect imaginable, was soothed and smoothed as the wine went round, and at last began to tell stories.

Propitious circumstance! Need we say how the young men roared with laughter at indifferent naval anecdotes, and greeted one effort at an august pun with clamorous applause? Tregurtha burst forth at last, followed by the others, into the *Lobgesang*, "For he's a jolly good fellow!" and this was the signal for Roscoria to edge himself confidentially close to the admiral and insinuate:

"Indeed, sir, we are all convinced of this, and it makes me all the more regretful that there should be any—any small mis—mis—understanding." (Roscoria here grew very nervous, and stammered a good deal.) "Fact is, Sir John, we all think here that things could be most comfortably settled if—if you could be content to make one small sacrifice. You have a niece——"

"The sacrifice, sir, if any is made, must be on *your* side," quoth the admiral, kindling; "though I don't deny that if you were to marry my niece it might thus be made to my full and complete satisfaction."

"Precisely, Sir John; and in that case, without further difficulty, I give up to you the 'boundary-plot,' which, I am afraid, you have long wished to possess."

"Wished, sir—*wished*? It is mine!" The admiral smote the table with his fist; the glasses jingled; he remembered the port, and, drinking some, was cheered.

"Yours, Sir John—yours from this moment if you consent to lay Miss Villiers' hand in mine," Roscoria spoke with ardor; the other men gathered round with interest, and the admiral saw he was expected to say the handsome thing. He rebelled at first.

"Young man," he said, "your hospitality is of a somewhat treacherous character."

"Pardon me, Sir John," retorted Roscoria. "I believe I have made you an honorable proposal. If it takes place whilst you are drinking my wine, well, sir, all that I can say is—I trust you find the port is good."

"Excellent—excellent. I have no fault to find with the wine. The wine, sir, is unexceptionable. I wish only I found your offer the same."

"Come now, admiral," interposed Tregurtha, good-humoredly, "what's a niece? You are rid of a tiresome responsibility, and the lady gets an honest husband."

"H'm! honesty is his *forte*, is it? Shouldn't have thought it," muttered the admiral; but he was giving in.

"There is one objection," he said, moving uneasily. "Miss Villiers is under age; but then girls are headstrong nowadays. What if she declines?"

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"Ah! she'll not decline," said Roscoria, with a joyous ring in his voice.

"Indeed, sir! Then there has been a little clandestine love-affair between you already, has there? The hussy!"

"*Well*, admiral, we don't generally make our first tentative advances in the presence of the guardians—now do we?" put in the ready Tregurtha.

"I suppose not, you rascal; I suppose not," said the admiral, and pen and paper were laid before him.

"Now mind, Sir John," Roscoria warned him jocularly, "this transaction may not be strictly legal;

but there is such a thing as the Court of Honor. I am sure of my own intentions, I can guess at the lady's, and this writing is to hold you to yours."

The admiral only nodded impatiently, and wrote down in good set terms an agreement to give his niece in marriage to Louis Roscoria on condition of that landowner and his heirs forever resigning all claim of ownership to the boundary-plot of Braceton Park. He threw the paper across to the young men to sign as witnesses, and then returned to his glass and his yarn. The old fellow's somewhat shaken good-humor was quickly restored. He was finally put into his greatcoat and sent home in his brougham, feeling vaguely uncomfortable, but softly singing a nautical ditty.

Roscoria knew no discomfort nor repentance, but danced the hornpipe with Tregurtha.

VII.

ROSCORIA'S BETROTHED.

Rosetta Villiers was looking very uncomfortable. She had taken a seat opposite to her uncle, the admiral, and was cross-questioning him with a certain sternness, before which the old sinner was quailing considerably.

"Mr. Roscoria made you this offer, you say? It is most extraordinary: I scarcely have seen him."

"Why, Rosetta, he gave me to understand—at least, he hinted at something like an *affaire de cœur* between you."

"Affaire de fiddlestick!" cried Miss Villiers, rising in real indignation; "the man *must* have been exceeding! Why, upon my word, the conceit of these young men! I suppose, passing me in the lanes once or twice, he was slightly taken with my looks, and supposes me to have been equally entranced by his. I should really like to see him, uncle, to give him a piece of my mind."

"Well, that is the most sensible thing you have said, Rosetta," agreed the admiral, "for you must anyway see this fellow, and make it up with him somehow, to save my credit as a man of my word. I admit it's a deuced awkward business, but since I consented to it—in cold blood mind, Rosetta, I repeat that I had *not* had too much—I am bound to stick by the contract, and I suppose you, being included in it, are at least called upon to bear me out." [Pg 162]

"I never knew such a fearful scrape!" cried Rosetta, with a rush of despairing tears to her eyes. And then, being very brave of nature, she shook herself together and pondered. She was a real child still, only sixteen, and had never been much in the company of older ladies. She was, therefore, quite unprepared to enter upon any matrimonial plans of her own, and—clever as she was—dwelt in surprising ignorance of the world. No course then could her inexperience suggest, except that of saving her uncle's reputation by adhering to the contract. And as she thought and accustomed herself to the strange idea, her young face lighted up with humorous smiles, and she threw up her head with a delightful sense of enterprise.

"Sir," she began, turning solemnly upon the shamefaced admiral, "I feel that you have treated me with scant consideration, and plunged me early into the difficulties of a matronly career. Nevertheless, such is my care for the family reputation that—I'll marry Louis Roscoria!" she concluded, with a sudden gust of laughter.

"Yes; he is learned, is he not? And I remember him as very good-looking," she added, with a blush; "large, soft eyes, if I am not mistaken. I *suppose* one can fall in love, given a man so handsome. *Allons—essayons!* But if I don't give it him for this abominable deception, then I don't feel the blood of my Spanish ancestors on the mother's side coursing vigorously through my veins! Sir, I consent."

The admiral (who was honestly afraid of his spoilt niece) confounded himself in thanks and praise, and privately thanked also his stars that his ward had grown up so unsophisticated. With that tricky Spanish spirit of hers, had she taken this affair in a different light she might have got me into fearful trouble, he thought, softly whistling directly the descendant of the hidalgos had turned the corner.

Next day was fixed for Roscoria's introduction. On hearing the complete success of his stratagem, Louis arrayed himself regardless of expense and hastened to Braceton Park. He gave Tregurtha leave to follow him in an hour—"to be introduced to the lady, who, I suppose, will then be my betrothed," he said.

Admitted into the drawing-room, Roscoria was left alone for what seemed to him an awful while. He grew nervous, and fluttered at every sound in the room. The clock annoyed him inexpressibly, and he started every time he faced a mirror. At last, in despair, he clutched his hat and stick, and sat down in orderly stiffness with his back to the door, and tried to abstract his thoughts. But they would dwell on his Lyndis, and it was no use to try and "sit like his grandsire carved in alabaster."

Suddenly there was a light sound of approach, and a tremulous, sweet voice close to his ear said simply:

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Roscoria."

Louis bounded on his chair as by galvanism, dropped his incumbrances, and spread forth a pair of eager arms, into which Rosetta, thinking this was all in the day's work, was actually preparing [Pg 163]

submissively to walk, when he saw that something was wrong.

"Ten *thousand* pardons!" he cried.

"Not at all," said Rosetta, smiling. "It is quite natural that you should feel deeply upon an occasion like this." And then she rubbed her small hands together bashfully, and waited with a beating heart for the beginning of his courtship.

"But I hope you see my mistake," urged Louis, still in smiling embarrassment. "I took you, in fact, for another lady."

"But; I *am* the other lady," said Rosetta.

"Ah!—Miss Villiers I was expecting."

"Precisely, I am Miss Villiers," said Rosetta, with firmness.

Roscoria looked the lady in the face. She was a very young looking creature, small, but rather strongly made, with a striking white face and great blue-black eye with a latent, passionate fire in the very depths of them. She had a resolute small chin and a decided mouth. Louis thought her, spite of her prettiness, the most tremendous interlocutor he had ever met. He turned absolutely faint with sudden horror, and grasped a chair, saying feebly:

"But Miss Villiers was tall and fair."

"Oh, my cousin do you mean? Yes; she will be in directly. But—but"—(Rosetta's face grew whiter and her eyes larger with the shock of discovery)—"you did not mean *her*, surely?"

"Excuse me—I did—and do."

"Then allow me to assure you, Mr. Roscoria, that the admiral did *not*. My cousin, Lyndis Villiers, is his niece and guest merely; it is I who am his ward since my father died in a naval engagement. He has made a very natural mistake. Lyndis is supposed to be out of the question, being engaged to marry a former pupil of yours—Mr. Eric Rodda. The admiral of course assumed that you meant me when you made your extraordinary request. I may mention that I thought it odd at the time."

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! I am punished this time!" groaned Roscoria, and, without even keeping up a pretense of ceremony, he sank on the table and sat there, rocking himself backward and forward. Rosetta laughed as one who had lost a load of care. She was now free to rejoice at the misfortunes of another, and for the first moment could not resist doing so. She stood opposite Roscoria and laughed at him and his discomfiture, like the child she really was.

"Not that I mean the least disrespect to you, my dear Miss *Villiers*," apologized Roscoria, out of the depths of his lamentations; "if only, like my predecessor Jacob when in a similar predicament, I could take *both*, how glad, how thankful I should be! But as it is, dear Miss Villiers, your cousin is so much to me—and—I thought I had got her!—in short, I know you will excuse me."

"Excuse you? Why, I am so thankful myself!" breathed out Rosetta.

"Thanks: it is very kind of you to say so. It makes it much easier for me," sighed Roscoria, gratefully. [Pg 164]

At that moment enter the admiral, walking sideways and fumbling with the door-handle as one who fears to interrupt a *tete-a-tete*.

Roscoria came forward in penitent guise, and began to explain the unlucky mistake that had arisen, and how it was Miss *Lyndis* Villiers toward whom his heart had yearned.

The admiral snorted. His temper arose. Both the young people knew they were in for it. Sir John Villiers withered them both with his sea-faring eye.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Roscoria, also a little irritably. "If I tear up that paper, and leave you in possession of that bit of land, and say no more of my marriage in connection with it, but try to gain Miss *Lyndis* Villiers as a separate undertaking, I suppose it will be all right?"

"Rosetta Villiers is an heiress, so if she pleases to throw herself away on a poor school master—he's no worse than the good-for-nothing military men who generally get the heiress—but Lyndis Villiers has not a penny, and I owe it to my second brother's memory to see that his orphaned child does not marry any impecunious young gentleman. Besides, she is suitably affianced to Mr. Rodda's eldest son. She is, therefore, out of the question."

"For the moment let us assume it," said Roscoria (who, we remember, was better informed); "but in that case, naturally, Miss Rosetta Villiers is free."

A very gentlemanly young man! thought Rosetta approvingly.

"I do not see it, sir," said the admiral, unfurling a handkerchief like a challenge flag. "I will neither give up the field nor permit you to go without your share in the bargain."

"Then give me a trifling consideration in money," suggested Roscoria—"if Miss Villiers will kindly pardon my entering upon such matters in her presence."

"That piece of land and my niece are, in my estimation, priceless. Only the one, sir, is a sufficient substitute for the other. Besides, I decline to have any shilly-shallying in this affair. It will be all over the place to-morrow that Rosetta accepted you and you threw her over."

"Let it be; I accepted the position," said Rosetta.

"I will *not* let it be," stormed the admiral. "If a young man thinks he can play fast and loose with a niece of mine, let him try—let him try!"

Here Rosetta, growing really frightened, hastily went out and returned with sherry and biscuits, which she pressed upon Roscoria's acceptance in the midst of his indignant rejoinder to her uncle. Mechanically the young man received the refreshments, and, holding his glass in one hand and taking a fierce bite of his biscuit, he said loudly, and turning toward the lady, "I protest again, Sir John Villiers, that I have not the slightest intention of playing fast and loose with Miss Rosetta, and she knows it as well as I do——"

And the door opened, and Lyndis Villiers was in the midst of them.

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Now this time, of course, Roscoria was unnerved, and did nothing but turn very white and set down his glass and look away. Therefore Lyndis, hearing his last speech, seeing him in excited converse with her uncle and her pretty cousin, and eating and drinking as if he were there for the day, harbored a deep suspicion of her lover. There was a painful silence.

Then the admiral began again:

"Lyndis, come here! Do you know Mr. Roscoria?" and Lyndis lifted her clear gray eyes upon Louis and said, "Yes, certainly."

Then Roscoria recovered himself and shook his beloved by the hand, and murmured, "Good-morning, dearest; I am in an awful scrape."

And Rosetta confided to Lyndis that the admiral was past human guidance, and it was to be hoped that Providence would interfere. Of course Lyndis knew nothing of what was toward, and a laborious explanation had to take place, at the end of which the tall, fair Englishwoman looked rather shocked, and murmured something about "unjustifiable liberty," which was directed at Roscoria. He took up the attack by a counter-charge:

"Is it true that you, as the admiral says, are still engaged to Eric Rodda?"

Lyndis raised her eyes again to Roscoria's, this time with a furtive memory of love-making in them, and responded decidedly, "No, it is not."

"Sir," she continued, turning to the admiral, "Mr. Rodda is coming this afternoon to break this to you."

"Break it to me!" irascibly exclaimed the admiral. "How many more things am I to have broken to me this day? I should like to break a thick stick to these fellows! Why can't they stick to their engagements as I do? Precious attractive they seem to find you two young women. I wonder you are not ashamed, Lyndis, to come and tell me that your fellow has given you the slip too."

"Oh, I say!" expostulated Roscoria, and he dared—before the admiral—to put his arm round Lyndis' waist.

"Look at them, sir!" said Rosetta, in a motherly aside. "I'd go to the rack with Spanish fortitude before I would cross young love."

"Lieutenant Tregurtha!" announced the footman, and in came Dick with an air of "Bless you, my children!" about him. He was stopped on the very threshold, though, by recognizing in Miss Rosetta Villiers a dear, if new, attraction.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Why, this *is* delightful, you know!" and shook her warmly and long by the hand.

Rosetta ordered a fresh glass for the sherry, and Lyndis inhaled the odor of the hyacinths in the flower-stand, whilst Roscoria bent over her, earnestly engaged in making his peace. The admiral, who had been quelled for the moment, burst out afresh. In trembling accents he said, waving his hand:

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"Ladies, leave us, if you please!" and Lyndis and Rosetta, knowing what impended, hastily made for the door, Roscoria finding time to bow out his adored just before Sir John broke into a torrent, a storm, hurricane, gust, squall, half-gale, great-guns-blowing (or any other nautical simile) of language.

The young men listened with respectful disapprobation (for to attempt to stem the course of the admiral's diction was at all times dangerous). When the sea-faring gentleman's invention was somewhat ebbing, Tregurtha was in an undertone acquainted with its source. The moment when it seemed of any use, Roscoria began again on his suit. He pleaded, urged, lost his temper, found it again, represented, reasoned, chaffed the admiral, appealed to his friend—and all in vain. Lyndis was steadily denied to him.

"And Miss Rosetta?" asked the lieutenant; but this question, which to him was most important, got lost, as totally irrelevant to the matter in hand. In despair the tired and heated Roscoria was gently led away by his friend, and the moment they appeared out of doors they were cheered by the sight of the ladies, who were waiting in the garden.

"It has not gone well with you, has it, Louis?" asked Lyndis anxiously.

"Gone well! It has gone vilely, Lyndis. Why do you encourage such a curmudgeon of a peppery old Cambyses as an uncle?"

"My relative, if you please, sir," said the loyal Lyndis. "Why do you get us all into such scrapes, you inconsiderate, duped Hotspur?"

"Because I am in love, most beautiful; they say it affects the intellect. So tell me what we are to do now."

"Well—would you like to give me up?"

"Don't," prayed the lover, with an imploring gaze at his goddess. "Say something cheering, for—eh! it *was* warm in there."

Lyndis nodded her beautiful head sagaciously, passed her hand over Roscoria's forehead, smoothing it, and smiled to herself to see how his countenance cleared under the comfort.

"Dear one, to me you are an Immortal," he said, reflectively; "but—if you *have* an age, what might it be?"

"That will not do," said Lyndis; "a minor I am, and a minor I fear I shall remain for a year or two more. But if you will wait——"

Louis threw out his arms with a gesture of impatience. "I had rather run away with you at once," he said. "Let us elope."

"Mr. Roscoria, what a very rash idea!"

"Should you refuse, if I asked you?"

"I hope so," said Lyndis, thereby giving her lover much hope. "And now, as I am really angry with you, you may go."

"Yes, goddess; but I will hear thee again on this matter. May I——"

Lyndis did not expressly say he might not, so he did—that is to say, he kissed the golden head that was resting on his rough coat, from whence it was raised with tumbled bright hair spread abroad like the rays of the sun. [Pg 167]

Tregurtha and Rosetta meantime had been looking over a hedge, commenting on scenery, the weather, and the crops. Rosetta was a born farmer. The sailor asked her tentatively:

"Did you agree to this plan of marrying my friend Roscoria?"

"I did," said the maiden, brightly.

"But surely you scarcely knew him well enough to love him? There must have been a strong elective affinity—or, bless me! I can't account for it."

"Love him! I never had spoken to him," laughed Rosetta.

"You would not have given him your hand without your heart?" persisted Tregurtha, with a strange, pained look, which, alas! she did not understand.

"Why, yes. If I had added my heart, think how great the sacrifice would have been. As it was, it was *very* amusing." Rosetta laughed again, at Roscoria this time, who came up to apologize for the awkward position in which he had stupidly placed her.

"Never mind, Mr. Roscoria," answered she. "I love adventures, and I owe this one to you. Only next time you ask for Miss *Lyndis* Villiers, let me advise you—'*see that you get her.*'"

VIII.

THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME.

For a fortnight after this failed attempt Roscoria beat his brains in vain to hit on a method of squaring the admiral. He was debarred from any sight of Lyndis herself, for Sir John, cleverly enough, had spirited the goddess off to her mother in London, so that her lover might chafe in the chains of his exacting profession until perhaps, being unable to follow, he might cease to love her.

Having executed this little piece of justice on his sworn foe Roscoria, the admiral turned mighty good-humored, and found that he lacked a companion over pipe and bowl. As he had quarreled for life with almost all the residents in Devonshire, it was natural that the choleric but cheery old fellow should turn his eye on Dick Tregurtha—a stranger, a sailor, a pleasant companion, and a man who could oppose a front of imperturbable and respectful good-humor to any high-handed impertinence which the admiral's temper might offer him.

This distinction suited Tregurtha uncommonly well. He liked the admiral, and he liked the admiral's niece. He did not see much of Miss Rosetta Villiers, for that damsel was always either attending to the farm or preparing for an examination. But she occasionally looked in upon the men, and had bright smiles for Richard, and a plate of fruit sometimes. She teased the admiral (who was completely under her rule). Sir John evidently liked and understood Rosetta. Lyndis was a complete puzzle to him. He could appreciate a fine woman; but Lyndis was more; she was a fine lady, and far too calm-spirited for the admiral's taste. She was afraid of him and his imperious way, and he knew it, and took a malicious pleasure in avenging himself on her indifference by startling projects of matrimony for her, accompanied by violent reprimands, which Lyndis took with a calm disdain coupled with fear. [Pg 168]

Now, when he presumed to scold Rosetta, she first would melt into a regular child's fit of tears (which used to cause the admiral to clear his throat and blink his eyes, and retract certain over-fierce expressions); then she would flash into a little Spanish passion, pay the admiral back in some of his own coin, with the genuine stamp upon it, and quickly send him to the right-about. And this the admiral understood too, for he was a man who knocked under with a good grace

when fairly worsted. Tregurtha was never weary of hearing the two joke together, and noting occasionally how, when the admiral wickedly strove to turn the joke against Rosetta herself or her sex, the young lady would throw her uncle a glance of her black eyes that shone with such masterful warning that the old commander would cough and change the subject, whilst Rosetta broke into a young, irrepressible laugh of victory.

Tregurtha commended himself to the lady by offering his help in the mathematics she required for her examinations. The logic which she also studied was at first beyond his ken, but he got over that difficulty by causing Roscoria to give him a fearful jorum of Jevons every evening, which he then passed on to the pretty student. Rosetta was much impressed; she marveled at the wide and varied talents of a mind that had remembered all the details of logic during a rough seafaring life like Tregurtha's. But if she admired his qualities, how was he affected by hers? Ah! that's the worst of it, always.

For, said Dick to Roscoria one afternoon, as that distinguished preceptor was on the point of joining his adoring disciples:

"Wish me good luck, old comrade: I am off on a forlorn hope."

"That child?" cried Roscoria, dropping an armful of the Clarendon Press series with resounding bang upon the floor.

"That child!" intoned Tregurtha, mechanically, with the voice of a captive spirit from a tomb. "I feel it is utterly hopeless madness; but I shan't be ashore much longer, and I must go to sea with a certainty behind me. I was never a man to go doubting when knowledge could be had for the asking. So I'll go and have my mind set at rest. I shall be satisfied this evening, I trust, and then I'll come back to you, Roscoria."

"Yes, you are sure of me, at any rate. I'm afraid you are making a mistake, old fellow; but I dare say you can't help it."

Pythias whistled sympathetically as Damon went out by the window with his hat over his brows and his teeth set.

Rosetta Villiers was playing about in the admiral's garden. At least, she thought she was working, but the sun was hot and there was a pleasant shade under that chestnut-tree. So she left off weeding and tying up roses, and sat dreamily down on a wooden seat to divide her attention between a book and a flitting dragon-fly. Tregurtha came walking informally through the garden, for was he not hand-in-glove with the admiral? Rosetta looked up brightly, extended her hand to Jevons in smiling appeal, and pointed to the other end of her rustic sofa.

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"I'm not up to logic to-day, dear Miss Villiers," said Tregurtha, with quiet despondency; "I have brought you a problem harder to solve than any in that class-book of yours. Do throw it over the hedge for half an hour, for indeed it is not opportune!"

Rosetta's astonishment was instructive to see. She clasped the book tighter and said, breathlessly: "You are strange, Mr. Tregurtha. Sit down here, and please don't look at me like the reproachful manes of my grandfather! There, at any rate, it is only a despairing profile that I see—the full face was unendurable."

"Just allow me," said Tregurtha, and he put Stanley Jevons into his pocket. "There! now I have no rival save the landscape. I say, listen, Miss Villiers. I—oh! but you will never understand—you will not understand!"

"I will do my best," said Rosetta, with a childish touch of pride. "Am I so stupid?"

"My little Rosetta, no!" cried Tregurtha, with an excess of tenderness which overwhelmed him; "but this is something which mere cleverness will never teach you, and which I cannot explain to you. Roscoria could have done it," he sighed, "but I am an inferior creature; besides, I shall only be speaking out my own disappointment. Well, best have it over; after all it won't take long. Rosetta, how do you think of me?"

"As my friend," answered Rosetta, promptly.

"Ah! and all the time I am only your lover!"

"My lover!"

"Say what you like now, I am ready," groaned Tregurtha, with hopeless resolution.

There was a long, dreary pause. Rosetta sat still, gazing away over the sunny lawn, and Tregurtha cared not even to see her answer in her face—he knew it; he looked before him also, and listlessly their thoughts dwelt on the daisies, the butterflies playing above them, the shifts of light and shadow, and the birds' half dreamlike song.

"Oh, this is dreadful!" Rosetta at last broke out. Richard drew her nearer, and kept his arm round her, saying quietly:

"I am sorry I distress you."

"Oh, I wish I could suffer anything! I wish anything evil could have happened to me, if only I might not have hurt you so! I did not know it, Richard, I did not know it!"

"No, of course I saw that. You are no flirt, sweetheart, or you would never have been troubled with me. Oh, well, it is over now—the worst part at least—and you must not be too soft-hearted, darling; you will have to break some hearts soon, so steel your own!"

Rosetta gave a long, long sigh, like a child roused from deepest sleep. All this was so new to her,

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such a revelation of pathos, and herself so helplessly ignorant and unprepared, that she had never a word to say, and all her sixteen bright years of life seemed unreality before this woeful fact—her lover. Involuntarily she laid her head upon Tregurtha's shoulder as if he could help her; then, with a start, as she felt the tremor that went through him at her touch, she raised it up, and bent her startled eyes upon him while she said, so low, with such an effort:

"I ought to try and tell you why I cannot—marry you. But what am I to say? I can find nothing reasonable. You would in your turn fail to understand the fancies of a child like me."

"I should like to hear," said Tregurtha. "Talk to me as long as you will; say what you please to me; I should like to take back some little knowledge of you, instead of the shadowy hope which has now gone to range itself with the endless mass which space is not great enough to hold—men's illusions."

His bitterness seemed to make his distress so real for Rosetta that she gave a deprecating cry and struggled with herself for several moments before she found the heart to continue speaking. Then tremulously she asked:

"Should you care to marry me before I could love you?"

"I don't know," said Tregurtha. "Now I am bewildered by my own love for you."

"Listen, Mr. Tregurtha. I am only sixteen, as you know, and childish for that age. I have lived so much alone and so wrapped up in my examinations and out-of-door pursuits that I simply have never yet had occasion to think of marriage. You see, I have no lady relatives, except Lyndis—and she is so serious! I imagined love would find its own way to me, without my playing with it beforehand. *Now* I see it needs practice."

"Did the admiral never warn you of your future lovers?" here put in Tregurtha, with some incredulity.

"Oh, the admiral! Who cares what the admiral says? He's an old sailor, what can you expect? They think of nothing else in connection with us women."

Tregurtha gave vent to a dismal chuckle at Rosetta's not altogether far-fetched aphorism on the navy. He was scarcely in a position to controvert it.

"And so you paid no attention?"

"Not much," said Rosetta, blushing. "At least I never dreamt that a man would love me yet, and that I should not be able to return his sentiment. I relied for the contrary on my southern nature, and troubled my head no more about it. Indeed, I used to think that I should like to have a lover, and now—now he is come!" And Rosetta covered her face and broke into low, sad sobbing.

"Oh, you poor little child! And I have done you harm, blundering into your charmed circle of heart-freedom! What a shame it is!"

Tregurtha rose up from his seat, and stood stretching his arms out with a laugh of self-directed irony; before this good and innocent girl, with all her sorrow for him, he felt utterly baffled, hopeless, and cast back.

"Let me try to explain myself further," pleaded Rosetta, with as much eagerness as if it were her fault that she could not love Tregurtha.

"See, I am happy here. To some people it is not given to know when they are happy, but I do know. I rejoice in my existence. I want nothing save that love which is beautiful in poetry and tragical in life. Here I am useful; you know the admiral—his dear, quarrelsome ways—who can keep him in order except me? Why, if I did not act as his interpreter there would never be a farm laborer on the place: every plowboy and cowman on it would give the admiral notice to-morrow—if I did! Here is my home, too; I love it. I love every corner of this old-fashioned garden—the corner where the winter violets grow, the nooks to find snowdrops in, and the borders with the scented pinks and heart's-ease in irregular places. I look for each flower as it comes out, and I scarcely care to stray outside our sweetbrier hedge."

"Well, dear child, all I can possibly say is, that it all sounds very pretty. If I were not your lover, I should exclaim, 'How simple are her tastes! what innocence and what content!' I should look on, were another in my place, and say complacently, 'Here is at last a woman who does not court men's admiration. Here is a fair maid who prefers Jevons' 'Elements of Logic' to Debrett's 'Peerage,' and a bunch of mignonette to a tiara of diamonds.' How new, how picturesque, and how refreshing!"

Rosetta gazed in blank wonderment at the embittered Richard, who, with arms folded and a caustic frown, was haranguing away as if to conjure from him a whole army of demons.

She was not of a mold to stand by and see another really suffer.

"I will do something for you, Richard!" she cried at length. "My lover shall not think me hard. I will go with you, Richard, and let the admiral and the cowman console each other. Between you and your friend it seems as if I were never to be left alone. Well, I am ready; I have plenty of spirit, and I say I will learn the meaning of this love which has made a hypochondriac of my sailor friend. I will be your wife and try to make the best of it—if it will make Richard himself again."

She stopped, excited but steadfast. Tregurtha, with a last laugh of amused wretchedness, said:

"Senorita! no one could deny that you are brave and ready; but beware of your adventurous spirit. You are forgetting what kind of a man it is to whose rescue you would hasten. Why, I would sooner a shark should devour me on my next voyage than that I should have to think of you

as a patient martyr—you, my—my— Oh, good gracious, what a fool I am! My dear Rosetta, go back to your happiness. When the Fates mean you to love, you will—and then—I envy the man! But till then, recollect that there is nothing so hopeless as mistaken heroism. Shun it, pretty one, as you would all evil; for it is a peculiar danger to you women. My darling, shall we shake hands for I am going."

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"And you will not come again? I shall miss you so!"

"I'll write and let you know about that," said Tregurtha.

She stood opposite him, murmuring pathetic words in Spanish. Then she caught her breath, and was silent. A man who knew her less would have thought she really loved him.

"Richard, you should have waited, I believe!" she exclaimed, as by sudden inspiration.

"What do you say?"

"While there is life there is hope; but in sailors, they tell me, there is not always constancy," meditated Rosetta, aloud.

"Not always, dear; only sometimes. Once would be enough for us. But do you know where you are leading me? For Heaven's sake, Rosetta, don't say anything you do not mean!"

"I take back my words, Richard. Perhaps I lost my way in this darkness. I am not well informed in these matters."

"No, dear, so I see," answered Tregurtha, gently, as the high hope of an instant died in his breast forgotten.

"And you have my 'Logic' still in your pocket," suggested Rosetta, melting again into tears.

"So I have! There—don't cry any more to-day. To-morrow I give you leave to cry, because you will then have forgotten all about it. Shall I tell you, senorita, who should have been your lover instead of me?"

"Please," whispered Rosetta, ashamed but curious.

"Job," said Tregurtha solemnly; and, the sailor nature being too strong for him, he kissed her lips, then left her under her chestnut-tree and went away, nor ever looked behind him.

IX.

THE WAY WE BEHAVE WHEN WE ARE YOUNG.

It was past midnight, and the summer moonlight sparkled on the waves as a little boat, with its sail puffed out by a brisk breeze, came gliding, conspirator-like, toward that part of the Braceton domain that runs along by the sea.

It was the night after Roscoria's school broke up, and the first use the master made of his holiday was this—to arrange to run off with Miss Lyndis. There seemed nothing else to be done; the admiral would not yield, the lady would not change her mind, and the lover would not be content to wait. So the young people exchanged letters, and the result was this boat. Tregurtha was in the affair as well, though he strongly disapproved of it. His love of adventure had conquered his conscience; and he was, besides, confident that Roscoria would end all by a blunder if not backed by a cool-headed friend.

So here was Tregurtha, steering the boat into a certain safe and sandy cove well in the shadow, where he knew that the eye even of an admiral could not penetrate, whilst Roscoria fetched his lady. Roscoria's heart was on land before his legs, and again and again had he mounted in spirit up that steep pathway, up the cliffs from the beach to the side of the house, where there would be one light in a window, one wakeful inmate to steal out to him through the unbolted shutters and the gate she would have left ajar.

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"Are we late?" he asked his friend.

"No, early," said Tregurtha.

"Will she be ready?"

"I have no means of knowing, my dear fellow."

"What are we to do if she is not?"

"Wait."

The boat ground on the pebbly beach, and Dick admonished the lover *sotto voce*—

"Don't—now *don't* sentimentalize on the way; every minute is valuable; the admiral is not deaf, and the lady's box is sure to be heavy."

Roscoria was off like a chamois-hunter. Tregurtha sat on the beach and smoked a pipe, stretching his legs in great tranquillity. Not that he was ignorant that Rosetta's window also had a light in it, but he knew it did not shine for him, and, considering all things, he thought it wiser to look in the opposite direction.

It was soon, in reality, that two figures began to descend the cliff-path. Roscoria first, bearing a

modest trunk on his shoulder, and looking back each moment to see if Lyndis knew her way in the moonlight.

Lyndis herself was muffled up in a large cloak. She did not seem at all nervous. All that Tregurtha noticed, as she stepped into the boat and bade him "good-evening" with a sort of pathetic courtesy, was that her figure stood straight and firm, and that she trod the rocks in the uncertain light with Devonshire decision.

The lieutenant was secretly a trifle shocked by the coolness of the young couple. Feeling himself the incarnation of duplicity and insubordination, he would have liked a more remorseful attitude in the fugitives themselves.

"How do you do, Miss Villiers?" said Tregurtha, doffing his sou'-wester politely, and at that moment he chanced to look up at the house and saw the little solitary light go out.

Rosetta also had found a fearful joy in the adventure. She would dearly have liked the moon-lit row for herself, or, failing that, would fain have waved her hand to Richard—but here conscience stepped in. She therefore watched the party from behind her curtain until she saw them safely into the boat, and took a last critical glance at her own lover, preferred him to Roscoria, blew out the light, and—probably went to sleep; for indeed she had quite cheered up, and Dick had been right in saying that she would only weep one day for his sorrow. Tregurtha smiled mournfully to himself as he reflected that the fiery southern natures may excel us in warmth of feeling, but we of the colder north can beat them in constancy.

They pulled off from shore, after a few instants of great anxiety, because of the pebbles' traitorous noise; and then they made an energetic start. The thoughts of the trio were concentrated on putting distance between themselves and the possibility of pursuit. Lyndis steered until the men lost their first vigor, when she took the place of one of them and rowed with the enterprise of an ancient Phœnician. At first she felt a delicacy taking thus active a part in the escape, but this finally vanished when she looked at Roscoria spreading out his cramped fists in smiling relief whenever she stood up to take his oar.

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They had passed the sharp cliff "Gallantry Bower," and began to feel the creeping shiver that heralds the dawn. By the mixed and twinkling light from the fading moon and the glimmering east they were thinking they could discern a suspicion of white houses in the bay for which they were making, when Roscoria, who happened just then to be resting with his hands on the rudder-lines, exclaimed:

"By Heaven, I see a boat!"

"No supernatural phenomenon upon the sea," said Richard, looking out, however, with some uneasiness. Lyndis heaved a deep sigh, and failed for the first time to draw her oar through the water.

"Well, we have the start, if it should be the admiral. It is a case of speed, and the devil take the hindmost. Oh, good gracious, Lyndis! I forgot he was your relation! Change places with me again, and guide us well in the small bay there. Pull for our happiness, Tregurtha!"

On land! The three voyagers broke into varying expressions of relief.

"By Jove, I feel as if I had been reading the 'Agamemnon!'" cried Roscoria, stretching out his arms, exhausted.

"Thank Heaven!" said Lyndis.

"Good," said Dick.

The cold morning light was growing brighter and more encouraging as, after drawing the boat high on to the shingle, the trio proceeded quickly toward a certain white and towered edifice. As might be expected, this was their goal—a church. Lyndis looked rather blankly as they approached this termination, and lagged behind with Roscoria.

"Would you two mind walking in front?" sang out Tregurtha without looking round, but with a sternness caused by his sense of complicity. They did so, and the wedding procession moved on much quicker.

At the church gate they were greeted by Eric Rodda, the curate here. He was so ingeniously unselfish (*i.e.* self-tormenting) a man that he had insisted on being the one to give his loved Lyndis to the man she loved.

"Well, every man has his particular fancy; but it puts *me* in a precious unpopular position," Roscoria had thought, whilst accepting the magnanimity.

"All right?" asked Rodda then of his patients, victims, clients, or whatever those wights are called on whom the parson pronounces the matrimonial benediction.

"For the present," replied Roscoria.

"Then come along," said Eric, and he led the way into the little rustic church. It was a picturesque old-fashioned place, evidently the resort of the ritualistic, for there were lighted candles on the altar and great bunches of scented flowers. The flowers lent a charm to the church and gave a memory of the fresh outer air, from which one is apt to feel so desolately shut out when encased within consecrated walls. The candles, also, were much needed, for the windows were stained in such deep red and purple tints that an early morning sun could hardly pierce the painting. The people present at this unconventional wedding were, besides the chief couple and their "best man," Tregurtha, Eric, the parson, who now surged gorgeously in from the

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vestry with flowing gown and ponderous prayer-book; the elderly and orthodox clerk or verger, who followed with a mien of severe desire to see a tiresome ceremony properly performed; then, lastly, an aged crone, of the sweeping and dusting persuasion, on whose neck Lyndis would fain have wept, in default of another woman. But our brides shed no tears nowadays. The times are undemonstrative, and thus the drooping veil, whose original use was to conceal unbecoming traces of tears, now only serves to soften the marble rigidity of resignation. Who that has once seen it can ever forget the Iphigenia-like air of beauty at the hymeneal! And then the wretched bridegroom! Whether he stands trembling before the statuesque bride, or kneeling, with the shiny soles of his patent-leather boots in view, what an advertisement to his bachelor friends against matrimony!

The present wedding was more cheery than most, however. Roscoria was fairly cool, but that was partly because he had not been able to afford a new coat for the auspicious occasion. Lyndis, to be sure, thought she was marrying (unlike the generality of brides) a man she loved, and this, moreover, in defiance of her guardian's wishes—a circumstance which must have lent an additional charm to the deed—Lyndis stood looking white, white and terrified; all her own rashness and the inevitable uncertainty of her future filling her thoughts. Her head was bent and her fingers clasped, and nervously bent back; she was retaining every atom of her self-control, but saying what she had to say mechanically, with a low voice, like the echo of her own sighing through cloister aisles.

"Cheer up, my darling!" said Louis in an audible whisper, just as the clergyman opened his mouth.

"Dearly beloved—*hush!*" began Eric Rodda; and even Lyndis, with all her chastened "amazement," could not resist a smile.

Tregurtha had given the bride away; Roscoria had at last found the ring, wrapped carefully up in his fly-book; names had been duly signed with atrocious pens in the vestry; and the bridegroom saluted the bride. But to do this last it was not essential to call in the verger as a witness, so the young people left Tregurtha and Rodda behind and took a merry run in the sunshine, down-hill toward the village. And as they danced along on the dewy grass, with their arms interlaced and their laughing improvident young faces upturned one to the other, they turned a sharp corner and Lyndis gave a little scream of horror, for she had nearly fallen into the arms of the admiral!

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As long as he lives Roscoria swears, he shall never forget how he was feeling whilst Lyndis shrank back with outstretched averting hands, exclaiming tremulously:

"My dearest uncle! this—this is an unexpected pleasure!"

"Lyndis Villiers—you wretched woman."

"You are twenty minutes behind the times, Sir John," interrupted Roscoria, stepping in front of the lady. "Lyndis is Mrs. Roscoria."

"Have you married her?" gasped the admiral, still too much done for even to swear.

"I—I—did—I have. Oh, Rodda!" appealed the bridegroom, as the curate came up with Tregurtha, "fetch the admiral the certificate, and beg him to be calm for the sake of Lyndis!"

It was evident that the admiral was in great perplexity. He saw he was too late.

"And *you* permitted this, you scoundrel!" he roared, turning upon Tregurtha with fury. Richard flushed up; he had been afraid of this. He simply saluted and said, humbly:

"I can only ask your pardon, sir; we have all behaved very badly."

"Ha! yes, my niece Rosetta knows a scamp when she sees one. Confound you, sir!" and the admiral turned his back upon his shamefaced subordinate. He confronted Roscoria, and this time with a peculiar expression of malicious gratification under his rage. After all, when your next-door neighbor has run away with your niece, there is a unique joy in the thought of how he shall reap the whirlwind. Sir John put up his eye-glass and surveyed the husband of his niece from head to foot with a smile.

"Well," said Roscoria, with an air of buoyant courtesy, which passed but poorly with his stammering, "I'm awfully sorry we have brought you so far after us—but—since you are here—would you?—may we request the honor?—we have ordered breakfast at the Red Lion."

That was going too far. The admiral gave one of his snorts, grasped his cane, and absolutely shook it in the face of the speaker. In another instant there would have been a row royal, and the preliminary electric thrill went through the whole party. Lyndis stepped in. She softly removed Roscoria's protective hand from off her shoulder, and said with decision:

"Let me speak to him, Louis."

The men withdrew a little as she went across to the infuriated admiral, and said to him:

"Sir John, dear, we do not want to defy you, and we never did. But indeed there was nothing to be said against the owner of Torres, except that he was poor. Was I also poor? Well, then, I was accustomed to a simple mode of life, and, bless my soul! that is all I have to fear; there is no starvation in the case. Perhaps I should have behaved differently; but, dear Sir John, am I not young? I loved him. And in any case, here I am, Roscoria's wife. My marriage cannot be overlooked; would it be seemly? Why not go home without any scandal, and be thankful that you are rid of a charge that I fear has been very troublesome to you. And you will go to the Red Lion first, will you not? and have some breakfast apart from us. Dear sir, think of Rosetta's feelings—

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and of my inextinguishable remorse—if you were to take a chill! Come, let me walk a piece of the way with you; the men will follow. That you should have come out on this rough sea so early in the morning! That is the only thing which shadows my happiness. I do not ask your forgiveness, but I *should* like your portrait—the one in uniform, of course—you will send it me, will you not? Yes?"

Lyndis bent her ruffled golden head and looked into his face with her sweet starry eyes. Now, the admiral had never been inaccessible to the wiles of lovely woman, and Lyndis had never before cared or dared to coax him. He began for the first time to see that there was something else in the girl beyond a fine figure. And thus it came that he put his hand furtively into his pocket and said, grumbling and awesome, but relenting:

"You're my own brother's child, unluckily, so here's ten pounds for your honeymoon. You will remember that I have made an effort—and a very considerable one it was, too, for an old gentleman of sixty—to bring you back to your duty; if I am too late, you may blame your own cunning for that, when in future days you may wish this morning's work undone. Begad, I will make it warm for your husband! He wasn't set down on the next estate to mine for nothing. There —there—a pleasant trip to you, girl; I cannot congratulate you on your choice, but we must hope for the best; good-morning!"

Then Tregurtha discovered that there was only just time for the newly wedded to breakfast at the inn before the coach should be arriving which was to convey them to Barnstaple, where they were to take the train for Penzance. So up the main street of Clovelly went the wedding party.

The informal little wedding breakfast had a far cheerier air than the funereal orthodox one. Instead of being presided over by awful footmen and hired waiters, the quartet was served by one sympathetic maid, who brought them an honest rustic repast of eggs and bacon, buttered cakes, and Devonshire cream, tea, and cider. It was all wonderfully Arcadian, and the little room was very pretty, with its walls covered with old china, and the creepers forcing their way in through the open window. Lyndis shone on the occasion.

Nor was there any time for sentiment, nor any ghastly speeches. Tregurtha did indeed raise his teacup, with a bow to Lyndis and a wink to Roscoria, and endeavor to drink its contents off at a draught, but, burning his mouth, he was forced to desist.

Then Roscoria was bound to pour out a glass of cider, and say:

"My dear fellows, I am heartily obliged to you, and now let me propose *my* toast. (By the way, Tregurtha, have you considered the pungency of the fact that the Greeks use the same word 'trouble' and 'wife's relations?') Where was I? Oh, yes; allow me to propose the health and good-humor and indemnity from chill, of my revered and feared uncle-in-law. Admiral Sir John Villiers, K. C. B."

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"Poor old fellow," said Tregurtha, reflectively; "I hear him stamping about overhead. I hope he has got all he wants; I shall go and take him a stiff glass of grog."

He did so, and returned with a smiling but battered expression.

"Is he any cooler?" anxiously inquired the bridegroom.

"Cooler? Molten lead—the torrid zone—a powder-magazine in full explosion—the furnaces of Nebuchadnezzar—are about as cool as is the admiral at this moment. I should like to see you two clear out of this, lest he change his mind, and bring the whole population of Clovelly down upon you."

Lyndis paled visibly and rose.

"How ever did he know we were off?" she asked.

"Yes, how indeed?" demanded Tregurtha of his friend. Roscoria looked up and Roscoria looked down, and Roscoria finally admitted in a whispered aside:

"Lyndis was rather fluttered, Dick, and so I kissed her—by mistake—just under the admiral's window."

"Good luck to you and your ship, captain!" said Roscoria, with that air of ill-sustained buoyancy which we all adopt during the *mauvais quart d'heure* of parting.

"Good-bye, Corydon," said Dick, and wrung his friend's hand. "Be off, or you'll miss the coach."

Lyndis and Roscoria walked away together up the steep path to the high road; Rodda had made himself scarce, and Tregurtha stood alone.

There is an advantage here and there, when your friend marries and you don't. He keeps a more luxurious table as a rule, and you are sure of a match-box and hot-water in your bedroom when you visit him. On the other hand, there is something eternally gone; the old frank confidence *a deux* grows yearly more difficult, and, you can never more be "boys together."

On that day a week later Captain Tregurtha was off again to sea, in command, in a measure through the admiral's interest, of a fine ship, the *Damietta*.

Rosetta, who did not see the captain again before he went, has taken first-class honors in the Junior Cambridge Exam. of the year (logic being specially commended), and she has now entered

upon an engrossing project in conjunction with the admiral for the importation of some "Hereford" white-face cattle on to the Braceton farm.

Admiral Sir John Villiers bides his time. When Roscoria comes home to cane his boys he will live to find a rod in pickle for himself. But little reckes the lover of the future thunders, for he is living under a cloudless sky. Unlike most folk of the present day, Lyndis and Roscoria have rushed headlong into matrimony; and if consequences *will* fall heavy—why, let them! they say, as they blissfully, economically, and appropriately roam amongst the myrtles in the Scilly Isles.

Transcriber's Note:

A table of contents has been added.

Some inconsistent punctuation was retained (e.g. eyeglass vs. eye-glass).

Page 145, changed ? to . after "opposite bank."

Page 166, restored several missing commas to "a torrent, a storm, hurricane, gust, squall, half-gale." These were present in the original but lost in the reprint.

Page 173, changed "into the boot" to "into the boat."

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