

THE  
MARRIAGE OF ELINOR

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BY

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# THE MARRIAGE OF ELINOR

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

It is needless to say that the years which developed Elinor's child into a youth on the verge of manhood, had not passed by the others of the family without full evidence of their progress. John Tatham was no longer within the elastic boundaries of that conventional youth which is allowed to stretch so far when a man remains unmarried. He might have been characterized as *encore jeune*, according to the fine distinction of our neighbours in France, had he desired it. But he did not desire it. He had never altogether neglected society, having a wholesome liking for the company of his fellow creatures, but neither had he ever plunged into it as those do who must keep their places in the crowd or die. John had pursued the middle

path, which is the most difficult. He had cultivated friends, not a mob of acquaintances, although, as people say, he 'knew everybody,' as a man who had attained his position and won his success could scarcely fail to do. He had succeeded indeed, not in the fabulous way that some men do, but in a way which most men in his profession looked upon as in the highest degree satisfactory. He had a silk gown like any dowager. He had been leading counsel in many cases which were now of note. He was among, not the two or three perhaps, but the twenty or thirty, who were at the head of his profession. If he had not gone further it was perhaps more from lack of ambition than from want of power. He had been for years in Parliament, but preferred his independence to the chance of office. It is impossible to tell how John's character and wishes might have been modified had he married and had children round him like other men. Had the tall boy in the north, the young hero of Lakeside, been his, what a difference would that have made in his views of life! But Philip was not his, nor Philip's mother—probably, as he always said to himself, from his own fault. This, as the reader

is aware, had always been fully recognised by John himself. Perhaps in the old days, in those days when everything was possible, he had not even recognised that there was but one woman in the world whom he could ever wish to marry. Probably it was only her appropriation by another that revealed this fact to him. There are men like this to be found everywhere; not so hotly constituted as to seize for themselves what is most necessary for their personal happiness—possessed by so many other subjects that this seems a thing to be thought of by-and-by—which by-and-by is generally too late.

But John Tatham was neither a disappointed nor an unhappy man. He might have attained a higher development and more brilliant and full life, but that was all; and how few men are there of whom this could not be said! He had become Mr. Tatham of Tatham's Cross, as well as Q.C. and M.P., a county gentleman of modest but effective standing, a lawyer of high reputation, quite eligible either for the Bench or for political elevation had he cared for either, a member of Parliament with a distinct standing, and therefore importance, of his own. There was probably throughout England no society in which he could

have found himself where his position and importance would have been unknown. He was a man approaching fifty, who had not yet lost any of the power of enjoyment or begun to feel the inroads of decay, at the very height of life, and unconscious that the ground would shortly begin to slope downwards under his feet; indeed, it showed no such indication as yet, and probably would not do so for years. The broad plateau of middle age lasts often till sixty, or even beyond. There was no reason to doubt that for John Tatham it would last as long as for any man. His health was perfect, and his habits those of a man whose self had never demanded indulgences of the vulgar kind. He had given up with some regret, but years before, his chambers in the Temple: that is, he retained them as chambers, but lived in them no longer. He had a house in one of the streets about Belgrave Square, one of those little bits of awkward, three-cornered streets where there are some of the pleasantest houses of a moderate kind in London; furnished from top to bottom, the stairs, the comfortable quaint landings, the bits of corridor and passage, nothing naked or neglected about it—no cold corner: but nothing fantastic;

not very much ornament, a few good pictures, a great deal of highly-polished, old-fashioned dark mahogany, with a general flavour of Sherraton and Chippendale: and abundance of books everywhere. John was able to permit himself various little indulgences on which wives are said to look with jealous eyes. He had a fancy for rare editions (in which I sympathise) and also for bindings, which seems to me a weakness—however, it was one in which he indulged in moderation. He possessed in his drawing-room (which was not very much used) a beautiful old-fashioned harpsichord, and also he had belonging to him a fiddle of value untold. I ought, of course, to say violin, or rather to distinguish the instrument by its family name: I have no doubt it was a Stradivarius. But there is an affectionate humour in the fiddle which does not consist with fine titles. He had always been fond of music, but even the Stradivarius did not beguile him, in the days of which I speak, to play, nor perhaps was his performance worthy of it, though his taste was said to be excellent. It will be perceived by all this that John Tatham's life had many pleasures.

And I am not myself sorry for him because he

was not married, as many people will be. Perhaps it is a little doleful coming home, when there is never anybody looking out for you, expecting you. But then he had never been accustomed to look for that, and the effect might have been irksome rather than pleasant. His household went on velvet under the care of a respectable couple who had 'done for' Mr. Tatham for years. He would not have submitted to extortion or waste, but everything was ample in the house; the cook by no means stinted in respect to butter or any of those condiments which are as necessary to good cooking as air is to life. Mr. Tatham would not have understood a lack of anything, or that what was served to him should not have been the best, supplied and served in the best way. Failure on such points would have so much surprised him that he would scarcely have known what steps to take. But Jervis, his butler, knew what was best as well as Mr. Tatham did, and was quite as little disposed to put up with any shortcoming. I say that I am not sorry for him that he was not married—up to this time. But, as a matter of fact, the time does come when one becomes sorry for the well-to-do, highly-respectable, refined, and agreeable man who has



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everything that heart can desire, except the best things in life—love, and the companionship of those who are his very own. When old age looms in sight everything is changed. But Mr. Tatham, as has been said, was not quite fifty, and old age seemed as far off as if it could never be.

He was a man who was very good to a number of people, and spent almost as much money in being kind as if he had possessed extravagant children of his own. His sister Mary, for instance, had married a clergyman not very well off, and the natural result had followed. How they could have existed without Uncle John, much less how they could have stumbled into public schools, scholarships, and all the rest of it, would be difficult to tell, especially now in these days when a girl's schooling ought, we are told, to cost as much as a boy's. This latter is a grievance which must be apparent to the meanest capacity. Unless the girl binds herself by the most stringent vows *not* to marry a poor curate or other penniless man the moment that you have completed her expensive education, I do not think she should in any case be permitted to go to Girton. It is all very well when the parents are rich or the girls have a sufficiency of their own. But

to spend all that on a process which, instead of fructifying in other schools and colleges, or producing in life a highly accomplished woman, is to be lost at once and swallowed up in another nursery, is the most unprofitable of benefactions. This is what Mary Tatham's eldest girl had just done, almost before her bills at Newnham had been paid. A wedding present had, so to speak, been demanded from Uncle John at the end of the bayonet to show his satisfaction in the event which had taken all meaning out of his exertions for little Mary. He had given it indeed—in the shape not of a biscuit-box, which is what she would have deserved, but of a cheque—but he was not pleased. Neither was he pleased, as has been seen, by the proceedings of Elinor, who had slighted all his advice, yet clung to himself in a way some women have. I do not know whether men expect you to be quite as much their friend as ever after they have rejected your counsel and taken their own (exactly opposite) way: but women do, and indeed I think expect you to be rather grateful that they have not taken amiss the advice which they have rejected and despised. This was Elinor's case. She hoped that John was ashamed of advising her to make

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her boy acquainted with his family and the fact of his father's existence, and that he duly appreciated the fact that she did not resent that advice; and then she expected from him the same attention to herself and her son as if the boy had been guided in his and not in her way. Thus it will be seen his friends and relations expected a very great deal from John.

He had gone to his chambers one afternoon after he left the law courts, and was there very busily engaged in getting up his notes for tomorrow's work, when he received a visit which awakened at once echoes of the past and alarms for the future in John's mind. It was very early in the year, the end of January, and the House was not sitting, so that his public duties were less overwhelming than usual. His room was the same in which we have already seen him on various occasions, and which Elinor in her youth, before anything had happened to make life serious for her, had been in the habit of calling the Star Chamber, for no reason in the world except that law and penalties or judgments upon herself in her unripe conviction, and suggestions of what ought to be done, came from that place to which Mrs. Dennistoun had made resort in

her perplexities almost from the very beginning of John's reign there. Mr. Tatham had been detained beyond his usual time by the importance of the case for which he was preparing, and a clerk, very impatient to get free, yet obliged to simulate content, had lighted the lamp and replenished the fire. It had always been a comfortable room. The lamp by which John worked had a green shade which concentrated the light upon a table covered with that litter of papers in which there seemed so little order, yet which Mr. Tatham knew to the last scrap as if they had been the tidiest in the world. The long glazed bookcase which filled up one side of the room gave a dark reflection of the light and of the leaping brightness of the fire. The curtains were drawn over the windows. If the clerk fumed in the outer rooms, here all was studious life and quiet. No spectator could have been otherwise than impressed by the air of absolute self-concentration with which the eminent lawyer gave himself up to his work. He was like his lamp, giving all the light in him to the special subject, indifferent to everything outside.

‘What is it, Simmons?’ he said abruptly, without looking up.

‘A lady, sir, who says she has urgent business and must see you.’

‘A lady—who *must* see me.’ John Tatham smiled at the very ineffectual *must*, which meant coercion and distraction to him. ‘I don’t see how she is going to accomplish that.’

‘I told her so,’ said the clerk.

‘Well, you must tell her so again.’ He had scarcely lifted his head from his work, so that it was unnecessary to return to it when the door closed, and Mr. Tatham went on steadily as before.

It is easy to concentrate the light of the lamp when it is duly shaded and no wind to blow it about, and it is easy to concentrate a man’s attention in the absolute quiet when nothing interrupts him; but when there suddenly rises up a wind of talk in the room which is separated from him only by a door, a tempest of chattering words and laughter, shrill and bursting forth in something like shrieks, making the student start, that is altogether a different business. The lady outside, who evidently had multiplied herself—unless it was conceivable that the serious Simmons had made himself her accomplice—had taken the cleverest way of showing that she

was not to be beat by any passive resistance of busy man, though not even an audible conversation with Simmons would have startled or disturbed his master, to whom it would have been apparent that his faithful vassal was thus defending his own stronghold and innermost retirement. But this was quite independent of Simmons, a discussion in two voices, one high-pitched and shrill, the other softer, but both absolutely unrestrained by any consciousness of being in a place where the chatter of strange voices is forbidden, and stillness and quiet a condition of being. The sound of the talk rang through Mr. Tatham's head as if all the city bells were ringing. One of the unseen ladies had a very shrill laugh, to which she gave vent freely. John fidgeted in his chair, raised up his eyes above the level of his spectacles (he wore spectacles, alas! by this time habitually when he worked) as if lifting a voiceless appeal to those powers who interest themselves in law cases to preserve him from disturbance, then made a manly effort to disregard the sounds that filled the air, returning with a shake of his head to his reading. But at the end of a long day, and in the dulness of the afternoon,

perhaps a man is less capable than at other moments to fight against interruption of this kind, and finally he threw down his papers and touched his bell. Simmons came in full of pale indignation, which made itself felt even beyond the circle illuminated by the lamp.

‘What can I do?’ he said. ‘They’ve planted themselves by the fire, and there they mean to stay. “Oh, very well, we’ll wait,” they said quite calm. And I make no doubt they will, having nothing else to do, till all is blue.’

Mr. Simmons had a gift of expression of which all his friends were flatteringly sensible, and he was very friendly and condescending to John, of whom he had taken care for many years.

‘What is to be done?’ said Mr. Tatham. ‘Can’t you do anything to get them away?’

Simmons shook his head. ‘There’s two of them,’ he said, ‘and they entertain each other, and they think it’s fun to jabber like that in a lawyer’s office. The young one says, “What a queer place!” and the other, she holds forth about other times when she’s been here.’

‘Oh, she’s been here other times— Do you know her, Simmons?’

‘Not from Adam, Mr. Tatham—or, I should

say, from Eve, as she's a lady. But a real lady I should say, though she don't behave herself as such—one of the impudent ones. They are never impudent like that,' said Mr. Simmons with profound observation, 'unless they are real high or—real low.'

'Hum!' said John, hesitating. And then he added, 'There is a young one, you say?'

But I do not myself think, though the light-minded may imagine it to be so, that it was because there was a young one that John gave in. It was because he could do nothing else, the noise and chatter of the voices being entirely destructive of that undisturbed state of the atmosphere in which work can be done. It was not merely the sounds but the vibration they made in the air, breaking all its harmony and concentration. He tried a little longer, but was unsuccessful, and finally in despair he said to Simmons, 'You had better show them in, and let me get done with them,' in an angry tone.

'Oh, he will see us after all,' said the high-pitched voice. 'So good of Mr. Tatham; but of course I should have waited all the same. Dolly, take Toto; I can't possibly get up while I have him on my knee. You can tell Mr.



Tatham I did not send in my name to disturb him, which makes it all the more charitable of him to receive me; but, dear me, of course I can tell him that myself as he consents to see us. Dolly, don't strangle my poor darling! I never saw a girl that didn't know how to take up a dear dog before.'

'He's only a snappish little demon, and you spoil him so,' said the other voice. This was attended by the sound of movement as if the party were getting under weigh.

'My poor darling pet, it is only her jealousy: is that the way? Yes, to be sure, it is the next room. Now, Dolly, remember this is where all the poor people are ruined and done for. Leave hope behind all ye who enter here.' A little shriek of laughter ended this speech. And John, looking up, taking off his spectacles, and raising a little the shade of the lamp, saw in the doorway Lady Mariamne, altered, as was inevitable, by the strain and stress of nearly twenty years.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

I DO not mean to assert that John Tatham had not seen Lady Mariamne during these twenty years, or that her changed appearance burst upon him with anything like a shock. In society, when you are once a member of that little world within a world, everybody sees everybody else from time to time. He had not recognised her voice, for he was not in the smallest degree thinking of Lady Mariamne or of any member of her family, notwithstanding that they now and then did make a very marked appearance in his mind in respect of the important question of that connection which Elinor in her foolishness tried to ignore. And John was not at all shocked by the progress of that twenty years, as reflected in the appearance of this lady, who was about his own standing, a

woman very near fifty, but who had fought strenuously against every sign of her age, as some women foolishly do. The result was in Lady Mariamne's case, as in many others, that the number of her years looked more like a hundred and fifty than their natural limit. A woman of her class has but two alternatives as she gets old. She must get stout, in which case, though she becomes unwieldy, she preserves something of her bloom; or she may grow thin, and become a spectre upon which art has to do so much that nature, flouted and tortured, becomes vindictive, and withdraws every modifying quality. Lady Mariamne had, I fear, false hair, false teeth, false complexion, everything that invention could do in a poor little human countenance intended for no such manipulation. The consequence was that every natural advantage (and there are some which age confers, as well as many that age takes away) was lost. The skin was parchment, the eyes were like eyes of fishes, the teeth—too white and too perfect—looked like the horrible things in the dentists' windows, which was precisely what they were. On such a woman, the very height of the fashion, to which she so often

attaches herself with desperation, has an antiquated air. Everything 'swears,' as the French say, with everything else. The softness, the whiteness, the ease, the self-abnegation of advancing age are all so many ornaments if people but knew. But Lady Mariamne had none of these. She wore a warm cloak in her carriage, it is true, but that had dropped from her shoulders, leaving her in all the bound-up rigidity in which youth is trim and slim and elastic, as becomes it. It is true that many a woman of fifty is, as John Tatham was, serenely dwelling on that tableland which shows but little difference between thirty-five, the crown of life, and fifty-five; but Lady Mariamne was not one of these. She had gone 'too fast,' she would herself have allowed; 'the pace' had been too much for such survivals. She was of the awful order of superannuated beauties of which Mr. Rider Haggard would in vain persuade us 'She' was not one. I am myself convinced that 'She's' thousands of years were all written on her fictitious complexion, and that other people saw them clearly if not her unfortunate lover. And Lady Mariamne had come to be of the order of 'She.' By dint of wiping out the traces of her fifty years, she

had made herself look as if she might have been a thousand, and in this guise she appeared to the robust, ruddy, well-preserved man of her own age, as she stood, with a fantastic little giggle, calling his attention, on the threshold of his door.

Behind Lady Mariamne was a very different figure—that of the serious and independent girl without any illusions, who is in so many cases the child of such a mother, and who is in revolt so complete from all that mother's traditions, so highly set on the crown of every opposite principle, that nature vindicates itself by the possibility that she may at any moment topple over, and become again what her mother was. He would have been a bold man, however, who in the present stage would have prophesied any such fate for Dolly Prestwich, who between working at Whitechapel, attending on a ward in St. Thomas's, drawing three days a week in the Slade School, and other labours of equally varied descriptions, had her time very fully taken up, and only on special occasions had time to accompany her mother. She had been beguiled on this occasion by the family history which was concerned, and which, *fin de siècle* as

Dolly was, excited her curiosity almost as much as if she had been born in the 'forties.' Dolly was never unkind, sometimes indeed was quite the reverse, to her mother. When Mr. Tatham, with a man's brutal unconsciousness of what is desirable, placed a chair for Lady Mariamne in front of the fire, Dolly twisted it round with a dexterous movement so as to shield the countenance which was not adapted for any such illumination. For herself, Dolly cared nothing whether it was the noonday sun or the blaze of a furnace that shone upon her: she defied them both to make her wink. As for complexion, she scorned that old-fashioned vanity. She had not very much, it is true. Having been scorched red and brown in Alpine expeditions in the autumn, she was now of a somewhat dry whitish-greyish hue, the result of much loss of cuticle and constant encounter with London fogs and smoke. She carried Toto—who was a shrinking, chilly Italian greyhound—in a coat, carelessly under one arm, and sat down beside her mother, studying the papers on John's table with exceedingly curious eyes. She would have liked to go over all his notes about his case, and form her own opinion on it—which she would have

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done, we may be sure, much more rapidly, and with more decision, than Mr. Tatham could do.

‘So here I am again, you will say,’ said Lady Mariamne. She had taken off her gloves, and was smoothing her hands, from the points of the fingers downwards, not, I believe, with any intention of demonstrating their whiteness, but solely because she had once done so, and the habit remained. She wore several fine rings, and her hands were still pretty, and—unlike the rest of her—younger than her age. They made a little show with their sparkling diamonds, just catching the edge of the light from John’s shaded lamp. Her face by Dolly’s help was in the shadow of the green shade. ‘You will say so, Mr. Tatham, I know: here she is again—without thinking how self-denying I have been, never to come, never to ask a single question, for all these years.’

‘The loss is mine, Lady Mariamne,’ said John, gravely.

‘It’s very pretty of you to say that, isn’t it, Dolly? One’s old flirts don’t always show up so well.’ And here the lady gave a laugh, such as had once been supposed to be one of Lady Mariamne’s charms, but which was rather like

a giggle now—an antiquated giggle, which is much less satisfactory than the genuine article. ‘How I used to worry you about poor Phil, and that little spitfire of a Nell—and what a mess they have made of it! I suppose you know what changes have happened in the family, Mr. Tatham, since those days?’

‘I heard indeed, with regret, Lady Mariamne, that you had lost a brother—’

‘A brother! two!’ she cried. ‘Isn’t it extraordinary—poor Hal, that was the picture of health? How little one knows! He just went, don’t you know, without any one ever thinking he would go. Regg in India was different—you expect that sort of thing when a man is in India. But poor Hal! I told you Mr. Tatham wouldn’t have heard of it, Dolly, not being in our own set, don’t you know.’

‘It was in all the papers,’ said Miss Dolly.

‘Ah, well, you didn’t notice it, I suppose: or perhaps you were away. I always say it is of no use being married or dying or anything else in September—your friends never hear of it. You will wonder that I am not in black, but black was always very unbecoming to me, and dark grey is just as good, and doesn’t make one



quite so ghastly. But the funny thing is that now Phil—who looked as if he never could be in the running, don't you know—is heir presumptive. Isn't it extraordinary? Two gone, and Phil, that lived much faster than either of them, and at one time kept up an awful pace, has seen them both out. And St. Serf has never married. He won't now, though I have been at him on the subject for years. He says, not if he knows it, in the horrid way men have. And I don't wonder much, for he has had some nasty experiences, poor fellow. There was Lady — Oh, I almost forgot you were there, Dolly.'

'You needn't mind me,' said Dolly, gravely; 'I've heard just as bad.'

'Well,' said Lady Marianne, with a giggle, 'did you ever know anything like those girls? They are not afraid of anything. Now, when I was a girl—don't you remember what an innocent dear I was, Mr. Tatham?—like a lamb; never suspecting that there was any naughtiness in the world—'

John endeavoured to put on a smile, in feeble sympathy with the uproariousness of Lady Marianne's laugh—but her daughter took no such trouble. She sat as grave as a young judge, never moving a muscle. The dog, however, held

in her arms, and not at all comfortable, then making prodigious efforts to struggle on to its mistress's more commodious lap, burst out into a responsive bark, as shrill and not much unlike.

'Darling Toto,' said Lady Mariamne, 'come!—it always knows what it's mummy means. Did you ever see such a darling little head, Mr. Tatham?—and the faithful pet always laughs when I laugh. What was I talking of?—St. Serf and his ladies. Well, it is not much wonder, you know, is it? for he has always been a sort of an invalid, and he will never marry now—and poor Hal being gone there's only Phil. Phil's been going a pace, Mr. Tatham; but he has had a bad illness too, and the other boys going has sobered him a bit; and I do believe, *now*, that he'll probably mend. And there he is, you know, tied to a— Oh, of course, *she* is as right as a— as right as a—trivet, whatever that may be. Those sort of heartless people always are: and then there's the child. Is it living, Mr. Tatham?—that's what I want to know.'

'Philip is alive and well, Lady Mariamne, if that is what you want to know.'

'Philip!—she called him after Phil, after all! Well, that is something wonderful. I expected

to hear he was John, or Jonathan, or something. Now, where is he?' said Lady Mariamne, with the most insinuating air.

John burst into a short laugh. 'I don't suppose you expect me to tell you,' he said.

'Why not?—you can't hide a boy that is heir to a peerage, Mr. Tatham!—it is impossible. Nell has done the best she could in that way. They know nothing about her at that awful place she was married from—of course you remember it—a dreadful place, enough to make one commit suicide, don't you know. The Cottage, or whatever they call it, is let, and nobody knows anything about them. I took the trouble to go there, I assure you, on my own hook, to see if I could find out something. Toto nearly died of it, didn't you, darling? Not a drop of cream to be had for him, the poor angel; only a little nasty skim milk. But Mr. Tatham has the barbarity to smile,' she went on, with a shrill outcry. 'Fancy, Toto—the cruelty to smile!'

'No cream for the angel, and no information for his mistress,' said John.

'You horrid, cruel, cold-blooded man!—and you sit there at your ease, and will do nothing for us——'

‘Should you like me,’ said John, ‘to send out for cream for your dog, Lady Mariamne?’

‘Cream in the Temple?’ said the lady. ‘What sort of a compound would it be, Dolly? All plaster of Paris, or stuff of that sort. Perhaps you have tea sometimes in these parts——’

‘Very seldom,’ said John; ‘but it might be obtainable if you would like it.’ He put forward his hand, but not with much alacrity, to the bell.

‘Mother never takes any tea,’ said Miss Dolly, hastily; ‘she only crumbles down cake into it for that little brute.’

‘It is you who are a little brute, you unnatural child. Toto likes his tea very much—he is dying for it. But you must have patience, my pet, for probably it would be very bad, and the cream all stucco, or something. Mr. Tatham, do tell us what’s become of Nell? Now, have you hidden her somewhere in London, St. John’s Wood, and that sort of thing, don’t you know? or where is she? Is the old woman living? and how has that boy been brought up? At a dame’s school, or something of that sort, I suppose.’

‘Mother,’ said Dolly, ‘you ought to know there are now no dames’ schools. There’s Board

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Schools, which is what you mean, I suppose; and it would be very good for him if he had been there. They would teach him a great deal more than was ever taught to Uncle Phil.'

'Teach him!' said Lady Mariamne, with another shriek. 'Did I ask anything about teaching? Heaven forbid! Mr. Tatham knows what I mean, Dolly. Has he been at any decent place—or has he been where it will never be heard of? Eton and Harrow one knows, and the dames' schools one knows, but horrible Board Schools, or things, where they might say young Lord Lomond was brought up—oh, goodness gracious! One has to bear a great many things, but I could not bear that.'

'It does not matter much, does it, so long as he does not come within the range of his nearest relations?' This was from John, who was almost at the end of his patience. He began to put his papers back in a portfolio, with the intention of carrying them home with him, for his hour's work had been spoilt as well as his temper. 'I am afraid,' he added, 'that I cannot give you any information, Lady Mariamne.'

'Oh, such nonsense, Mr. Tatham! — as if the heir to a peerage could be hid.'

It was not often that Lady Mariamne produced an unanswerable effect, but against this last sentence of hers John had absolutely nothing to say. He stared at her for a moment, and then he returned to his papers, shovelling them into the portfolio with vehemence. Fortunately, she did not herself see how potent was her argument. She went on diluting it till it lost all its power.

‘There is the “Peerage,” if it was nothing else—they must have the right particulars for that. Why, Dolly is at full length in it, her age and all, poor child; and Toto, too, for anything I know. Is du in the “Peerage,” dear Toto, darling? And yet Toto can’t succeed, nor Dolly either. And this year Phil will be in as heir presumptive and his marriage and all—and then a blank line. It’s ridiculous, it’s horrible, it’s a thing that can’t, can’t be! Only think all the troops of people, nice people, the best people, that read the “Peerage,” Mr. Tatham!—and that know Phil is married, and that there is a child, and yet will see nothing but that blank line. Nell was always a little fool, and never could see things in a common-sense way. But a man ought to know better—and a lawyer, with chambers in the Temple! Why, people come and consult you

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on such matters—I might be coming to ask you to send out detectives, and that sort of thing. How do you dare to hide away that boy?’

Lady Mariamne stamped her foot at John, but this proceeding very much incommoded Toto, who, disturbed in his position on her knee, got upon his feet and began to bark furiously, first at his mistress and then, following her impulse, at the gentleman opposite to her, backing against the lady’s shoulder and setting up his little nose furiously with vibrations of rage against John, while stumbling upon the uncertain footing of the lap, volcanically shaken by the movement. The result of this onslaught was to send Lady Mariamne into shrieks of laughter, in the midst of which she half smothered Toto with mingled endearments and attempts at restraint, until Dolly, coming to the rescue, seized him summarily and snatched him away.

‘The darling!’ cried Lady Mariamne, ‘he sees it, and you can’t see it, a great big lawyer though you are. Dolly, don’t throttle my angel child. Stands up for his family, don’t he, the dear? Mr. Tatham, how can you be so bigoted and stubborn, when our dear little Toto—— But you always were the most obstinate man. Do you

remember once, when I wanted to take you to Lady Dogberry's dance—wasn't it Lady Dogberry's?—well, it was Lady Somebody's—and you said you were not asked, and I said, what did it matter: but to make you go, and Nell was with me—we might as well have tried to make St. Paul's go——'

'My dear Lady Mariamne,' said John.

She held up a finger at him with the engaging playfulness of old. 'How can I be your dear Lady Mariamne, Mr. Tatham, when you won't do a thing I ask you? What, Dolly? Yes, we must go, of course, or I shall not have my nap before dinner. I always have a nap before dinner, for the sake of my complexion, don't you know—my beauty nap, they all call it. Now, Mr. Tatham, come to me to-morrow, and you shall give Toto his cream, to show you bear no malice, and tell me all about the boy. Don't be an obstinate pig, Mr. Tatham. Now, I shall look for you—without fail. Shan't we look for him, Dolly?—and Toto will give you a paw and forgive you—and you must tell me all about the boy.'



## CHAPTER XXXV.

To tell her all about the boy!

John Tatham shovelled his papers into his portfolio, and shut it up with a snap of embarrassment, a sort of confession of weakness. He pushed back his chair with the same sharpness, almost making a noise upon the old Turkey carpet, and he touched his bell so that it sounded with a shrill electric ping, almost like a pistol-shot. Simmons understood all these signs, and he was very sympathetic when he came in to take Mr. Tatham's last orders and help him on with his coat.

'Spoilt your evening's work,' said Simmons compassionately. 'I knew they would. Ladies never should enter a gentleman's chambers if I could help it. They've got nothing to do in the Temple.'

'You forget some men in the Temple are married, Simmons.'

'What does that matter?' said the clerk; 'let 'em see their wives at home, sir. What I will maintain is that ladies have no business here.'

This was a little ungrateful, it must be said, for Simmons probably got off three-quarters of an hour earlier than he would have done had Mr. Tatham remained undisturbed. As it was, John had some ten minutes to wait before his habitual hansom drew up at the door.

It was not the first time by many times that Mr. Tatham had considered the question which he now took with him into his hansom, and which occupied him more or less all the way to Halkin Street. Lady Mariamne, however, had put it very neatly and very conclusively when she said that you can't hide the heir to a peerage—more concisely at least than John had himself put it in his many thoughts on the subject—for, to tell the truth, John had never considered the boy in this aspect. That he should ever be the heir to a peerage had seemed one of those possibilities which so outrage nature, and are so very like fiction, that the sober mind rejects them with almost a fling of impatience. And yet how often

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they come true! He had never heard—a fact of which he felt partly ashamed, for it was an event of too much importance to be ignored by any one connected with Elinor—of Hal Compton's death. John was not acquainted with Hal Compton any more than he was with other men who come and go in society, occasionally seen, but open to no particular remark. A son of Lord St. Serf—the best of the lot—a Compton with very little against him: these were things which he had heard said and had taken little notice of. Hal was healthier, less objectionable, a better life than Phil's, and yet Hal was gone, who ought by all rights to have succeeded his invalid brother. It was true that the invalid brother, who had seen the end of two vigorous men, might also see out Phil. But that would make little difference in the position, unless indeed by modifying Elinor's feelings and removing her reluctance to make her boy known. John shook his head as he went on with his thoughts, and decided within himself that this was the very reason why Phil Compton should survive and become Lord St. Serf, and make the imbroglio worse, if worse were possible. It had not required this to make it a hideous imbroglio, the most foolish and wanton that ever a woman made. He won-

dered at himself, when he thought of it, how he had ever consented to it, ever permitted such a state of affairs ; and yet what could he have done ? He had no right to interfere even in the way of advice, which he had given until everybody was sick of him and his counsels. He could not have betrayed his cousin. To tell her that she was conducting her affairs very foolishly, laying up untold troubles for herself, was what he had done freely, going to the very edge of a breach. And he had no right to do any more. He could not force her to adopt his method, neither could he betray her when she took her own way. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that John felt himself almost an accomplice, involved in this unwise folly, with a sort of responsibility for it, and almost guilt. It did not indeed change young Philip's moral position in any way, or make the discovery that he had a father living more likely to shock and bewilder him that this discovery should come mingled with many extraneous wonders. And yet these facts did alter the circumstances. 'You cannot hide the heir to a peerage.' Lady Mariamne was far, very far, from being a philosopher or a person of genius, and yet this which she had said was in reality quite unan-

swerable. Phil Compton might have been ignored for ever by his wife and child had he remained only the *dis*-Honourable Phil, a younger son and a nobody. But Phil Compton as Lord St. Serf could not be ignored. Elinor had been wise enough never to change her name, that is to say, she had been too proud to do so, though nobody knew of the existence of that prefix which was so inappropriate to her husband's character. But now Mrs. Compton would no longer be her name; and Philip, the boy at the big northern grammar school, would be Lord Lomond. An unlooked-for summons like this has sometimes the power of turning the heads of the heirs so suddenly ennobled, but it did anything but convey elation to John's mind in the prospect of its effect upon his relations. Would she see reason *now*? Would she be brought to allow that something must be done, or would she remain obdurate to the end of the chapter? A great impatience with Elinor filled John's mind. She was, as the reader knows, the only woman to John Tatham; but what does that matter? He did not approve of her any more on that account. He was even more conscious of the faults of which she was guilty. He was aware of her obstinacy, her

determined adherence to her own way, as no other man in the world was. Would she acknowledge now at last that she was wrong, and give in? I am obliged to confess that the giving in of Elinor was the last spectacle in heaven or earth which John Tatham could conceive.

He went over these circumstances as he drove through all of London that is to some people worth calling London, on that dark January night, passing from the light of the busy streets into the comparative darkness of those in which people live, without in the least remarking where he was going, except in his thoughts. He had not the least intention of accepting the invitation of Lady Mariamne, nor did his mind dwell upon her or the change that age had wrought in her. But yet the Compton family had gained an interest in John's eyes which it did not possess even at the time when Elinor's marriage first brought its name into his thoughts. Philip—young Philip—the boy, as John called him in his own mind, in fond identification—was as near John's own child as anything ever could be in this world. He had many nephews and nieces belonging to him by a more authentic title, but none of these was in the least like Philip, whom none of all the

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kindred knew but himself, and who, so far as he was aware, had but one kinsman in the world, who was Uncle John. He had followed the development of the boy's mind always with a reference to those facts of which Philip knew nothing, which would be so wonderful to him when the revelation came. To John that little world at Lakeside where the ladies had made an artificial existence for themselves, which was at the same time so natural, so sweet, so full of all the humanities and charities—was something like what we might suppose this erring world to be to some archangel great enough to see how everything is, not great enough to give the impulse that would put it right. If the great celestial intelligences are allowed to know and mark our perverse human ways, how much impatience with us must mingle with their tenderness and pity! John Tatham had little perhaps that was heavenly about him, but he loved Elinor and her son, and was absolutely free of selfishness in respect to them. Never, he was aware, could either woman or child be more to him than they were now. Nay, they were everything to him, but on their own account, not his: he desired their welfare absolutely, and not his own through them. Elinor

was capable at any moment of turning upon him, of saying, if not in words, yet in undeniable inference, what is it to you? and the boy, though he gladly referred to Uncle John when Uncle John was in the way, took him with perfect composure as a being apart from his life. They were everything to him, but he was nothing to them. His whole heart was set upon their peace, upon their comfort and well-being, but as much apart from himself as if he had not been.

Mr. Tatham was dining out that night, which was a good thing for him to distract his thoughts from this problem, which he could only torment himself about and could not solve; and there was an evening party at the same house—one of those quieter, less-frequented parties which are, people in London tell you, so much more agreeable than in the crowd of the season. It was a curious kind of coincidence that at this little assembly, which might have been thought not at all in her way, he met Lady Mariamne, accompanied by her daughter, again. It was not in her way, being a Judge's house where frivolity, though it had a certain place, was not the first element. But then when there are few things to choose from, people must not be too particular, and those who cannot have society



absolutely of their own choosing, are bound, as in other cases of necessity, to take what they can get. And then Dolly liked to hear people talking of things which she did not understand. When Lady Mariamne saw that John Tatham was there she gave a little shriek of satisfaction, and rushed at him as if they had been the dearest friends in the world. 'So delighted to see you *again*,' she cried, giving everybody around the idea of the most intimate relationship. 'It was the most wonderful good fortune that I got my Toto home in safety, poor darling; for you know, Mr. Tatham, you would not give him any tea, and Dolly, who is quite unnatural, pitched him into the carriage and simply sat upon him—sat upon him, Mr. Tatham! before I could interfere. Oh, you do not know half the trials a woman has to go through! And now please take me to have some coffee or something, and let us finish the conversation we were having when Dolly made me go away.'

John could not refuse his arm, nor his services in respect to the coffee, but he was mute on the subject on which his companion was bent. He tried to divert her attention by some questions on the subject of Dolly instead.

'Dolly! oh, yes, she's a girl of the period, don't

you know—not what a girl of the period used to be in *our* day, Mr. Tatham, when those nasty newspaper people wrote us down. Look at her talking to those two men, and laying down the law. Now, we never laid down the law; we knew best about things in our sphere—dress, and the drawing-room, and what people were doing in society. But Dolly would tell you how to manage your next great case, Mr. Tatham, or she could give one of those doctor-men a wrinkle about cutting off a leg. Gracious, I should have fainted only to hear of such a thing! Tell me, are those doctor-men supposed to be in society?’ Lady Mariamne cried, putting up her thin shoulder (which was far too like a specimen of anatomy) in the direction of a famous physician who was blandly smiling upon the instruction which Miss Dolly assuredly intended to convey.

‘As much as lawyer-men are in society,’ replied John.

‘Oh, Mr. Tatham, such nonsense! Lawyers have always been in society. What are the Attorney-General and Lord Chancellor and so forth? They are all lawyers; but I never heard of a doctor that was in the Cabinet, which makes all the difference. Here is a quiet corner, where nobody

can disturb us. Sit down; it will be for all the world like sitting out a dance together: and tell me about Nell and her boy.'

'And what if I have nothing to tell?' said John, who did not feel at all like sitting out a dance, but, on the contrary, was much more upright and perpendicular than even a Queen's counsel of fifty has any need to be.

'Oh, sit down, *please!* I never could bear a man standing over me, as if he had swallowed a poker. Why did she go off and leave Phil? Where did she go to? I told you I went off on my own hook to that horrid place where they lived, and knocked up the old clergyman and the woman who wanted me to put on a shawl over one of the prettiest gowns I ever had. Fancy, the Vandal! But they knew nothing at all of her there. Where is Nell, Mr. Tatham? You don't pretend not to know. And the boy? Why he must be about eighteen—and if St. Serf were to die—— Mr. Tatham, you know it is quite, quite intolerable, and not to be borne! I don't know what steps Phil has taken. He has been awfully good—he has never said a word. To hear him you would think she was far too nice to be mixed up with a set of people like us. But now, you

know, he must be got hold of—he must, he must! Why, he'd be Lomond if St. Serf were to die! and everybody would be crying out, "Where's the heir?" After Phil there's the Bagley Comptons, and they would set up for being heirs presumptive, unless you can produce that boy.'

'But the boy is not mine that I should produce him,' said John.

'Oh, Mr. Tatham! when Nell is your relation, and always, always was advised by you. You may tell that to the Marines, or anybody that will believe it. You need not think you can take in me.'

'I hope not to take in anybody. If being advised by me means persistently declining to do what I suggest and recommend——'

'Oh, then, you are of the same opinion as I am!' said Lady Mariamne. 'Bravo! now we shall manage something: If you had been like that years ago when I used to go to you, don't you remember, to beg you to smooth things down—but you would never see it, till the smash came.'

'I wish,' said John, not without a little bitterness, 'that I could persuade you how little influence I have. There are some women, I suppose, who take advice when it is given to them; but the

women whom I have ever had anything to do with, I am sorry to say——’

‘I’ll promise,’ cried Lady Mariamne, putting her hands and rings together, in an attitude of supplication, ‘to do what you tell me faithfully, if you’ll advise me where I’ll find the boy. Oh, let Nell alone, if you want to keep her to yourself—I shan’t spoil sport, Mr. Tatham, I promise you,’ she cried, with her shrill laugh; ‘only tell me where I’ll find the boy. What is it you want, Dolly, coming after me like a policeman? Don’t you see I am busy? We are sitting out the dance, Mr. Tatham and I.’

Dolly did not join in her mother’s laugh nor unbend in the least. ‘As there is no dancing,’ she said, ‘and everybody is going, I thought you would prefer to go too.’

‘But we shall see you to-morrow, Mr. Tatham? Now, I cannot take any refusal. You must come, if it were only for Toto’s sake: and Dolly will go out, I hope, on one of her great works and will not come to disturb us, just when I have persuaded you to speak—for you were just going to open your mouth. Now, you know you were! Five o’clock to-morrow, Mr. Tatham, whatever happens. Now, remember! and you

are to tell me everything.' She held up her finger to him, half-threatening, half-coaxing, and then, with a peal of laughter, yielded to Dolly, and was taken away.

'I did not know, Tatham,' said the Judge, who was his host, 'that you were on terms of such friendship with Lady Mariamne.'

'Nor did I,' said John Tatham, with a yawn.

'Queer thing this is about that old business, in which her brother was mixed up—haven't you heard?—one of those companies that came to smash somewhere about twenty years ago. The manager absconded, and there was something queer about the books. Well, the fellow, the manager, has been caught at last, and there will be a trial. It's in your way—you will be offered a brief, no doubt, with refreshers every day, you lucky fellow. I shall have just as much trouble and no refreshers. What a fool a man is, Tatham, ever to change the Bar for the Bench! Don't you do it, my dear fellow—take a man's advice who knows.'

'At least I shall wait till I am asked,' said John.

'Oh, you will be asked, sooner or later—but don't do it—take example by those who have

gone before you,' said the great functionary, shaking his learned head.

And the Judge's wife had also a word to say. 'Mr. Tatham,' she said, as he took his leave, 'I know now what I have to do when I want to secure Lady Mariamne—I shall ask you.'

'Do you often want to secure Lady Mariamne?' said John.

'Oh, it is all very well to look as if you didn't care. She is, perhaps, a little *passée*, but still a great many people think her charming. Isn't there a family connection?' Lady Wigsby said, with a curiosity which she tried not to make too apparent, for she was acquainted with the ways of the profession, and knew that was the last thing likely to procure her the information she sought.

'It cannot be called a connection. There was a marriage—which turned out badly.'

'Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Tatham, if the question was indiscreet! I hear Lord St. Serf is worse again, and not likely to last long: and there is some strange story about a lost heir.'

'Good-night, Lady Wigsby,' John replied.

And he added, 'Confound Lord St. Serf,' under his breath, as he went downstairs.

But it was not Lord St. Serf, poor man—who had done him no harm—whom John wished to be confounded because at last, after many threatenings, he was about to be so ill-advised as to die. It was some one very different. It was the woman who for much more than twenty years had been the chief object of John Tatham's thoughts.



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

THINGS relapsed into quietness for some time after that combination which seemed to be directed against John's peace of mind. If I said that it is not unusual for the current of events to run very quietly before a great crisis, I should not be saying anything original, since the torrent's calmness ere it dash below has been remarked before now. But it certainly was so in this instance. John, I need scarcely say, did not present himself at Lady Mariamne's on the afternoon at five when he was expected. He wrote a very civil note to say that he was unable to come, and still less able to give the information her ladyship required; and, to tell the truth, in his alarm lest Lady Mariamne should repeat her invasion, Mr. Tatham was guilty of concerting with his clerk, the excellent Simmons, various

means of eluding such a danger. And he exercised the greatest circumspection in regard to his own invitations, and went nowhere where there was the least danger of meeting her. In this way for a few months he had kept himself safe.

It may be imagined, then, how great was his annoyance when Simmons came in again, very diffident, coughing behind his hand, and taking shelter in the shaded part of the room, with the hesitating statement that a lady—who would take no denial, who looked as if she knew the chambers as well as he did, and could hardly be kept from walking straight in—was waiting to see Mr. Tatham. John sprang to his feet with words which were not benedictions. ‘I thought,’ he said, ‘you ass, that you knew exactly what to say.’

‘But, sir,’ said Simmons, ‘it is not the same lady—it is not at all the same lady. It is a lady who——’

But here the question was summarily settled, for the door was pushed open though Simmons still held it with his hand, and a voice, which was more like the voice of Elinor Dennistoun at eighteen than that of Mrs. Compton, said quickly,

‘I know, John, that your door can’t be shut for me.’

‘Elinor!’ he said, getting up from his chair.

‘I know,’ she repeated, ‘that there must be some mistake—that your door could not be shut for me.’

‘No, of course not,’ he said. ‘It is all right, Simmons; but who could have thought of seeing you here? It was a contingency I never anticipated. When did you come; where are you staying? Is Philip with you?’ He overwhelmed her with questions, perhaps by way of stopping her mouth lest she should put questions still more difficult to answer to himself.

‘Let me take breath a little,’ she said. ‘I scarcely have taken breath since the—thing happened which has brought me here: but I feel a little confidence now with the strong backing I have in you, John.’

‘My dear Elinor,’ he said, ‘I am afraid you must not look for any strong backing in me.’

‘Why?’ she cried. ‘Have you judged it all beforehand? And do you know—are you quite, quite sure, John, that I cannot avoid it in any way, that I am obliged at all costs to appear? I would rather fly the country, I would rather

leave Lakeside altogether and settle abroad. There is nothing in the world that I would not rather do.'

'Elinor,' said John, with some sternness, 'you cannot believe that I would oppose you in any possible thing. Your pleasure has been a law to me. I may have differed with you, but I have never made any difference.'

'John! you do not mean to say,' she cried, turning pale, 'that you are going to abandon me now?'

'Of course that is merely a figure of speech,' he said. 'How could I abandon you? But it is quite true what that woman says, and I entirely agree with her and not with you in this respect, that the heir to a peerage cannot be hid——'

'The heir to a peerage!' she faltered, looking at him astonished. Gradually a sort of slowly growing light seemed to diffuse itself over her face. 'The heir to—a peerage, John! I don't know what you mean.'

'Is this not your reason for coming to town?'

'There is nothing—that I know of—about the heir to a peerage. Who is this heir to a peerage? I don't know what you mean, but you frighten me. Is that a reason why I should be dragged

out of my seclusion and made to appear in his defence? Oh, no—surely no; if he is *that*, they will let him off. They will not press it. I shall not be wanted, John—the more reason that you should stand by me——’

‘We are at cross-purposes, Elinor. What has brought you to London? Let me know on your side and then I shall understand what I have got to do.’

‘*That* has brought me to London.’ She handed him a piece of paper which John knew very well the appearance of. He understood it better than she did, and he was not afraid of it, which she was, but he opened it all the same with a great deal of surprise. It was a subpoena charging Elinor Compton to appear and bear testimony—in the case of *The Queen* versus *Brown*.

‘*The Queen* versus *Brown*!—what have you got to do with such a case? You, Elinor, of all people in the world! Oh!’ he said suddenly, as a light, but a very dim one, began to break upon him. It was the case of which his friend the Judge had spoken, and in which he had been offered a retainer, as a matter of fact, shortly after that talk. He had been obliged to refuse,

his time being already fully taken up, and he had not looked into the case. But now it began slowly to dawn upon him that the trial was that of the once absconded manager of a certain joint-stock company, and that this was precisely the company in which Elinor's money had been all but invested by her husband. It might be upon that subject that she had to appear.

'Well,' he said, 'I can imagine a possible reason why you should be called: and yet not a good one: for it was not of course you who were acting but your—husband for you. It is he that should appear, and not you.'

'Oh, John!' she cried; 'oh, John!' wringing her hands. She had followed his looks eagerly, noticing the light that seemed to dawn over his face with a strange anxiety and keen interest. But John, it was evident, had not got the clue which she expected, and her face changed into impatience, disappointment, exasperation. 'You have not heard anything about it,' she said; 'you don't know.'

'It was brought to me,' he said, 'but I could not take it up—no, I don't know—except that it's curious from the lapse of time—twenty years or thereabouts: that's all I know.'

‘The question is,’ she said, ‘about a date. There were some books destroyed, and it is not known who did it. Suspicion fell upon one—who might have been guilty: but that on that day—he arrived at the house of the girl—whom he was going to marry: and consequently could not have been there——’

‘Elinor!’

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘that is what I am wanted for, John, an excellent reason after all these years. I must appear to—clear my husband: and that is how Pippo will find out that I have a husband and he a father. Oh, John, John! support me with your approval, and help me, oh, help me to go away.’

‘Good gracious!’ was all that John could say.

‘I should have gone first and asked you after,’ she cried, ‘for you are a lawyer, and I suppose you will think you must not advise any one to fly in the face of the law. And I don’t even know whether it will be of any use to fly. Will they have it in the papers all the same? Will they put it in that his wife refused to appear on his behalf, that she had gone away to avoid the summons? Will it be all there for Pippo to guess and wonder at the name and come to me

with questions,—mother, who is this? and mother, what is that? John, can't you answer me, you that I came to to guide me, to tell me what I must do; have you nothing, nothing to say?'

'I am too much bewildered to know what I am doing, Elinor. This is all sprung upon me like a mine: and there was plenty before.'

'There was nothing before,' she cried indignantly, 'it was all plain sailing before. He knew nothing of family troubles—how should he, poor child, being so young? That was simple enough. And I think I see a way still, John. I will take him off at Easter for a trip abroad, and, when we have started to go to Switzerland or somewhere, I will change my mind, and make him think of Greece or somewhere far, far away—the East, where there will be no newspapers. Tell me when the trial will come on, and how long you think it will last, and I will keep him away till it is all over. John! you have nothing surely to say against that? Think from how much it will save the boy.'

'It is impossible, Elinor, that the boy can be saved. I never knew of this complication, but there are other circumstances, of which I have lately heard.'



‘What can any other circumstances have to do with it, John, even if he must hear? I know, I know, you have always been determined upon that. Is that the way you would have him hear, not only that he has a father, but that his father was involved in—in transactions like that before ever he was born?’

‘Elinor, let us understand each other,’ said Mr. Tatham. ‘You mean that you have it in your power to exonerate your husband, and he has had you subpœnad, knowing this?’

She looked at him with a look which he could not fathom. Was it reluctance to save Phil Compton that was in Elinor’s eyes? Was she ready to leave her husband to destruction when she could prevent it, in order to save her boy from the knowledge of his existence? John Tatham was horrified by the look she fixed upon him, though he could not read it. He thought he could read it, and he read it that way, in the way of hate and deliberate preference of her own will to all law and justice. There could be no such tremendous testimony to the power of that long-continued, absolutely-faithful, visionary love which John Tatham bore to Elinor than that this discovery which he thought he had made did not

destroy it. He was greatly shocked, but it made no difference in his feelings. Perhaps there was more of the brotherly character in them than he thought. For a moment they looked at each other, and he thought he made this discovery—while she met his eyes with that look which she did not know was inscrutable, which she feared was full of self-betrayal. ‘I believe,’ she said, bending her head, ‘that that is what he thinks.’

‘If it had been me,’ said John Tatham, moved out of his habitual calm, ‘I would rather be proved guilty of anything than owe my safety to such an expedient as that. Drag in a woman who hates me to prove my alibi as if she loved me! By Jove, Elinor! you women have the gift of drawing out everything that’s worst in men.’

‘It seems to make you hate me, John, which I don’t think I have deserved.’

‘Oh, no, I don’t hate you. It’s a consequence, I suppose, of use and wont. It makes little difference to me——’

She gave him another look which he did not understand—a wistful look, appealing to something, he did not know what—to his ridiculous partiality, he thought, and that stubborn domestic affection to which it was of so little importance

what she did, as long as she was Elinor: and then she said with a woman's soft, endless pertinacity, 'Then you think I may go?'

He sprang from his seat with that impatient despair which is equally characteristic of the man. 'Go!' he said, 'when you are called upon by law to vindicate a man's character, and that man your husband! I ought not to be surprised at anything with my experience, but, Elinor, you take away my breath.'

She only smiled, giving him once more that look of appeal.

'How can you think of it?' he said. 'The subpœna is enough to keep any reasonable being, besides the other motive. You must not budge. I should feel my own character involved, as well as yours, if after consulting me on the subject you were guilty of an evasion after all.'

'It would not be your fault, John.'

'Elinor! you are mad—it must not be done,' he cried. 'Don't defy me, I am capable of informing upon you, and having you stopped—by force—if you do not give this idea up.'

'By force!' she said, with her nostril dilating. 'I shall go of course if I am threatened.'

'Then Philip must not go. Do you know

what has happened in the family to which he belongs, and must belong, whether you like it or not? Do you know—that the boy may be Lord Lomond before the week is out? that his uncle is dying, and that your husband is the heir?’

She turned round upon him slowly, fixing her eyes upon his, with simple astonishment and no more in her look. Her mind, so absorbed in other thoughts, hardly took in what he could mean.

‘Have you not heard this, Elinor?’

‘But there is Hal,’ she said, ‘Hal—the other brother—who comes in first.’

‘Hal is dead, and the one in India is dead, and Lord St. Serf is dying. The boy is the heir. You must not, you cannot take him away. It is impossible, Elinor; it is against all nature and justice. You have had him for all these years: his father has a right to his heir.’

‘Oh, John!’ she cried, in a bitter note of reproach; ‘oh, John, John!’

‘Well,’ he cried, ‘is not what I tell you the truth? Would Philip give it up if it were offered to him? He is almost a man—let him judge for himself.’

‘Oh, John, John! when you know that the object of my life has been to keep him from

knowing—to shut that chapter of my life altogether; to bring him up apart from all evil influences, from all instructions——’

‘And from his birthright, Elinor?’

She stopped, giving him another sudden look, the natural language of a woman brought to bay. She drew a long breath in impatience and desperation, not knowing what to reply: for what could she reply? His birthright! to be Lord Lomond, Lord St. Serf, the head of the house. What was that? Far, far better Philip Dennistoun of Lakeside, the heir of his mother and his grandmother, two stainless women, with enough for everything that was honest and of good report, enough to permit him to be an unworldly scholar, a lover of art, a traveller, any play-profession that he chose if he did not incline to graver work. Ah! but she had not been so wise as that; she had not brought him up as Philip Dennistoun. He was Philip Compton; she had not been bold enough to change his name. She stood at bay, surrounded as it were by her enemies, and confronted John Tatham, who had been her constant champion and defender, as if all that was hostile to her, all that was against her peace was embodied in him.

‘I must go a little further, Elinor,’ said John, ‘though God knows that to add to your pain is the last thing in the world I wish. You have been left unmolested for a very long time, and we have all thought your retreat was unknown. I confess it has surprised me, for my experience has always been that everything is known. But you have been subpœnad for this trial, therefore, my dear girl, we must give up that idea. Everybody, that is virtually everybody, all that are of any consequence, know where you are and all about you now.’

She sank into a chair, still keeping her eyes upon him, as if it were possible that he might take some advantage of her if she withdrew them; then, still not knowing what to reply, seized at the last words because they were the last, and had little to do with the main issue. ‘All about me?’ she said faintly, as if there had been something else besides the place of her refuge to conceal.

‘You know what I mean, Elinor. The moment that your home is known all is known. That Philip lives and is well, a promising boy; that you have brought him up to do honour to any title, or any position.’

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He could not help saying this, and partly in the testimony to her, partly for love of the boy, John Tatham's voice faltered a little, and the water came into his eyes.

'Ah, John! you say that!' she cried, as if it had been an admission forced from him against his will.

'What could I say otherwise? Elinor, because I don't approve of all your proceedings, because I don't think you have been wise in one respect, is that to say that I do not understand and know *you*? I am not such a fool or a formalist as you give me credit for being. You have made him all that the fondest and proudest could desire. You have done far better for him, I do not doubt for a moment, than—— But, my dear cousin, my dear girl, my poor Nelly——'

'Yes, John?'

He paused a moment, and then he said, 'Right is right, and justice is justice at the end of all.'

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHEN Elinor received the official document which had so extraordinary an effect upon her life, and overturned in a moment all the fabric of domestic quiet and security which she had been building up for years, it was outside the tranquil walls of the house at Lakeside, in the garden which lay between it and the high-road, opening upon that not very much frequented road by a pair of somewhat imposing gates, which gave the little establishment an air of more pretension than it really possessed. Some fine trees shrouded the little avenue, and Elinor was standing under one of them, stooping over a little nest of primroses at its roots, from which the yellow buds were peeping forth, when she heard behind her the sound of a vehicle at the gates, and the quick leap to the ground of some



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one who opened them. Then there was a pause; the carriage, whatever it was, did not come farther, and presently she herself, a little curious, turned round to see a man approaching her, whom she did not know. A dog-cart driven by another, whose face she recognised, waited in the road while the stranger came forward. 'You are Mrs. Compton, ma'am?' he said. A swift thrill of alarm, she could scarcely tell why, ran over Elinor from head to foot. She had been settled for nearly eighteen years at Lakeside. What could happen to frighten her now? but it tingled to her very fingers' ends. And then he said something to her which she scarcely understood, but which sent that tingle to her very heart and brain, and gave her the suspicious-looking blue paper which he held in his hand. It all passed in a moment of time to her dazed yet excited consciousness. The early primrose which she had gathered had not had time to droop in her grasp, though she crushed the stalk unconsciously in her fingers, before the gates were closed again, the sound of the departing wheels growing faint on the road, and she herself standing like one paralysed with that thing in her hand. A subpœna!—what was a

subpœna? She knew as little, perhaps less, than the children in the parish school, who began to troop along the road in their resounding clogs at their dinner hour. The sound of this awoke her a little to a frightened sense that she had better put this document out of sight, at least until she could manage to understand it. And then she sped swiftly away past the pretty white house lying in the sunshine, with all its doors and windows open, to the little wood behind, where it would be possible to think and find out at her leisure what this was. It was a small wood and a public path ran through it; but where the public was so limited as at Lakeside this scarcely impaired the privacy of the inhabitants, at least in the morning, when everybody in the parish was at work. Elinor hurried past the house that her mother might not see her, and climbed the woody hillock to a spot which was peculiarly her own, and where a seat had been placed for her special use. It was a little mount of vision from which she could look out, up and down, at the long winding line of the lake cleaving the green slopes, and away to the rugged and solemn peaks among which lay, in his mountain fastnesses, Helvellyn, with

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his hoary brethren crowding round him. Elinor had watched the changes of many a north-country day, full of endless vicissitudes, of flying clouds and gleams of sunshine, from that seat, and had hoped and tried to believe that nothing, save these vicissitudes of nature, would ever again disturb her. Had she really believed that? Her heart thumping against her breast, and the pulses of her brain beating loud in her ears, answered 'No.' She had never believed it—she had known, notwithstanding all her obstinacy, and indignant opposition to all who warned her, that some day or other her home must be broken up, and the storm burst upon her. But even such a conviction, desperately fought against and resisted, is a very different matter from the awful sense of certainty that it has come, *now*—

The trees were thick enough to conceal her from any passer-by on the path, the young half-unfolded foliage of the birches fluttered over her head, while a solid fir or two stood, grim guardians, yet catching pathetic airs from every passing wind to soothe her. But Elinor neither heard nor saw lake, mountain, sunshine, or spring breezes, but only the bit of paper in her hand, and the uncomprehended words she had heard

when it was given to her. It was not long, however, before she perceived and knew exactly what it meant. It was a subpœna in the case of *The Queen* versus *Brown*, to attend and give evidence on a certain day in May, in London. It was for a few minutes a mystery to her as great as it was alarming, notwithstanding the swift and certain mental conviction she had that it concerned infallibly the one secret and mystery of her life. But as she sat there pondering, those strange strays of recollection that come to the mind, of things unnoted, yet unconsciously stored by memory, drew gradually about her, piecing out the threads of conviction. She remembered to have heard her mother read, among the many scraps which Mrs. Dennistoun loved to read out when the newspaper arrived, something about a man who had absconded, whose name was Brown, who had brought ruin on many, and had at length, after a number of years, ventured back to England and had been caught. It was one of the weaknesses of Mrs. Dennistoun's advancing years to like these bits of news, though there might be little interest in them to so quiet a household; and her daughter was wont to listen with a very vague attention,

noting but a word now and then, answering vaguely the lively remarks her mother would make on the subjects. In this case even she had paid no attention; and yet, the moment that strong keynote had been struck, which vibrated through her whole being, this echo suddenly woke up and resounded as if it had been thundered in her ears—'Brown!' She began to remember bit by bit—and yet what had she to do with Brown? He had not defrauded her; she had never seen him; she knew nothing about his delinquencies. Then there came another note faintly out of the distance of the years:—her husband's image, I need not say, had come suddenly into her sight with the first burst of this new event. His voice seemed to be in the air saying half-forgotten things. What had he to do with this man? Oh, she knew very well there was something—something which she would have given her life not to recollect; which she knew in another moment would flash completely upon her as she tried not to remember it. And then suddenly her working mind caught another string which was not that; which was a relief to that for the moment. Brown!—who was it that had talked of Brown?—and the

books that were destroyed—and the—— and the —— day that Phil Compton arrived at Windy-hill?

Elinor rose up from her seat with a gasp. She put her arm round the rough stem of the fir-tree to support herself, but it shook with her though there was no wind, only the softest of morning airs. She saw before her a scene very different from this—the flowery garden at the Cottage with the copse and the sandy road beyond, and the man whom Phil had expected, whom he had been so anxious to see—and his fingers catching hers, keeping her by him, and the questions to which she had replied. Twenty years! What a long time it is! time enough for a boy to grow into almost a man who had not been born or thought of—and yet what a moment, what a nothing! Her mind flashed from that scene in the garden to the little hall in the Cottage, the maid stooping down fastening the bolt of the door, the calendar hanging on the wall with that big 6 showing, so visible, so obtrusive, forcing itself as it were on the notice of all. ‘Only ten days, Nell!’ And the maid’s glance upwards of shy sympathy, and the blank of Mrs. Dennistoun’s face, and his look. Oh, that look

of his! which was true and yet so false; which meant so much besides, and yet surely, surely meant love too!

The young fir-tree creaked and swayed in Elinor's grip. She unloosed it as if the slim thing had cried under the pressure, and sat down again. She had nothing to grasp at, nothing. Oh, her life had not been without support! Her mother—how extraordinary had been her good fortune to have her mother to fall back upon when she was shipwrecked in her life—to have a home, a shelter, a perpetual protector and champion, who, whether she approved or disapproved, would never forsake her. And then the boy, God bless him! who might quiver like the little fir if she flung herself upon him, but who, she knew, would stand as true. Oh, God forbid, God forbid that he should ever know! Oh, God help her, God help her! how was she to keep it from his knowledge? Elinor flung herself down upon the mossy knoll in her despair as this came pouring into her mind a flood of horrible light, of unimaginable bitterness. He must not know, he must not know; and yet how was it to be kept from his knowledge? It was a public thing; it could not be hid. It

would be in all the papers, his father's name: and the boy did not know he had a father living. And his mother's evidence on behalf of her husband; and the boy thought she had no husband.

This was what had been said to her again and again. Some time the boy must know—and she had pushed it from her angrily, indignantly asking why should he know? though in the bottom of her own heart she too was aware that it was the delusion of a fool, and that the time must come— But how could she ever have thought that it would come like this, that the boy would discover his father through the summons of his mother to a public court to defend her husband from a criminal accusation? Oh, life that pardons nothing! Oh, severe, unchanging heaven!—that this should be the way!

And then there came into Elinor's mind wild thoughts of flight. She was not a woman whose nature it was to endure. When things became intolerable to her she fled from them, as the reader knows; escaped, shutting her ears to all advice and her heart to all thoughts except that life had become intolerable, and that she could bear it no longer. It is not easy to hold the balance even in such matters. Had Elinor ful-



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filled what would appear to many her first duty, and stood by Phil through neglect, ill-treatment, and misery, as she had vowed for better, for worse, she would by this time have been not only a wretched but a deteriorated woman, and her son most probably would have been injured both in his moral and intellectual being. What she had done was not the abstract duty of her marriage vow, but it had been better—had it not been better for them both? In such a question who is to be the judge? And now again there came surging up into Elinor's veins the impulse of flight. To take the boy and fly. She could take him where he wished most to go, to the scenes of that literature and history of which his school-boy head was full, to the happiest ideal wandering, his mother and he, two companions almost better than lovers. How his eyes would brighten at the thought! among the summer seas, the golden islands, the ideal countries—away from all the trouble and cares, all the burdens of the past, all the fears of the future! Why should she be held by that villainous paper and obey that dreadful summons? Why allow all her precautions, all the fabric of her life to fall in a moment? Why pour upon the boy the horror of that

revelation, when everything she had done and planned all his life had been to keep it from him? In the sudden energy of that new possibility of escape Elinor rose up again from the prostration of despair. She saw once more the line of shining water at her feet full of heavenly splendour, the mountain-tops sunning themselves in the morning light, the peace and the beauty that was over all. And there was nothing needed but a long journey, which would be delightful, full of pleasure and refreshment, to secure her peace to her, and to save her boy.

When she had calmed herself with this new project, which, the moment it took form in her mind seemed of itself, without reference to the cause, the most delightful project in the world and full of pleasure—Elinor smoothed back her hair, put her garden hat which had got a little out of order straight, and took her way again towards the house. Her heart had already escaped from the shock and horror and was beating softly, exhausted yet refreshed, in her bosom. She felt almost like a child who has sobbed all its troubles out, or like a convalescent recovering from a brief but violent illness, and pathetically happy in the cessation of pain. She went along

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quietly, slowly, by the woodland path among the trees full of the sweetness of the morning which seemed to have come back to her. Should she say anything about it to her mother, or only by degrees, announce to her the plan she had begun to form for Pippo's pleasure, the long delightful ramble which would come between his school-time and the university? She had almost decided that she would do this when she went into the house; but she had not been half an hour with her mother when her intention became untenable, for the good reason that she had already told Mrs. Dennistoun of the new incident. They were not in the habit of keeping secrets from each other, and in that case there is nothing in the world so difficult. It requires training to keep one's affairs to one's self in the constant presence of those who are our nearest and dearest. Some people may be capable of this effort of self-control, but Elinor was not. She had showed that alarming paper to her mother with a partial return of her own terror at the sight of it before she knew. And I need not say that for a short time Mrs. Dennistoun was overwhelmed by that natural horror too.

'But,' she said, 'what do you know, what can

you tell about this Mr. Brown, Elinor? You never saw him in your life.'

'I think I know what it means,' said Elinor, with a sudden dark glow of colour, which faded instantly, leaving her quite pale. She added hurriedly, 'There were some books destroyed. I cannot tell you the rights of the story. It is too dreadful altogether, but—another was exculpated by the date of the day he arrived at Windyhill. This must be the reason I am called.'

'The date he arrived—before your marriage, Elinor? But then they might call me, and you need not appear.'

'Not for the world, mother!' cried Elinor. The colour rose again and faded. 'Besides, you do not remember.'

'Oh, I could make it out,' said Mrs. Dennistoun. 'It was when he came from Scotland, and went off in the evening next day. I don't at this moment remember what the day was, but I could make it out. It was about a fortnight before, it was ——'

'Do you remember, mother, the little calendar in the hall, and what it marked, and what he said?'

'I remember, of course, perfectly well the little

calendar in the hall. You gave it me at Christmas, and it was always out of order, and never kept right. But I could make it out without that.'

'You must not think of it for a moment,' cried Elinor with a shudder. There had been so many things to think of that it had scarcely occurred to her what it was to which she had to bear witness. She told her mother hurriedly the story of that incident, and then she added, without stopping to take breath:

'But I will not appear. I cannot appear. We must keep it out of the papers, at every cost. Mother, do not think it dreadful of me. I will run away with Pippo; far away, if you will not be anxious. This is just his chance between school and college. I will take him to Greece.'

'To Greece, Elinor?' Mrs. Dennistoun cried with almost a shriek.

'Mother, dear, it is not so very far away.'

'I am not thinking how far away it is, Elinor. And leave his father's reputation to suffer? Leave him perhaps to be ruined—by a false charge?'

'Oh, mother,' cried Elinor, starting to her feet. She was quite unprepared for such remonstrance.

'My dear, I have not opposed you; though

there have been many things I have scarcely approved of. But, Elinor, this must not be. Run away from the law? Allow another to suffer, when you can clear him? Elinor, Elinor, this must not be—unless I can go and be his witness in your place. I might do that,’ said Mrs. Denistoun seriously. She paused a moment, and then she said, ‘But I think you are wrong about the sixth. He stayed only one night, and the night he went away was the night that Alick Hudson—who was going up for his examination. I can make it out exactly, if you will give me a little time to think it over. My poor child! that you should have this to disturb your peace! But I will go, Elinor. I can clear him as well as you.’

Elinor stood up before her, pallid as a ghost. ‘For God’s sake, mother, not another word,’ she said, with a dreadful solemnity. ‘The burden is mine, and I must bear it. Let us not say a word more.’

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

I WILL not confuse the reader with a description of all Elinor's thoughts during the slow progress of that afternoon and evening, which were as the slow passing of a year to her impatient spirit. She took the usual afternoon walk with her mother soberly, as became Mrs. Dennistoun's increasing years, and then she made a pretext of some errands in the village to occupy her until dark, or rather to leave her free to twist the thread of her own thoughts as she went along the silent country road. Her thoughts varied in the afternoon from those which had seized upon her with such vulture's claws in the morning; but they were not less overwhelming in that respect. Her mother's suggestion that *she* and not Elinor should be the witness of that date, and then her ponderings as to that date, her slow

certainty that she could make it out, or puzzle it out, as Elinor in her impatience said, which was the last of all things to be desired—had stung the daughter into a new and miserable realisation of what it was that was demanded of her, which nobody could do but she. What was it that would be demanded of her? To stand up in the face of God and man and swear to tell the truth, and tell—a lie: or else let the man who had been her husband, the love of her youth, the father of her boy, sink into an abyss of shame. She thought rapidly, knowing nothing, that surely there could be no punishment for him, even if it were proved, at the long interval of twenty years. But, shame—there would be shame. Nothing could save him from that. Shame which would descend more or less to his son. And then Elinor reflected, with hot moisture coming out upon her forehead against the cold breeze of the spring night, on what would be asked of her. Oh, no doubt it would be cleverly done! She would be asked if she remembered his visit, and why she remembered it. She would be led on carefully to tell the story of the calendar in the hall, and of how it was but ten days before her marriage—the last hurried, unexpected visit of



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the lover before he came as a bridegroom to take her away. It would be all true, every word, and yet it would be a lie. And standing up there in that public place, she would be made to repeat it, as she had done in the flowery garden, in the sunshine, twenty years ago—then dazed and bewildered, not knowing what she did, and with something of the blind confidence of youth and love in saying what she was told to say; but now with clearer insight, with a horrible certainty of the falsehood of that true story, and the object with which it was required of her. Happily for herself, Elinor did not think of the ordeal of cross-examination through which witnesses have to pass. She would not, I think, have feared that, if the instinct of combativeness had been roused in her: her quick wit and ready spirit would not have failed in defending herself, and in maintaining the accuracy of the fact to which she had to bear witness. It was herself, and not an opposing counsel, that was alarming to Elinor. But I have promised that the reader should not be compelled to go through all the trouble and torment of her thoughts.

Dinner, with the respect which is necessary for the servant who waits, whether that may be

a solemn butler, with his myrmidons, or a little maid—always makes a pause in household communications; but when the ladies were established afterwards by the pleasant fireside which had been their centre of life for so many years, and with the cheerful lamp on the table between them which had lighted so many cheerful talks, readings, discussions, and consultations, the new subject of anxiety and interest immediately came forth again. It was Mrs. Dennistoun who spoke first. She had grown older, as we all do; she wore spectacles as she worked, and often a white shawl on her shoulders, and was—as sometimes her daughter felt, with shame of herself to remark it—a little slower in speech, a little more pertinacious and insistent, not perhaps perceiving with such quick sympathy the changes and fluctuations of other minds, and whether it was advisable or not to follow a subject to the bitter end. She said, looking up from her knitting, with a little rhetorical movement of her hand which Elinor feared, and which showed that she felt herself on assured and certain ground:

‘My dear, I have been thinking. I have made it out day by day. God knows there were

plenty of landmarks in it to keep any one from forgetting. I can now make out certainly the day—of which we were speaking; and if you will give me your attention for a minute or two, Elinor, you will see that whatever the calendar said—which I never noticed, for it was as often wrong as right—you are making a mis—’

‘Oh, for heaven’s sake, mother,’ cried Elinor, ‘don’t let us talk of that any more!’

‘I have no desire to talk of it, my dear child; but for what you said I should never— But of course we must take some action about this thing—this paper you have got. And it seems to me that the best thing would be to write to John, and see whether he could not manage to get it transferred from you to me. I can’t see what difficulty there could be about that.’

‘I would not have it for the world, mother! And what good would it do? The great thing in it, the dreadful thing, would be unchanged. Whether you appear or me, Pippo would be made to know, all the same, what it has been our joint object to conceal from him all his life.’

Mrs. Dennistoun did not say anything, but she would not have been mortal if she had not,

very slightly, but yet very visibly to keen eyes, shaken her head.

‘I know what you mean,’ said Elinor, vehemently, ‘that it has been I, and not we, whose object has been to conceal it from him. Oh, yes, I know you are right! but at least you consented to it, you have helped in it, it is your doing as well as mine.’

‘Elinor, Elinor!’ cried her mother, who having always protested, was not prepared for this accusation.

‘Is there any advantage to be got,’ said Elinor, like an injured and indignant champion of the right, ‘in opening up the whole question over again now?’

What could poor Mrs. Dennistoun do? She was confounded, as she often had been before, by those swift and sudden tactics. She gave a glance up at her daughter over her spectacles, but she said nothing. Argument, she knew by long experience, was difficult to keep up with such an opponent.

‘But John is an idea,’ said Elinor. ‘I don’t know why I should not have thought of him. He may suggest something that could be done.’

‘I thought of him, of course, at once,’ said

Mrs. Dennistoun, not able to refrain from that small piece of self-assertion. 'It is not a time that it would be easy for him to leave town; but at least you could write and lay your difficulties before him, and suggest——'

'Oh, you may be sure, mother,' cried Elinor, 'I know what I have to say.'

'I never doubted it, my dear,' said Mrs. Dennistoun, gently.

And then there was a little pause. They sat and worked, the elder lady stumbling a little over her knitting, her thoughts being so much engaged; the younger one plying a flying needle, the passion and impetus of her thoughts lending only additional swiftness and vigour to everything she did. And for ten minutes or more there was nothing to be heard in the room but the little drop of ashes from the fire, the sudden burst of a little gas-flame from the coals, the rustle of Elinor's arm as it moved. The cat sat with her tail curled round her before the fire, the image of dignified repose, winking at the flames. The two human inhabitants, save for the movements of their hands, might have been in wax, they were so still. Suddenly, however, the quiet was broken by an energetic.

movement. Elinor threw her work down on the table and rose from her chair. She went to the window and drew the curtain aside, and looked out upon the night. She shut it carefully again, and going to the writing-table, struck a match and lighted the candles there, and sat down and began, or appeared to begin, to write. Then she rose quickly again and returned to the table at which Mrs. Dennistoun was still seated, knitting on, but watching every movement of her restless companion. 'Mother,' she said, 'I can't write, I have far too much to say. I will run up to town to-morrow myself and see John.'

'To town, Elinor, by yourself? My dear, you forget it is not an hour's journey, as it was to Windyhill.'

'I know that very well, mother. But even the journey will be an advantage. The movement will do me good, and I can tell John much better than I could write. Who could write all about a complicated business like this? He will understand me when he sees me at half a word, whereas in writing one can never explain. Don't oppose me, please, mother! I feel that to do something, to get myself in motion, is the only thing for me now.'

‘I will not oppose you, Elinor. I have done so, perhaps, too little, my dear; but we will not speak of that. No doubt, as you say, you will understand each other better if you tell him the circumstances face to face. But, oh, my dear child, do nothing rash! Be guided by John; he is a prudent adviser. The only thing is that he, no more than I, has ever been able to resist you, Elinor, if you had set your heart upon any course. Oh, my dear, don’t go to John with a foregone conclusion. Hear first what he has to say!’

Elinor came behind her mother with one of those quick returns of affectionate impulse which were natural to her, and put her arms suddenly round Mrs. Dennistoun. ‘You have always been far too good to me, mamma,’ she said, kissing her tenderly, ‘both John and you.’

And next morning she carried out her swiftly conceived intention and went to town, as the reader is aware. A long railway journey is sometimes soothing to one distracted with agitation and trouble. The quiet and the noise, which serve as a kind of accompaniment, half silencing, half promoting too active thought; the forced abstraction and silence, and semi-imprisonment of mind

and body, which are equally restless, but which in that enclosure are bound to self-restraint, exercise, in spite of all struggles of the subject, a subduing effect. And it was a strange thing that in the seclusion of the railway compartment in which she travelled alone there came for the first time to Elinor a softening thought, the sudden sensation of a feeling, of which she had not been sensible for years, towards the man whose name she bore. It occurred to her quite suddenly, she could not tell how, as if some one invisible had thrown that reflection into her mind—(and I confess that I am of opinion they do: those who are around us, who are unseen, darting into our souls thoughts which do not originate with us, thoughts not always of good, blasphemies as well as blessings)—it occurred to her, I say, coming into her mind like an arrow, that after all she had not been so well hidden as she thought all these years, seeing that she had been found at once without difficulty, it appeared, when she was wanted. Did this mean that he had known where she was all the time—known, but never made any attempt to disturb her quiet? The thought startled her very much, revealing to her a



momentary glimpse of something that looked like magnanimity, like consideration and generous self-restraint. Could these things be? He could have hurt her very much had he pleased, even during the time she had remained at Windyhill, when certainly he knew where she was: and he had not done so. He might have taken her child from her; at least he might have made her life miserable with fears of losing her child: and he had not done so. If indeed it was true that he had known where she was all the time and had never done anything to disturb her, what did that mean? This thought gave Elinor perhaps the first sense of self-reproach and guilt that she had ever known towards this man, who was her husband, yet whom she had not seen for more than eighteen years.

And then there was another thing. After that interval he was not afraid to put himself into her hands—to trust to her loyalty for his salvation. He knew that she could betray him—and he knew equally well that she would not do so, notwithstanding the eighteen years of estrangement and mutual wrong that lay between. It did not matter that the loyalty he felt sure of would be a false loyalty, an upholding of what was not true. He

would think little of that, as likely as not he had forgotten all about that. He would know that her testimony would clear him, and he would not think of anything else; and even did he think of it the fact of a woman making a little misstatement like that would never have affected Philip. But the strange thing was that he had no fear she would revenge herself by standing up against him—no doubt of her response to his appeal; he was as ready to put his fate in her hands as if she had been the most devoted of wives—his constant companion and champion. This had the most curious effect upon her mind, almost greater than the other. She had shown no faith in him, but he had faith in her. Reckless and guilty as he was, he had not doubted her. He had put it in her power to convict him not only of the worst accusation that was brought against him, but of a monstrous trick to prove his alibi, and a cruel wrong to her in compelling her to uphold that as true. She was able to expose him, if she chose, as no one else could do; but he had not been afraid of that. This second thought which burst upon Elinor without any volition of her own, had the most curious effect upon her. She abstained carefully, anxiously,

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from allowing herself to be drawn into making any conclusion from these darts of unintended thoughts. But they moved her in spite of herself. They made her think of him, which she had for a long time abstained from doing. She had shut her heart for years from any recollection of her husband, trying to ignore his existence in thought as well as in fact. And she had succeeded for a long time in doing this. But now in a moment all her precautions were thrown to the winds. He came into her memory with a sudden rush for which she was no way responsible, breaking all the barriers she had put up against him: that he should have known where she was all this time, and never disturbed her, respected her solitude all these years—that when the moment of need came he should, without a word to conciliate her, without an explanation or an apology, have put his fate into her hands— To the reader who understands I need not say more of the effect upon the mind of Elinor; hasty, generous, impatient as she was of these two strange facts. There are many in the world who would have given quite a different explanation—who would have made out of the fact that he had not disturbed her only the explanation that Phil

Compton was tired of his wife and glad to get rid of her at any price: and who would have seen in his appeal to her now only audacity combined with the conviction that she would not compromise herself by saying anything more than she could help about him. I need not say which of these interpretations would have been the true one. But the first will understand and not the other what it was that for the first time for eighteen years awakened a struggle and controversy which she could not ignore, and vainly endeavoured to overcome, in Elinor's heart.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

ELINOR had not been three days gone, indeed her mother had but just received a hurried note announcing her arrival in London, when as she sat alone in the house which had become so silent, Mrs. Dennistoun suddenly became aware of a rising of sound of the most jubilant, almost riotous description. It began by the barking of Yarrow, the old colley, who was fond of lying at the gate watching in a philosophic way of his own the mild traffic of the country road, the children trooping by to school, who hung about him in clusters, with lavish offerings of crust and scraps of biscuit, and all the leisurely country *flâneurs* whom the good dog despised, not thinking that he himself did nothing but *flâner* at his own door in the sun. A bark from Yarrow was no small thing in the stillness of the spring after-

noon, and little Urisk, the terrier, who lay wrapt in dreams at Mrs. Dennistoun's feet, heard where he lay entranced in the folds of sleep and cocked up an eager ear and uttered a subdued interrogation under his breath. The next thing was no bark but a shriek of joy from Yarrow, such as could mean nothing in the world but 'Philip!' or 'Pippo!' which was what no doubt the dogs called him while following their mistress. Urisk heard and understood. He made but one spring from the footstool on which he lay and flung himself against the door. Mrs. Dennistoun sat for a moment and listened, much disturbed. When some troublous incident occurs in the deep quiet of domestic life how often is it followed by another, and her heart turned a little sick. She was not comforted even by the fact that Urisk was wagging not his tail only but his whole little form in convulsions of joy, barking, crying aloud for the door to open, to let him forth. By this time all the friendly dogs about had taken up the sound out of sympathy with Yarrow's yells of delight—and into this came the clang of the gate, the sound of wheels, an outcry in a human voice, that of Barbara the maid—and then a young shout that rang through the air—'Where's my mother,

Barbara, where's granny?' Philip, it may be imagined, did not wait for any answer but came in headlong, Yarrow leaping after him, Urisk springing into the air to meet him,—himself in too great a hurry to heed either, flinging himself upon the astonished lady who rose to meet him, with a sudden kiss, and a 'Where's my mother, granny?' of eager greeting.

'Pippo!—Good gracious, boy, what's brought you home now?'

'Nothing but good news,' he said, 'so good I thought I must come. I've got it, granny: where is my mother—'

'You've got it?' she said, so full of other thoughts that she could not recollect what it was he meant. Pippo thought, as Elinor sometimes thought, that his granny was getting slow of understanding—not so bright as she used to be in her mind.

'Oh, granny, you've been dozing: the scholarship! I've got it—I thought you would know the moment you heard me at the door—'

'My dear boy,' she said, putting her arms about him, while the tall boy stooped for the homage done to him—the kiss of congratulation. 'You have got the scholarship! notwithstanding

Howard and Musgrave and the hard fight there was to be——’

Pippo nodded, with a bright face of pleasure. ‘But,’ he said, ‘I can’t say I’m sorry I’ve got it, granny—but I wish there had been another for Musgrave: for he worked harder than I did, and he wanted so to win. But so did I, for that matter. And where is my mother all this time?’

‘How delighted she will be: and what a comfort to her just now when she is upset and troubled! My dear, it’ll be a dreadful disappointment to you: your mother is in London. She had to hurry off the day before yesterday—on business.’

‘In London!’ cried Pippo. His countenance fell: he was so much disappointed that for a moment, big boy as he was, he looked ready to cry. He had come in bursting with his news, expecting a reception almost as tumultuous as that given him by the dogs outside. And he found only his grandmother, who forgot what it was he was ‘in for’—and no mother at all!

‘It is a disappointment, Pippo—and it will be such a disappointment to her not to hear it from your own lips: but you must telegraph at once, and that will be next best. She has some worry-



ing business—things that she hates to look after—and this will give her a little heart.’

‘What a bore!’ said Pippo, with his crest down and the light gone out of him. He gave himself up to the dogs, who had been jumping about him, biding their time. ‘Yarrow knew,’ he said laughing, to get thé water out of his eyes. ‘He gave me a cheer whenever he saw me, dear old fellow—and little Risky, too——’

‘And only granny forgot,’ said Mrs. Dennistoun; ‘that was very hard upon you, Pippo; my thoughts were all with your mother. And I couldn’t think how you could get back at this time——’

‘Well,’ said the boy, ‘my work’s over, you know. There’s nothing for a fellow to do after he’s got the scholarship. I needn’t go back at all—unless you and my mother wish it. I’ve—in a sort of a way—done everything that I can do. Don’t laugh at me, granny!’

‘Laugh at you, my boy! Is it likely I should laugh at you? Don’t you know I am as proud of you as your mother herself can be? I am glad and proud,’ said Mrs. Dennistoun, ‘for I am glad for her as well as for you. Now, Pippo, you want something to eat.’

The boy looked up with a laugh. 'Yes, granny,' he said, 'you always divine that sort of thing. I do.'

Mrs. Dennistoun did not occupy her mind with any thought of that little unintentional and grateful jibe—that she always divined that sort of thing. Among the other great patiences of her life she had learnt to know that the mother and son, loving and tender as they were, had put her back unconsciously into the proper place of the old woman—always consulted, always thought of, never left out; but divining chiefly *that sort of thing*, the actual needs, the more apparent thoughts of those about her. She knew it, but she did not dwell upon it—sometimes it made her smile, but it scarcely hurt her, and never made her bitter, she comprehended it all so well. Meanwhile Pippo, left alone, devoted himself to the dogs for a minute or two, making them almost too happy. Then, at the very climax of riotous enjoyment, cast them off with a sudden, 'Down, Yarrow!' which took all the curl in a moment out of the noble tail with which Yarrow was sweeping all the unconsidered trifles off Mrs. Dennistoun's work-table. The young autocrat walked to the window as he shook off his adoring

vassal, and stared out for a little while with his hands deeply dug into his pockets. And then a new idea came into Pippo's head; the most brilliant new idea, which restored at once the light to his eyes and elevation to his crest. He said nothing of this, however, till he had done justice to the excellent luncheon, while his grandmother, seated beside him in the dining-room with her knitting, looked on with pride and pleasure and saw him eat. This was a thing, they were all of accord, which she always thoroughly understood.

'You will run out now and telegraph to your mother. She is in the old rooms in Ebury Street, Pippo.'

'Yes, granny; don't you think now a fellow of my age, having done pretty well and all that, might be trusted to—make a little expedition out of his own head?'

'My dear! you have always been trusted, Pippo, you know. I can't remember when your mother or I either have shown any want of trust——'

'Oh, it's not that,' said Pippo, confused. 'I know I've had lots, lots—far more than most fellows—of my own way. It was not that exactly.'

I meant without consulting any one, just to do a thing out of my own head.'

'I have no doubt it will be quite a right thing, Pippo; but I should know better if you were to tell me.'

'That would scarcely be doing it out of my own head, would it, granny? But I can't keep a thing to myself; now Musgrave can, you know; that's the great difference. I suppose it is having nobody but my mother and you, who always spoil me, that has made me that I can't keep a secret.'

'It is something about making it up to Musgrave for not winning the scholarship?'

Philip grew red all over with a burning blush of shame. 'What a beast I am!' he said. 'You will scarcely believe me, but I had forgotten that—though I do wish I could. I do wish there was any way— No, granny, it was all about myself.'

'Well, my dear?' she said in her benignant, all-indulgent grandmother's voice.

'It is no use going beating about the bush,' he said. 'Granny, I'm not going to telegraph to mamma. I'll run up to London by the night mail.'

‘Pippo!’

‘Well, it isn’t so extraordinary; naturally I should like to tell her better than to write. It didn’t quite come off, my telling it to you, did it? but my mother will be excited about it—and then it will be a surprise seeing me at all—and then if she is worried by business it will be a good thing to have me to stand by her. And—why there are a hundred reasons, granny, as you must see. And then I should like it above all.’

‘My dear,’ said Mrs. Dennistoun, trembling a little. She had time during this long speech to collect herself, to get over the first shock, but her nerves still vibrated. ‘In ordinary circumstances, I should think it an excellent plan. And you have worked well for it, and won your holiday; and your mother always enjoys wandering about town with you. Still, Pippo——’

‘Now what can there be against it?’ the boy said, with the same spark of fire coming into his blue eyes which had often been seen in Elinor’s hazel ones. He was like the Comptons, a refined image of his father, with the blue eyes and very dark hair which had once made Phil Compton irresistible. Pippo had the habit, I am

sorry to say, of being a little impatient with his grandmother. Her objections seemed old-world and obsolete at the first glance.

‘The chief thing against it is that I don’t think your mother—would wish it, Pippo.’

‘Mamma—think me a bore, perhaps!’ the lad cried, with a laugh of almost scornful amusement at this ridiculous idea.

‘She would never, of course, think you a bore in any circumstances; but she will be very much confined—she could not take you with her to—lawyers’ offices. She will scarcely have any time to herself.’

‘What is this mysterious business, granny?’

‘Indeed, Pippo, I can scarcely tell you. It is something connected with old times—that she wishes to have settled and done with. I did not inquire very closely; neither, I think, should you. You know your poor mother has had troubles in her life——’

‘Has she?’ said Pippo, with wide open eyes. ‘I have never seen any. I think perhaps, don’t you know, granny, ladies—make mountains of molehills—or so at least people say——’

‘Do they?’ said Mrs. Dennistoun, with a laugh. ‘So you have begun to learn that sort of thing

already, Pippo, even here at the end of the world!’

Pippo was a little mortified by her laugh, and a little ashamed of what he had said. It is very tempting at eighteen to put on a man’s superiority, yet he was conscious that it was perhaps a little ungenerous, he who owed all that he was and had to these two ladies; but naturally he was the more angry because of this.

‘I suppose,’ he said, ‘that what is in every book that ever was written is likely to be true! But that has nothing to do with the question. I won’t do anything against you if you forbid me absolutely, granny; but short of that I will go——’

Mrs. Dennistoun looked at the boy with all the heat in him of his first burst of independence. It is only wise to compute the forces opposed to one before one launches a command which one may not have force to ensure obedience to. He said that he would not disobey her ‘absolutely’ with his lips; but his eyes expressed a less dutiful sentiment. She had no mind to be beaten in such a struggle. Elinor had complained of her mother in her youth that she was too

reasonable, too unwilling to command, too reluctant to assume the responsibility of an act; and it was not to be supposed that she had mended of this, in all the experience she had had of her impatient daughter, and under the influence of so many additional years. She looked at Philip, and concluded that he would at least find some way of eluding her authority if she exercised it, and it did not consist with her dignity to be either 'absolutely' or partially disobeyed.

'You forget,' she said, 'that I have never taken such authority upon me since you were a child. I will not forbid you to do what you have set your heart upon. I can only say, Philip, that I don't think your mother would wish you to go——'

'If that's all, granny,' said the boy, 'I think I can take my mother into my own hands. But why do you call me Philip? You never call me that but when you are angry.'

'Was I ever angry?' she said with a smile; 'but if we are to consider you a man, looking down upon women, and taking your movements upon your own responsibility, my dear, it would be ridiculous that you should be little Pippo any more.'



‘Not little Pippo,’ he said with a boyish complacent laugh, rising up to his full height. A young man nearly six feet high, with a scholarship in his pocket, how is he to be expected to take the law from his old grandmother as to what he is to do?

And young Philip did go to town triumphantly by the night mail. He had never done such a thing before, and his sense of manly independence, of daring, almost of adventure, was more delightful than words could say. There was not even any one, except the man who had driven him in to Penrith, to see him away—he who was generally accompanied to the last minute by precautions, and admonitions, and farewells. To feel himself dart away into the night with nobody to look back to on the platform, no gaze half-smiling, half-tearful, to follow him, was of itself an emancipation to Pippo. He was a good boy and no rebel against the double maternal bond which had lain so lightly yet so closely upon him all his life. It was only for a year or two that he had suspected that this was unusual, or even imagined that for a growing man the sway of two ladies, and even their devotion, might make others smile. Perhaps he had been a little more

particular in his notions, in his manners, in his fastidious dislike to dirt and careless habits, than was common in the somewhat rough north-country school which had so risen in scholastic note under the last headmaster, but which was very far from the refinements of Eton. And lately it had begun to dawn upon him that a mother and a grandmother to watch over him and care for him in everything might be perhaps a little absurd for a young man of his advanced age. Thus his escapade, which was against the will of his elder guardian, and without the knowledge of his mother—which was entirely his own act, and on his own responsibility, went to Philip's head, and gave him a sort of intoxication of pleasure. That his mother should be displeased, really displeased, should not want him—incredible thought!—never entered into his mind save as an unaccountable delusion of granny's. His mother not want him! All the arguments in the world would never have got that into young Pippo's head.

Mrs. Dennistoun waking up in the middle of the night to think of the boy rushing on through the dark on his adventurous way, recollected only then with much confusion and pain that

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she ought to have telegraphed to Elinor—who might be so engaged as to make it very embarrassing for her in her strange circumstances to see Pippo—that the boy was coming. In her agitation she had forgotten this precaution. Was it perhaps true, as the young ones thought, that she was getting a little slower in her movements, a little dulled in her thoughts?

## CHAPTER XL.

JOHN TATHAM had in vain attempted to persuade Elinor to come to his house, to dine there in comfort—he was going out himself—so that at least in this time of excitement and trouble she might have the careful service and admirable comfort of his well-managed house. Elinor preferred her favourite lodgings and a cup of tea to all the luxuries of Halkin Street. And she was fit for no more consultations that night. She had many, many things to think of, and some new which as yet she barely comprehended. The rooms in Ebury Street were small, and they were more or less dingy, as such rooms are; but they were comfortable enough, and had as much of home to Elinor as repeated visits there with all her belongings could give them. The room in which she slept was next to that in

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which her boy had usually slept. That was enough to make it no strange place. And I need not say that it became the scene of many discussions during the few days that followed. The papers by this time were full of the strange trial which was coming on: the romance of commercial life and ruin—the guilty man who had been absent so long, enjoying his ill-gotten gains, and who now was dragged back into the light to give an account of himself—and of other guilt perhaps less black than his own, yet dreadful enough to hear of. The story of the destroyed books was a most remarkable and picturesque incident in the narrative. The leading papers looked up their own account of the facts given at the time, and pointed out how evidently justified by the new facts made known to the public was the theory they had themselves given forth. As these theories, however, were very different, and as all claimed to be right, perhaps the conclusion was less certain than this announcement gave warrant to believe. But each and all promised ‘revelations’ of the most surprising kind—involving some of the highest aristocracy, the democratic papers said—bringing to light an exciting story of the private relations between hus-

band and wife, said those of society, and revealing a piquant chapter of social history hushed up at the time. It was a modest print indeed that contented itself with the statement that its readers would find a romance of real life involved in the trial which was about to take place. Elinor did not, fortunately, see all these comments. The *Times* and the *Morning Post* were dignified and reticent, and she did not read, and was indeed scarcely cognizant of the existence of most of the others. But the faintest reference to the trial was enough, it need hardly be said, to make the blood boil in her veins.

It was a curious thing in her state of mind, and with the feelings she had towards her husband's family, that one of the first things she did on establishing herself in her Ebury Street rooms was to look for an old 'Peerage,' which had lain for several years, she remembered, on a certain shelf. Genteel lodgings in Ebury Street which did not possess somewhere an old 'Peerage' would be out of the world indeed. She found it in the same corner as of old, where she had noted it so often, and avoided it as if it had been a serpent; but now the first thing she did, as soon as her tray was brought her, and all

necessary explanations given, and the door shut, was to take the book furtively from its place, almost as if she were afraid of what she should see. What a list there was of sons of Lord St. Serf! some she had never known, who died young: and Reginald in India, and Hal who was so kind—what a good laugh he had, she remembered, not a joyless cackle like Mariamne's, a good natural laugh, and a kind light in his eyes: and he had been kind. She could remember ever so many things, nothings, things that made a little difference in the dull, dull cloudy sky of a neglected wife. Poor Hal! and he too was gone, and St. Serf dying, and—Pippo the heir!—Pippo was perhaps, for anything she knew, Lord Lomond now.

To say that this did not startle Elinor, did not make her heart beat, did not open new complications and vistas in life, would be a thing impossible. Pippo Lord Lomond! Pippo, whom she had feared to expose to his father's influence, whom she had kept apart, who did not know anything about himself except that he was her son—had she kept and guarded the boy thus in the very obscurity of life, in the stillest and most protected circumstances, only to plunge him sud-

denly at last, without preparation, without warning, into the fiery furnace of temptation, into a region where he might pardonably (perhaps) put himself beyond her influence, beyond her guidance? Poor Elinor! and yet she was not wholly to be pitied either. For her heart was fired by the thought of her boy's elevation in spite of herself. It did not occur to her that such an elevation for him meant something also for her. That view of the case she did not take into consideration for a moment. Nay, she did not think of it. But that Pippo should be Lord Lomond went through her like an arrow—like an arrow that gave a wound, acute and sharp, yet no pain, if such a thing could be said. That he should discover his father had been the danger before her all his life, but if he must find out that he had a father that was a way in which it might not be all pain. I do not pretend that she was very clear in all these thoughts. Indeed, she was not clear at all. John Tatham, knowing but one side, had begun to think vaguely of Elinor what Elinor thought of her mother, that her mind was not quite as of old, not so bright nor so vivid, not so clear in coming to a conclusion; had he known everything he might not have been so



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sure even on that point. But then had he known everything that Elinor knew, and been aware of what it was which Elinor had been summoned by all the force of old fidelity and the honour of her name to do, John would have been too much horrified to have been able to form an opinion. No, poor Elinor was not at all clear in her thoughts—less clear than ever after these revelations—the way before her seemed dark in whatever way she looked at it, complications were round her on every side. She had instinctively, without a word said, given up that idea of flight. Who was it that said the heir to a peerage could not be hid? John had said it, she remembered, and John was always right. If she was to take him away to the uttermost end of the earth, they would seek him out and find him. And then there was—his father, who had known all the time, had known and never disturbed her— No wonder that poor Elinor's thoughts were mixed and complicated. She walked up and down the room, not thinking, but letting crowds and flights of thoughts like birds fly through her mind; no longer clear indeed as she had been wont to be, no longer coming to sudden, sharp conclusions, admitting

possibilities of which Elinor once upon a time would never have thought.

And day by day as he saw her, John Tatham understood her less and less. He did not know what she meant, what she was going to do, what were her sentiments towards her husband, what were her intentions towards her son. He had found out a great deal about the case, merely as a case, and it began to be clear to him where Elinor's part came in. Elinor Compton could not have appeared on her husband's behalf, and whether there might not arise a question whether, being now his wife, her evidence could be taken on what had happened before she was his wife, was by no means sure. 'Why didn't they call your mother?' John said, as Mrs. Dennistoun also had said; but he did not at all understand, how could he? the dismay that came over Elinor, and the 'Not for the world' which came from her lips. He had come in to see her in the morning as he went down to his chambers, on the very morning when Pippo, quite unexpected and also not at all desired, was arriving at Euston Square.

'It would have been much better,' he said, 'in every way if they had called your mother—who

of course must know exactly what you know, Elinor, in respect to this matter——’

‘No,’ said Elinor with dry lips. ‘She knows nothing. She—calculates back by little incidents—she does not remember: I—do——’

‘That’s natural, I suppose,’ said John, with an impatient sigh and a half-angry look. ‘Still—my aunt——’

‘Would do no good at all: you may believe me, John. Don’t let us speak of this any more. I know what has to be done: my mother would twist herself up among her calculations—about Alick Hudson’s examination and I know not what. Whereas I—there is nothing, nothing more to be said. I thought I could escape, and it is your doing if I now see that I cannot escape. I can but hope that Providence will protect my boy. He is at school, where they have little time for reading the papers. He may never even see—or at least if he does he may think it is another Compton—some one whom he never heard of——’

‘And how if he becomes Lord Lomond, as I said, before the secret is out?’

‘Oh, John,’ cried Elinor, wringing her hands—‘don’t, don’t torment me with that idea now—let

only this be past and then—Oh, I see, I see—I am not a fool—I perceive that I cannot hide him as you say if that happens. But oh, John, for pity's sake let this be over first! Let us not hurry everything on at the same time. He is at school. What do schoolboys care for the newspapers, especially for trials in the law courts? Oh, let this be over first! A boy at school—and he need never know—'

It was at this moment that a hansom drew up, and a rattling peal came at the door. Hansoms are not rare in Ebury Street, and how can one tell in these small houses if the peal is at one's own door or the next?—Elinor was not disturbed. She paid no attention. She expected no one, she was afraid of nothing new for the present. Surely, surely, as she said, there was enough for the present. It did not seem possible that any new incident should come now.

'I do not want to torment you, Elinor—you may imagine I would be the last—I would only save you if I could from what must be—What! what? who's this?—PHILIP! the boy!'

The door had burst open with an eager, impatient hand upon it, and there stood upon the threshold, in all the mingled excitement and

fatigue of his night journey, pale, sleep in his eyes, yet happy expectation, exultation, the certainty of open arms to receive him, and cries of delight—the boy. He stood for a second looking into the strange yet familiar room. John Tatham had sprung to his feet and stood startled, hesitating, while young Philip's eyes, noting him with a glance, flashed past him to the other more important, more beloved, the mother whom he had expected to rush towards him with an outcry of joy.

And Elinor sat still in her chair, struck dumb, grown pale like a ghost, her eyes wide open, her lips apart. The sight of the boy, her beloved child, her pride and delight, was as a horrible spectacle to Elinor. She stared at him like one horrified, and neither moved nor spoke.

'Elinor!' cried John, terrified, 'there's nothing wrong. Don't you see it's Philip? Boy, what do you mean by giving her such a fright? She's fainting, I believe.'

'I—give her a fright!' cried, half in anguish, half in indignation, the astonished boy.

'No, I'm not fainting. Pippo! there's nothing wrong—at home?' Elinor cried, holding out her hand to him—coming to herself, which meant

only awakening to the horror of a danger far more present than she had ever dreamt, and to the sudden sight not of her boy, but of that Nemesis which she had so carefully prepared for herself, and which had been awaiting her for years. She was not afraid of anything wrong at home. It was the first shield she could find in the shock which had almost paralysed her, to conceal her terror and distress at the sight of him from the astonished, disappointed, mortified, and angry boy.

‘I thought,’ he said, ‘you would have been glad to see me, mother! No, there’s nothing wrong at home.’

‘Thank heaven for that!’ cried Elinor, feeling herself more and more a hypocrite as she recovered from the shock. ‘Pippo, I was saying this moment that you were at school. The words were scarcely off my lips—and then to see you in a moment, standing there.’

‘I thought,’ he repeated again, trembling with the disappointment and mortification, wounded in his cheerful, confident affection, and in his young pride, the monarch of all he surveyed—‘I thought you would have been pleased to see me, mother!’

‘Of course,’ said John, cheerfully, ‘your mother is glad to see you: and so am I, you impetuous boy, though you don’t take the trouble of shaking hands with me. He wants to be kissed and cuddled, Elinor, and I must be off to my chambers. But I should like to know first what’s up, boy? You’ve got something to say.’

‘Pippo, what is it, my dearest? You did give me a great fright, and I am still nervous a little. Tell me, Pippo: something has brought you—your Uncle John is right. I can see it in your eyes. You’ve got something to tell me!’

The tired and excited boy looked from one to another, two faces both full of a veiled but intense anxiety, looking at him as if what they expected was no good news. He burst out into a big, hoarse laugh, the only way to keep himself from crying. ‘You don’t even seem to remember anything about it,’ he cried, flinging himself down in the nearest chair; ‘and for my part I don’t care any longer whether any one knows or not.’

And Elinor, whose thoughts were on such different things—whose whole mind was absorbed in the question of what he could have heard about the trial, about his father, about the new and strange future before him—gazed at him

with eyes that seemed hollowed out all round with devouring anxiety. 'What is it?' she said, 'what is it? For God's sake tell me! What have you heard?'

It goes against all prejudices to imagine that John Tatham, a man who never had had a child, an old bachelor not too tolerant of youth, should have divined the boy better than his mother. But he did, perhaps because he was a lawyer, and accustomed to investigate the human countenance and eye. He saw that Philip was full of something of his own, immediately interesting to himself; and he cast about quickly in his mind what it could be. Not that the boy was heir to a peerage: he would never have come like *this* to announce *that*: but something that Philip was cruelly disappointed his mother did not remember. This passed through John's mind like a flash, though it takes a long time to describe. 'Ah,' he said, 'I begin to divine. Was not there something about a—scholarship?'

'Pippo!' cried Elinor, lighting up great lamps of relief, of sudden ease and quick-coming joy, in her brightened eyes and face. 'My boy! you've won your battle! You've got it, you've got it, Pippo! And your foolish, stupid mother that



thought for a moment you could rush to her like this with anything but good news!’

It took a few moments to soothe Pippo down, and mend his wounded feelings. ‘I began to think nobody cared,’ he said, ‘and that made me that I didn’t care myself. I’d rather Musgrave had got it, if it had not been to please you all. And you never seemed so much as to remember—only Uncle John!’ he added after a moment, with a half scorn which made John laugh at the never-failing candour of youth.

‘Only the least important of all,’ he said. ‘It was atrocious of the ladies, Philip. Shake hands, my boy, I owe you five pounds for the scholarship. And now I’ll take myself off, which will please you most of all.’

He went downstairs, laughing to himself all the way, but got suddenly quite grave as he stepped outside—whether because he remembered that it does not become a Q.C. and M.P. to laugh in the street, or for other causes, it does not become us to attempt to say.

And Elinor meanwhile made it up to her boy amply, and while her heart ached with the question what to do with him, how to dispose of him during those dreadful following days, behaved

herself as if her head too was half turned with joy and exultation, only tempered by the regret that Musgrave, who had worked so hard, could not have got the scholarship too.

## CHAPTER XLI.

ELINOR made much of her boy during that day and the following days, to take away the sense of disappointment which even after the first great mortification was got over still haunted young Philip's mind. It surprised him beyond measure to find that she did not wish to go out with him, indeed in so far as was possible avoided it altogether, save for a hurried drive to a few places, during which she kept her veil down and sheltered herself with an umbrella in the most ridiculous way. 'Are you afraid of your complexion, mother?' the boy asked of her with disdain. 'It looks like it,' she said, but with a laugh that was full of embarrassment, 'though it is a little late in the day.' Elinor was perhaps better aware than Pippo was that she had a complexion which a

girl might have envied, and was still as fresh as a rose, notwithstanding that she was a year or two over forty; but I need not say it was not of her complexion she was thinking. She had been careful to choose her time on previous visits to London so as to risk as little as possible the chance of meeting her husband. But now there was no doubt that he was in town, and not the least that if he met her anywhere with Pippo, her secret, so far as it had ever been a secret, would be in his hands. Even when John took the boy out it was with a beating heart that his mother saw him go, for John was too well known to make any secret possible about his movements, or who it was who was with him. Perhaps it was for this reason that John desired to take him out, and even cut short his day's work on one or two occasions to act as cicerone to Philip. He took him to the House, to the great excitement and delight of the boy, who only wished that the entertainment could have been made complete by a speech from Uncle John, which was a point in which his guide, philosopher, and friend, though in every other way so complaisant, did not humour Pippo. On one

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occasion during the first week they had an encounter which made John's middle-aged pulses move a little quicker. When they were walking along through Hyde Park, having strolled that way in the fading of the May afternoon, when the carriages were still promenading up and down, before they returned to Halkin Street to dinner, where Elinor awaited them—it happened to Mr. Tatham to meet the roving eyes of Lady Mariamne, who lay back languidly in her carriage, wrapped in a fur cloak, and shivering in the chill of the evening. She was not particularly interested in anything or any person whom she had seen, and was a little cross and desirous of getting home. But when she saw John she roused up immediately, and gave a sign to Dolly, who sat by her, to pull the check-string. 'Mr. Tatham!' she cried, in her shrill voice. Lady Mariamne was not one of the people who object to hear their own voice in public, or are reluctant to make their wishes known to everybody. She felt herself to be of the caste in which everybody is interested, and that the public liked to know whom she honoured with her acquaintance. 'Mr. Tatham! are you going to carry your rudeness so far as

not to seem to know me? Oh, come here this moment, you impertinent man!’

‘Can I be of any use to you, Lady Mariamne?’ said John gravely, at the carriage door.

‘Oh, dear no; you can’t be of any use. What should I have those men for if I wanted you to be of use? Come and talk a moment, that’s all; or get into the carriage and I’ll take you anywhere. Dolly and I have driven round and round, and we have not seen a creature we cared to see. Yes! there was a darling, darling little Maltese terrier, with white silk curls hanging over his eyes, on an odious woman’s lap; but I cannot expect you to find that angel for me. Mr. Tatham, who is that tall boy?’

‘Pippo,’ said John quickly (though probably he had never in his life before used that name, which he disapproved of angrily, as people often do of a childish name which does not please them), ‘go on. I’ll come after you directly. The boy is a young nephew of mine, Lady Mariamne, just from school.’

‘Mr. Tatham, I am quite sure it is Nell’s boy. Call after him. What’s his name? Bring him back! John Thomas, run after that young gentleman, and say with my compliments—’

‘Nothing,’ said John, stopping the footman with a lifted hand and a still more emphatic look. ‘He is hastening home to—an engagement. And it’s evident I had better go too—for your little friend there is showing his teeth.’

‘The darling!’ said Lady Mariamne, ‘did it show its little pearls at the wicked man that will not do what its mummy says? Dolly, can’t you jump down and run after that boy? I am sure it is your Uncle Philip’s boy.’

‘He is out of sight, mother,’ said Miss Dolly calmly.

‘You are the most dreadful, wicked, unkind people all of you. Show its little teeth, then, darling! Oo’s the only one that has any feeling. Mr. Tatham, do tell me something about this trial. What is going to be done? Phil is mixed up in it. I know he is. Can they do anything to anybody—after all this time? They can’t make you pay up, I know, after a certain time. Oh, couldn’t it all be hushed up and stopped and kept out of the newspapers? I hate the newspapers, always chuckling over every new discovery. But this cannot be called a new discovery. If it’s true it’s old, as old as the beginning of the world. Don’t you think some-

body could get at the newspaper men and have it hushed up?’

‘I doubt if you could get hold of all of them; their name is legion,’ said John.

‘Oh, I don’t care what their name is. If you will help me, Mr. Tatham, we could get hold of most of them.—Won’t you? You know, don’t you, poor St. Serf is so bad; it may be over any day—and then only think what a complication! Dolly, turn your head the other way; look at that silly young Huntsfield capering about to catch your eye. I don’t want you to hear what I have got to say.’

‘I don’t in the least want to hear what you have got to say, dear mamma,’ said Dolly.

‘That would have made me listen to every word,’ said Lady Mariamne; ‘but girls are more queer nowadays than anything that ever was. Mr. Tatham’—she put her hand upon his, which was on the carriage door, and bent her perfumed, powdered face towards him—‘for goodness’ sake—think how awkward it would be—a man just succeeding to a title and that sort of thing put in all the papers about him. Do, do stop it, or try something to stop it, for goodness’ sake!’



‘I assure you,’ said John, ‘I can do nothing to stop it. I am as powerless as you are.’

‘Oh, I don’t say that I am powerless,’ said Lady Mariamne, with her shrill laugh. ‘One has one’s little ways of influence.’ Then she put her hand again upon John with a sudden grip. ‘Mr. Tatham,’ she said, ‘tell me, in confidence, was that Phil’s boy?’

‘I have told you, Lady Mariamne, it is a nephew of mine.’

‘A nephew—oh, I know what kind of a nephew—*à la mode de Bretagne!*’

She turned her head to the other side, where her daughter was gazing calmly in front of her.

‘Dolly! I was sure of it,’ she cried, ‘don’t you hear? Dolly, don’t you hear?’

‘Which, mamma?’ said Dolly gravely; ‘of course I could not help hearing it all. Which part was I to notice? about the newspapers or about the boy?’

Lady Mariamne appealed to earth and heaven with the loud cackle of her laugh. ‘He can’t deny it,’ she said; ‘he as good as owns it. I am certain that’s the boy that will be Lomond.’

‘Uncle St. Serf is not dead yet,’ said Dolly reprovingly.

‘Poor St. Serf!—but he’s so very bad,’ said Lady Mariamne, ‘that it’s almost the same thing. Mr. Tatham, can’t we take you anywhere? I’m so glad I’ve seen Nell’s boy. Can’t we drive you home? Perhaps you’ve got Nell there too?’

John stood back from the carriage door, just in time to escape the start of the horses as the remorseless string was touched and the footman clambered up into his seat. Lady Mariamne’s smile went off her face, and she had forgotten all about it, to judge from appearances, before he had got himself in motion again. And a little farther on, behind the next tree, he found young Philip waiting, full of curiosity and questions.

‘Who was that lady, Uncle John? Was she asking about me? I thought I heard her call. I had half a mind to run back and say “Here I am.”’

‘It was much better that you didn’t do anything of the kind. Never pay any attention when you think you hear a fine lady calling you, Philip. It’s better not to hear the Siren’s call.’

‘When they’re elderly Sirens like that!’ said the boy with a laugh. ‘But I say, Uncle John, if you won’t tell me who the lady is, who is the

girl? She has a pair of eyes!—not like Sirens, though—eyes that go through you—like—like a pair of lancets.'

'A surgical operation in fact: and I shouldn't wonder if she meant to be a doctor,' said John. 'The mother has done nothing all her life, therefore the daughter means to do too much. It is the natural reaction of the generations. But I never noticed that Miss Dolly had any eyes—to speak of,' said the highly indifferent middle-aged man.

The boy flushed with a sense of indignation. 'Perhaps you think the old lady's were finer?' he said.

'I never admired the old lady, as you call her,' said John shortly; and then he turned Philip's attention to something, possibly with the easily satisfied conviction of a spectator that the boy thought of it no more.

'We met my Lady Mariamne in the Park,' he said to Elinor when they sat at dinner an hour later at that bachelor table in Halkin Street, where everything was so exquisitely cared for. It was like Elinor, but most unlike the place in which she found herself, that she started so violently as to shake the whole table, crying out

in a tone of consternation, 'John!' as if he did not know very well what he might venture to say, or as if he had any intention of betraying her to her son.

'She was very anxious,' he said, perhaps playing a little with her excitement, 'to have Philip presented to her: but I sent him on—that is to say, I thought I sent him on. The fellow went no farther than to the next tree, where he stood and watched Miss Dolly, not feeling any interest in the old lady, as he said.'

'Well, Uncle John—did you expect me to look at the old lady? You are not so fond of old ladies yourself.'

'And who is Miss Dolly?' said Elinor, trying to conceal the beating of her heart and the quiver on her lips with a smile; and then she added, with a little catch of her breath, 'Oh, yes, I remember there was a little girl.'

'You will be surprised to hear that we are by way of being great friends. Her ladyship visits me in my chambers——'

Again Elinor uttered that startled cry, 'John!' but she tried this time to cover it with a tremulous laugh. 'Are you becoming a flirt in your old age?'

‘It appears so,’ said John. And then he added, ‘That aphorism, which struck you as it struck me, Elinor, by its good sense—about the heir to a peerage—is really her production, and not mine.’

‘Miss Dolly’s? And what was the aphorism, Uncle John?’ cried Philip.

‘No, it was not Miss Dolly’s, my young man. It was the mother’s, and so of course does not interest you any more.’

It did not as a matter of fact: the old lady was supremely indifferent to Pippo; but as he looked up, saying something else which did not bear upon the subject, it occurred to the boy, as it will sometimes occur by the merest chance to a young observer, to notice his mother. She caught his eye somehow in the most accidental way; and Pippo was too well acquainted with her looks not to perceive that there was a thrill in every line of her countenance, a slight nervous tremble in her hands and entire person, such as was in no way to be accounted for (he thought) by anything that had been said or done. There was nothing surely to disquiet her in dining at Uncle John’s, the three alone, not even one other guest to fill up the vacant side of the

table. Philip had himself thought that Uncle John might have asked some one to meet them. He should have remembered that he himself, Philip, was now of an age to dine out, and see a little society, and go into the world. But what in the name of all that was wonderful was there in this entertainment to agitate his mother? And John Tatham had a look—which Philip did not understand—the look of a man who was successful in argument, who was almost crushing an opponent. It was as if a duel had been going on between them, and the man was the victor, which, as was natural, immediately threw Philip violently on the other side.

‘You’re not well, mother,’ he said.

‘Do you think not, Pippo? Well, perhaps you are right. London is too much for me. I am a country bird,’ said Elinor, with smiling yet trembling lips.

‘You shall not go to the theatre if you are not up to it,’ said the boy in his imperious way.

She gave him an affectionate look, and then she looked across the table at John. What did that look mean? There was a faint smile in it: and there was a great deal which Philip did not

understand, things understood by Uncle John—who was after all what you might call an outsider, no more—and not by him, her son! Could anything be so monstrous? Philip blazed up with sudden fire.

‘No,’ said John Tatham; ‘I think Philip’s right. We’ll take her home to be coddled by her maid, and we’ll go off, two wild young fellows, to the play by ourselves.’

‘No,’ said Philip, ‘I’ll leave her to be coddled by no maid. I can take care of my mother myself.’

‘My dear boy,’ said Elinor, ‘I want no coddling. But I doubt whether I could stand the play. I like you to go with Uncle John.’

And then it began to dawn upon Philip that his mother had never meant to be of the party, and that this was what had been settled all along. He was more angry, more wounded and hurt in his spirit than he had of course the least occasion to be. He was of opinion that his mother had never had any secrets from him, that she had taken him into her confidence since he was a small boy, even things that granny did not know! And here all at once there was rising between them a cloud, a mist, which there

was no reason for. If he had done anything to make him less worthy he would have understood; had there been a bad report from school, had he failed in his work and disappointed her, there might have been some reason for it. But he had done nothing of the kind! Never before had he been so deserving of confidence; he had got his scholarship, he had finished the first phase of his education in triumph, and fulfilled all her expectations. And now just at this point of all others, just when he was most fit to understand, most worthy of trust, she turned from him. His heart swelled as if it would burst, with anger first, almost too strong to be repressed, and with that sense of injured merit which is of all things the most hard to bear. It is hard enough even when one is aware one deserves no better. But to be conscious of your worth and to feel that you are not appreciated, that is indeed too much for any one. There was not even the satisfaction of giving up the play which he had looked forward to, making a sacrifice of it to his mother, in which there would have been a severe pleasure. But she did not want him! She preferred that he should leave her by herself to be coddled by her maid, as



Uncle John (vulgarly) said. Or perhaps was there somebody else coming, some old friend whom he knew nothing of, somebody, some one or other like that old witch in the carriage whom Pippo was not meant to know?

It ended, however, in the carrying out of the plan settled beforehand by those old conspirators. The old conspirators do generally manage to carry out their plans for the management of rebellious youth, however injured the latter may feel. Pippo wound himself in solemn dignity and silence when he understood that it was ordained that he should proceed to the play with John Tatham. And the pair had got half-way to Drury Lane—or it may have been the Lyceum, or the Haymarket, or any of half-a-dozen other theatres, for here exact information fails—before he condescended to open his lips for more than Yes or No. But Philip's gloom did not survive the raising of the curtain, and he had forgotten all offences and had taken his companion into favour again, and was talking to Uncle John between the acts with all the excitement of a country youth to whom a play still was the greatest of novelties and delights, when he suddenly saw a change come over John Tatham's

countenance and a slight bow of recognition directed towards a box, which made Philip turn round and look too. And there was the old witch of the carriage, and, what was more interesting, the girl with the keen eyes, who looked out suddenly from the shade of the draperies, and fixed upon Philip—Philip himself—a look which startled that young hero much. Nor was this all; for later in the evening, after another act of the play, some one else appeared in the same box, and fixed the dark and impassive stare of a long pair of opera-glasses upon Philip. It amused him at first, and afterwards it half frightened him, and finally made him very angry. The gazer was a man, of whom, however, Philip could make nothing out but his white shirt-front and his tall stature, and the long black tubes of the opera-glass. Was it at him the man was looking, or perhaps at Uncle John? But the boy thought it on the whole unlikely that anybody should stare in that way at anything so little out of the ordinary as Uncle John.

‘I say,’ he said in the next interval, ‘who is that fellow staring at us out of your old lady’s box?’

‘Staring at the ladies behind us, you mean,’

said John. 'Pippo, do you think we could make a rush for it the moment the play's over? I've got something to look over when I get home. Are you game to be out the very first before the curtain's down?'

'Certainly I'm game,' said Philip, delighted, 'if you wish it, Uncle John.'

'Yes, I wish it,' said the other, and he put his hand on the boy's shoulder as the act finished and the characters of the piece drew together for the final tableau. And the pair managed it triumphantly, and were the very first to get out at the head of the crowd, to Philip's immense amusement and John Tatham's great relief. The elder hurried the younger into the first hansom, all in the twinkling of an eye: and then for the first time his gravity relaxed. Philip took it all for a great joke till they reached Ebury Street. But when his companion left him, and he had time to think of it, he began to ask himself, why?

## CHAPTER XLII.

I WILL not say that Philip's sleep was broken by this question, but it undoubtedly recurred to his mind the first thing in the morning when he jumped out of bed very late for breakfast, and the events of the past night and the lateness of the hour at which he got to rest came back upon him as excuses in the first place for his tardiness. And then, which was remarkable, it was not the scene in the play in which he had been most interested, but a vision of that box and the man standing in front of it staring at him through the black tubes of the opera-glass which came before Philip like a picture. Uncle John had said it was at the ladies behind, but the boy felt sure it was no lady behind, but himself, on whom that stare was fixed. Who would care to stare so at him? It faintly gleamed across

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his thoughts that it might be some one who had heard of the scholarship, but he dismissed that thought instantly with a blush. It also gleamed upon him with equal vagueness like a momentary but entirely futile light, consciously derived from story books, and of which he was much ashamed, that the inexplicable attention given to himself might have something to do with the girl who had such keen eyes. Philip blushed fiery red at this involuntary thought, and chased it from his mind like a mad dog; but he could not put away the picture of the box, the girl putting aside the curtain to look at him, and the opera-glass fixed upon his face. And then why was Uncle John in such a hurry to get away? It had seemed a capital joke at the moment, but when he came to think of it, it was rather strange that a man who might be Solicitor-General to-morrow if he liked, and probably Lord Chancellor in a few years, should make a schoolboy rush from the stalls of a theatre with the object of being first out. Philip disapproved of so undignified a step on the part of his elderly relation. And he saw now in the serious morning light that Uncle John was very unlikely to have done it for fun. What, then, did it mean?

He came down full of these thoughts, and rather ashamed of being late, wondering whether his mother would have waited for him (which would have annoyed him), or if she would have finished her breakfast (which would have annoyed him still more). Happily for Elinor, she had hit the golden mean, and was pouring out for herself a second cup of coffee (but Philip was not aware it was the second) when the boy appeared. She was quite restored to her usual serenity and freshness, and as eager to know how he had enjoyed himself as she always was. He gave her a brief sketch of the play and of what pleased him in it as in duty bound. 'But,' he added, 'what interested me almost more was that we had a sort of a—little play of our own.'

'What?' she cried, with a startled look in her eyes. One thing that puzzled him was that she was so very easily startled, which it seemed to Philip had never been the case before.

'Well,' he said, 'the lady was there whom Uncle John met in the Park—and the girl with her—and I believe the little dog. She made all sorts of signs to him, but he took scarcely any notice. But that's not all, mother——'

'It's a good deal, Pippo——'

‘Is it? Why do you speak in that choked voice, mother? I suppose it is just one of his society acquaintances. But the thing was that before the last act somebody else came forward to the front of the box, and fixed—I was going to say his eyes, I mean his opera-glasses—upon us.’

Philip had meant to say upon me—but he had produced already so great an effect on his mother’s face that he moderated instinctively the point of this description. ‘And stared at us,’ he added, ‘all the rest of the time, paying not the least attention to anything that was going on. It’s a queer sensation,’ he went on with a laugh, ‘to feel that black mysterious-looking thing like the eyes of some monster with no speculation in them, fixed upon you. Now I want you to tell me— What’s the matter, mother?’

‘Nothing, Pippo; nothing,’ said Elinor faintly, stooping to lift up a book she had let fall. ‘Go on with your story. I am very much interested; and then, my dear?’

‘Mother,’ cried Philip, ‘I don’t know what has come over you, or over me. There’s something going on I can’t understand. You never used to have any secrets from me. I was always in your confidence—wasn’t I, mother?’

It was not a book she had let fall, but a ring that she had dropped from her finger, and which had to be followed over the carpet. It made her red and flushed when she half raised her head to say, 'Yes, Pippo—you know—I have always told you——'

Philip did not remark that what his mother said was nothing after all. He got up to help her to look for her ring, and put his arm round her waist as she knelt on the floor.

'Yes, mamma,' he said tenderly, protectingly, 'I do know: but something's changed; either it's in me that makes you feel you can't trust me—or else it is in you. And I don't know which would be worst.'

'There is no change,' she said after a moment, for she could not help the ring being found and immediately when his quick young eyes came to the search: but she did not look him in the face. 'There is no change, dear. There is only some worrying business which involves a great many troubles of my old life before you were born. You shall hear—everything—in a little while: but I cannot enter into it all at this moment. It is full of complications and—secrets that belong to other people. Pippo, you must promise me



to wait patiently, and to believe—to believe—always the best you can—of your mother.’

The boy laughed as he raised her up, still holding her with his arm. ‘Believe the best I can! Well, I don’t think that will be a great effort, mother. Only to think that you can’t trust me as you always have done makes me wretched. We’ve been such friends, haven’t we, mamma? I’ve always told you everything, or at least everything except just the nonsense at school: and you’ve told me everything. And if we were going to be different——’

‘You’ve told me everything!’—the boy was as sure of it as that he was born. She had to hold by him to support herself, and it cost her a strong effort to restrain the shiver that ran through her. ‘We are not going to be different,’ she said, ‘as soon as we leave London—or before—you shall know everything about this business of mine, Pippo. Will that satisfy you? In the meantime it is not pleasant business, dear; and you must bear with me if I am abstracted sometimes and occupied, and cross.’

‘But mother,’ said Philip, bending over her with that young celestial-foolish look of gravity and good advice with which a neophyte will

sometimes address the much-experienced and heavily laden pilgrim, 'don't you think it would be easier if it was all open between us, and I took my share? If it is other people's secrets I would not betray them, you know that.'

Unfortunately Elinor here murmured, scarcely knowing what words came from her lips, 'That is what John says——'

'John,' said the boy, furious with the quick rage of injured tenderness and pride, 'Uncle John! and you tell him more, him, an outsider, than you tell me!'

He let her go then, which was a great relief to Elinor, for she could command herself better when he was a little farther off, and could not feel the thrill that was in her, and the thumping of her heart.

'You must remember, Pippo,' she said, 'what I have told you, that my present very disagreeable, very painful business is about things that happened before you were born, which John knew everything about. He was my adviser then, as far as I would take any advice, which I am afraid never was much, Pippo,' she said; 'never, alas! all my life. Granny will tell you that. But John, always the kindest friend and

the best brother in the world, did everything he could. And it would have been better for us all if I had taken his advice instead of always, I fear, always my own way.'

Strangely enough this cheered Pippo, and swept the cloud from his face. 'I am glad you didn't take anybody's advice, mother. I shouldn't have liked it. I've more faith in you than anybody. Well then, now, about this man. What man in the world—I really mean in the world, in what is called society, for that is the kind of people they were—could have such a curiosity about—me?'

She had resumed her seat, and her face was turned away from him. Also the exquisite tone of complacency and innocent self-appreciation with which Philip expressed this wonder helped her a little to surmount the situation. Elinor could have laughed had her heart been only a trifle less burdened. She said, 'Are you sure it was at you?'

'Uncle John said something about ladies behind us—but I am sure it was no ladies behind. It might, of course,' the boy added cautiously, 'have been *him*, you know. I suppose Uncle John's a personage, isn't he? But after all, you know,

hang it, mother, it isn't easy to believe that a fellow like that would stare so at Uncle John.'

'Poor John! It is true there is not much novelty about him,' said Elinor with a tremble in her voice, which, if it was half agitation, was yet a little laughter too: for there are scarcely any circumstances, however painful, in which those who are that way moved by nature are quite able to quench the unconquerable laugh. She added, with a falter in which there was no laughter, 'And what—was the—fellow like?'

'All that I could see was that he was a tall man. I saw his large shirt-front and his black evening clothes, and something like grey hair above those two big black goggles—'

'Grey hair!' Elinor said with a low suppressed cry.

'He never took them away from his eyes for a moment, so of course I could not see his face, or anything much except that he was more than common tall—like myself,' Pippo said, with a little air of pleased vanity in the comparison.

Like himself! She did not make any remark. It is very doubtful whether she could have done so. There came before her so many visions of the past, and such a vague, confused, bewildering

future, of which she could form no definite idea what it would be. Was it with a pang that she foresaw that drawing towards another influence : that mingled instinct, curiosity, perhaps admiration and wonder, which already seemed to move her boy's unconscious mind? Elinor did not even know whether that would hurt her at all. Even now there seemed a curious pungent sense of half-pleasure in the pain. Like himself! So he was. And if it should be that it was his father, who for hours had stood there, not taking his eyes off the boy (for hours her imagination said, though Pippo had not said so), the father who had known where she was and never disturbed her, never interfered with her; the man who had summoned her to perform her martyrdom for him, never doubting—Phil, with grey hair! To say what mingled feelings swept through Elinor's mind, with all these elements in them, is beyond my power. She saw him with his face concealed, standing up unconscious of the crowded place and of the mimic life on the stage, his eyes fixed upon his son whom he had never seen before. Where was there any drama in which there was a scene like this? His son, his only child, the heir! Unconsciously even to herself that fact had

some influence, no doubt, on Elinor's thoughts. And it would be impossible to say how much influence had that unexpected subduing touch of the grey hair: and the strange change in the scene altogether. The foolish, noisy, 'fast' woman, with her *tourbillon* of men and dogs about her, turned into the old lady of Pippo's careless remark, with her daughter beside her far more important than she. And the tall figure in the front of the box, with grey hair——

Young Philip had not the faintest light or guidance in the discovery of his mother's thoughts. He was much more easy and comfortable now that there had been an explanation between them, though it was one of those explanations which explained nothing. He even forgave Uncle John for knowing more than he did, moved thereto by the consolatory thought that John's advice had never been taken, and that his mother had always followed her own way. This was an incalculable comfort to Pippo's mind, and gave him composure to wait calmly for the clearing up of the mystery, and the restoration of that perfect confidence between his mother and himself which he was so firmly convinced had existed all his life. He was a great deal happier after,

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and gave her an excellent account of the play, which he had managed to see quite satisfactorily, notwithstanding the other 'little play of our own' which ran through everything. At Philip's age one can see two things at once well enough. I knew a boy who at one and the same moment got the benefit of (1st) his own story-book, which he read lying at full length before the fire, half buried in the fur of a great rug; and (2nd) of the novel which was being read out over his head for the benefit of the other members of the family—or at least he strenuously asserted he did, and indeed proved himself acquainted with both. Philip in the same way had taken in everything in the play, even while his soul was intent upon the opera-glass in the box. He had not missed anything of either. He gave an account of the first, from which the drama might have been written down had fate destroyed it: and had noticed the *minauderies* of the heroine, and the eager determination not to be second to her in anything which distinguished the first gentleman, as if he had nothing else in his mind: while all the time he had been under the fascination of the two black eyeholes *braqués* upon him, the mysterious gaze as of a ghost from eyes which he never saw.

This occupied some part of the forenoon, and Philip was happy. But when he had completed his tale and began to feel the necessity of going out, and remembered that he had nowhere to go and nothing to do, the prospect was not alluring. He tried very hard to persuade his mother to go out with him, but this was a risk from which Elinor shrank. She shrank, too, from his proposal at last to go out to the Park by himself.

‘To the Row. I shan’t know the people except those who are in *Punch* every week, and I shall envy the fellows riding—but at least it will be something to see.’

‘I wish you would not go to the Row, Pippo.’

‘Why, mother? Doesn’t everybody go? And you never were here at this time of the year before.’

‘No,’ she said, with a long breath of despair. No; of all times of the year this was the one in which she had never risked him in London. And, oh! that he had been anywhere in the world except London now!

Philip, who had been watching her countenance with great interest, here patted her on the shoulder with condescending, almost paternal kindness. ‘Don’t you be frightened, mother. I’ll not



get into any mischief. I'll neither be rode over nor robbed, nor run away. I'll take as great care of myself as if you had been there.'

'I'm not afraid that you will be ridden over or robbed,' she said, forcing a smile; 'but there is one thing, Pippo. Don't talk to anybody whom you—don't know. Don't let yourself be driven into—— If you should meet, for instance, that lady—who was in the theatre last night.'

'Yes, mother?'

'Don't let her make acquaintance with you; don't speak to her, nor the girl, nor any one that may be with her. At the risk even of being uncivil——'

'Why, mother,' he said, elevating his eyebrows, 'how could I be uncivil to a lady?'

'Because I tell you,' she cried, 'because you must—because I shall sit here in terror counting every moment till you come back, if you don't promise me this.'

He looked at her with the most wondering countenance, half disapproving, half pitying. Was she going mad? what was happening to her? was she after all, though his mother, no better than the jealous foolish women in books, who endeavoured at all costs to separate their children

from every influence but their own? How could Pippo think such things of his mother? and yet what else could he think?

‘I had better,’ he said, ‘if that is how you feel, mother, not go to the Row at all.’

‘Much better, much better!’ she cried. ‘I’ll tell you what we’ll do, Pippo—you have never been to see—the Tower.’ She had run over all the most far-off and unlikely places in her mind, and this occurred to her as the most impossible of all to attract any visitor of whom she could be afraid. ‘I have changed my mind,’ she added. ‘We’ll have a hansom, and I will go with you to see the Tower.’

‘So long as you go with me,’ said Pippo, ‘I don’t care where I go.’

And they set out almost joyfully as in their old happy expeditions of old, for that long drive through London in the hansom. And yet the boy was only lulled for the moment, and in his heart was more and more perplexed what his mother could mean.

## CHAPTER XLIII.


FORTUNE was favourable to Elinor that day. At the Tower, where she duly went over everything that was to be seen with Pippo, conscious all the time of his keen observance of her through all that he was doing, and even through his interest in what he saw—and feeling for the first time in her life that there was between her boy and her something that he felt, something that was not explained by anything she had said, and that awaited the dreadful moment when everything would have to be told—at the Tower, as I say, they met some friends from the north, the Rector of the parish, who had come up with his son to see town, and was naturally taking his boy, as Elinor took hers, to see all that was not town, in the usual sense of the word. They were going to Woolwich

and Greenwich next day, and with a pang of mingled trouble and relief in her mind Elinor contrived to engage Pippo to accompany them. On the second day I think they were to go to St. Katherine's Docks, or the Isle of Dogs, or some other equally important and interesting sight—far better no doubt for the two youths than to frequent such places as the Row, and gaze at the stream of gaiety and luxury which they could not join. Pippo in ordinary circumstances would have been delighted to see Woolwich and the docks, but it was so evident to him that his mother was anxiously desirous to dispose of him so, that his satisfaction was much lessened. The boy, however, was magnanimous enough to consent without any appearance of reluctance. In the many thoughts which filled his mind Philip showed his fine nature, by having already come to consent to the possibility that his mother might have business of her own into which he had no right to enter unless at her own time and with her full consent. It cost him an effort, I allow, to come to that: but yet he did so, and resolved, a little pride helping him, to inquire no more, and if possible to wonder or be offended no more, but to wait the time she had promised,

when the old rule of perfect confidence should be re-established between them. The old rule! if Pippo had but known! nothing yet had given Elinor such a sense of guilt as his conviction that she had told him everything, that there had been no secrets between them during all the happy life that was past.

How entirely relieved Elinor was when he started to join his friends next morning it would be impossible to put into words. She watched all his lingering movements before he went with eyes in which she tried to quench the impatience, and look only with the fond admiration and interest she felt upon all his little preparations, his dawning sense of what was becoming in apparel, the flower in his coat, the carefully rolled umbrella, the hat brushed to the most exquisite smoothness, the handkerchief just peeping from his breast-pocket. It is always a revelation to a woman to find that these details occupy as much of a young man's attention as her own toilette occupies hers; and that he is as tremulously alive to 'what is worn' in many small particulars that never catch her eye, as she is to details which entirely escape him. She smiles at him as he does at her, each in that conscious supe-

riority to the other, which is on the whole an indulgent sentiment. Underneath all her anxiety to see him go, to get rid of him (was that the dreadful truth in this terrible crisis of her affairs ?), she felt the amusement of the boy's little coquetries, and the mother's admiration of his fresh looks, his youthful brightness, his air of distinction; how different from the Rector's boy, who was a nice fellow enough, and a credit to his rectory, and whose mother, I do not doubt, felt in his ruddy good looks something much superior in robustness, and strength, and manhood to the too-tall and too-slight golden youth of the ladies at Lakeside! It even flitted across Elinor's mind to give him in her thought the title that was to be his, everybody said—Lord Lomond! And then she asked herself indignantly what honour it could add to her spotless boy to have such a vain distinction; a name that had been soiled by so much ignoble use? Elinor had prided herself all her life on an indifference to, almost a contempt for, the distinctions of rank, and that it should occur to her to think of that title as an embellishment to Pippo—nay, to think furtively, without her own knowledge, so to speak, that Pippo looked every inch a lord and heir to a peerage, was an



involuntary weakness almost incredible. She blushed for herself as she realised it:—a peerage which had meant so little that was excellent— a name connected with so many undesirable precedents: still I suppose when it is his own even the veriest democrat is conscious at least of the picturesqueness, the superiority, as a mode of distinguishing one man from another, of anything that can in the remotest sense be called an historical name.

When Pippo was out of sight Elinor turned from the window with a sigh, and came back to the dark chamber of her own life, full at this moment of all the gathered blackness of the past and of the future. She put her hands over her eyes, and sank down upon a seat, as if to shut out from herself all that was before her. But shut it out as she might, there it was—the horrible court with the judgment-seat, the rows of faces bent upon her, the silence through which her own voice must rise alone, saying—what? What was it she was called there to say? Oh, how little they knew who suggested that her mother should have been called instead of her, with all her minute old-fashioned calculations and exact memory, who even now, when all was over,

would probably convict Elinor of a mistake! Even at that penalty what would not she give to have it over, the thing said, the event done with, whatever it might bring after it! And it could now be only a very short time till the moment of the ordeal would come, when she should stand up in the face of her country, before the solemn judge on his bench, before all the gaping, wondering people—before, oh! thought most dreadful of all, which she would not, could not, contemplate—before One who knew everything, and say— She picked herself up trembling as it were, and uncovered her eyes, and protested to herself that she would say nothing that was not true. Nothing that was not true! She would tell her story—so well remembered, so often conned; the story that had been put into her lips twenty years ago, which she had repeated then confused, not knowing how it was that what was a simple fact should nevertheless not be true. Alas! she knew that very well now, and yet would have to repeat it before God and the world. But thinking would make it no better—thinking could only make it worse. She sprang up again, and began to occupy herself with something she had to do: the less it was thought



over the better: for now the trial had begun, and her ordeal would soon be done too. If only the boy could be occupied, kept away—if only she could be left alone to do what she had to do! That he should be there was the last aggravation of which her fate was capable; there in idleness, reading the papers in the morning, which was a thing she had so lately calculated a boy at school was unlikely to do; and what so likely as that his eye would be caught by his own name in the report of the trial, which would be an exciting trial and fully reported—a trial which interested society. The boy would see his own name: she could almost hear him cry out, looking up from his breakfast, ‘Hallo, mother! here’s something about a Philip Compton!’ And all the questions that would follow—‘Is he the same Comptons that we are? What Comptons do we belong to? You never told me anything about my family. Is this man any relation, I wonder? Both surname and Christian name the same. It’s strange if there is no connection!’ She could almost hear the words he would say—all that and more—and what should she reply?

‘I have only one thing to say, Elinor,’ said

John, to whom in her desperation she turned again, as she always did, disturbing him, poor man, in his chambers as he was collecting his notes and his thoughts in the afternoon after his work was over: 'it is the same as I have always said; even now make a clean breast of it to the boy. Tell him everything; better that he should hear it from your own lips than that it should burst upon him as a discovery. He has but to meet Lady Mariamne in the Park, the most likely thing in the world.'

'No, John,' cried Elinor, 'no; the Marshalls are here, our Rector from Waterdale, and he is taking his boy to see all the sights. I have got Pippo to go with them. They are going to Woolwich to-day, and afterwards to quite a long list of things—oh, entirely out of everybody's way.'

Her little look of uneasy triumph and satisfaction made John smile. She was not half so sure as she tried to look; but all the same, had a little pride, a little pleasure in her own management, and in the happy chance of the Marshalls being in London, which was a thing that could not have been planned, an intervention of Providence. He could not refuse to smile—partly

with her, partly at her simplicity—but all the same, he shook his head.

‘The only way in which there is any safety—the only chance of preserving him from a shock, a painful shock, Elinor, that may upset him for life——’

‘How do you mean, upset him for life?’

‘By showing him that his mother, whom he believes in like heaven, has deceived him since ever he was born.’

She covered her face with her hands, and burst into a sobbing cry. ‘Oh, John, you don’t know how true that is! He said to me only yesterday, “You have always told me everything, mother. There has never been any secret between us.” Oh! John, John, only think of having that said to me, and knowing what I know!’

‘Well, Elinor; believe me, my dear, there is but one thing to do. The boy is a good boy, full of love and kindness.’

‘Oh, isn’t he, John? the best boy, the dearest ——’

‘And adores his mother, as a boy should.’ John got up from his chair and walked about the room for a little, and then he came behind her and put his hand on her shoulder. ‘Tell him, Elinor:

my dear Nelly, as if I had never said a word on the subject before, I beseech you tell him, trust him fully, even now, at the eleventh hour.'


She raised her head with a quivering, wistful smile. 'The moment the trial is over, the moment it is over! I give you my word, John.'

'Do not wait till it is over, do it now; to-night when he comes home.'

She began to tremble so that John Tatham was alarmed—and kept looking at him with an imploring look, her lips quivering and every line in her countenance. 'Oh, not to-night. Spare me to-night! After the trial; after my part of it. At least—after—after—oh, give me till to-morrow to think of it, John.'

'My dear Elinor, I count for nothing in it. I am not your judge; I am your partisan, you know, whatever you do. But I am sure it will be the better done, and even the easier done, the sooner you do it.'

'I will—I will: at the very latest the day after I have done my part at the trial. Is not that enough to think of at one time, for a poor woman who has never stood up before the public in all her life, never had a question put to her? Oh, John! oh, John!'



‘Elinor, Elinor! you are too sensible a woman to make a fuss about a simple duty like this.’

‘There speaks the man who has stood before the world all his life, and is not afraid of any public,’ she said with a tremulous laugh. But she had won her moment’s delay, and thus was victorious after a fashion, as it was her habit to be.

I do not know that young Philip much amused himself at Woolwich that day. He did and he did not. He could not help being interested in all he saw, and he liked the Marshalls well enough, and in ordinary circumstances would have entered very heartily into any sightseeing. But he kept thinking all the time what his mother was doing, and wondering over the mysterious business which was to be explained to him sooner or later, and which he had so magnanimously promised to wait for the revelation of, and entertain no suspicions about in the meantime. The worst of such magnanimity is that it is subject to dreadful failings of the heart in its time of waiting—never giving in, indeed, but yet feeling the pressure whenever there is a moment to think. This matter mixed itself up so with all Philip saw that he never in after life saw a great cannon,

or a pyramid of balls (which is not to be sure an everyday sight), without a vague sensation of trouble, as of something lying behind which was concealed from him, and which he could scarcely endure to have concealed. When he left his friends in the evening, however, it was with another engagement for to-morrow, and several to-morrows after, and great jubilation on the part of both father and son as to their good luck in meeting him, and having his companionship in their pleasures. And, in fact, these pleasures were carried on for several days, always with the faint bitter in them to Philip of that consciousness that his mother was pleased to be rid of him, glad to see his back turned, the most novel, extraordinary sensation to the boy. And it must also be confessed that he kept a very keen eye on all the passing carriages, always hoping to see that one in which the witch, as he called her, and the girl with the keen eyes, were—for he had not picked up the name of Lady Mariamne, keen as his young ears were, and though John had mentioned it in his presence, partly, perhaps, because it was so very unlikely a name. As for the man with the opera-glasses, he had not seen his face at all, and therefore

could not hope to recognise him. And yet he felt a little thrill run through him when any tall man with grey hair passed in the street. He almost thought he could have known the tall slim figure with a certain swaying movement in it, which was not like anybody else. I need not say, however, that even had these indications been stronger, Woolwich and the Isle of Dogs were unlikely places in which to meet Lady Mariamne, or any gentleman likely to be in attendance on her. In Whitechapel, indeed, had he but known, he might have met Miss Dolly: but then in Whitechapel there were no sights which virtuous youth is led to see. And Philip's man with the opera-glass was, during these days, using that aid to vision in a very different place, and had neither leisure nor inclination to move vaguely about the world.

For three days this went on successfully enough: young Philip Compton and Ralph Marshall saw enough to last them all the rest of their lives, and there was no limit to the satisfaction of the good country clergyman, who felt that he never could have succeeded so completely in improving his son's mind, instead of delivering him over to the frivolous amusements

of town, if it had not been for the companionship of Philip, who made Ralph feel that it was all right, and that he was not being victimised for nothing. But on the fourth day a hitch occurred. John Tatham had been made to give all sorts of orders and admissions for the party to see every nook and corner of the Temple, much to Elinor's alarm, who felt that place was much too near to be safe; but she was herself in circumstances too urgent to permit her dwelling upon it. She had left the house on that particular morning long before Philip was ready, and every anxiety was dulled in her mind for the moment by the overwhelming sense of the crisis arrived. She went to his room before he had left it, and gave him a kiss, and told him that she might be detained for a long time; that she did not know exactly at what hour she should return. She was very pale, paler than he had ever seen her, and her manner had a suppressed agitation in it, which startled Philip; but she managed to smile as she assured him she was quite well, and that there was nothing troubling her. 'Nothing, nothing that has to do with us—a little disturbed for a friend—but that will be all over,'



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she said, 'to-night, I hope.' Philip made a leisurely breakfast after she was gone, and it happened to him that morning for the first time as he was alone to make a study of the papers. And the consequence was that he said to himself really those words which his mother in imagination had so often heard him say, 'Hallo! Philip Compton, my name! I wonder if he is any relation. I wonder if we have anything to do with those St. Serf Comptons.' Then he reflected, but vaguely, that he did not know to what Comptons he belonged, nor even what county he came from, to tell the truth. And then it was time to hurry over his breakfast, to swallow his cup of tea, to snatch up his hat and gloves, and to rush off to meet his friends. But on that day Philip was unlucky. When he got to the place of meeting he found nothing but a telegram from Ralph, announcing that his father was so knocked up with his previous exertions that they were obliged to take a quiet day. And thus Philip was left in the Temple, of all places in the world, on the day when his mother was to appear in the law-court close by, on the day of all others when if she could have sent him for twenty-four hours to the end

of the earth she would have done so, on the day when so terrible was the stress and strain upon herself that for once in the world even Pippo had gone as completely out of her mind as if he had not been.

The boy looked about him for awhile, and reflected what to do; and then he started out into the Strand, conscientiously waiting for the Marshalls before he should visit the Temple and all its historical ways; and then he was amused and excited by seeing a barrister or two in wig and gown pass by; and then he thought of the trial in the newspapers, in which somebody who, like himself, was called Philip Compton, was involved. Philip was still lingering, wondering if he could get into the court, a little shy of trying, but gradually growing eager, thinking at least that he would try and get a sight of the wonderful grand building, still so new, when he suddenly saw Simmons, his Uncle John's clerk, passing through the quadrangle of the law-courts. Here was his chance. He rushed forward and caught the clerk by the arm, who was in a great hurry, as everybody seemed to be. 'Oh, Simmons, can you get me in to that Brown trial?' cried Philip.

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‘Brown!’ Simmons said. ‘Mr. Tatham is not on in that.’ ‘Oh, never mind about Mr. Tatham,’ said the boy. ‘Can’t you get me in? I have never seen a trial, and I take an interest in that.’ ‘I advise you,’ said Simmons, ‘to wait for one that your uncle’s in.’ ‘Can’t you get me in?’ said Philip impatiently: and this touched the pride of Simmons, who had many friends, if not in high places, yet in low.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

PHILIP had never been in a court of law before. I am almost as ignorant as he was, yet I cannot imagine anything more deeply interesting than to find one's self suddenly one of a crowded assembly trying more or less—for is not the public but a larger jury, sometimes contradicting the verdict of the other, and when it does so almost invariably winning the cause?—a fellow-creature, following out the traces of his crime or his innocence, looking on while a human drama is unrolled, often far more interesting than any dramatic representation of life. He was confused for the moment by the crowd, by the new and unusual spectacle, by the bewilderment of seeing for the first time what he had so often heard of, the judge on the bench, the wigged barristers below, the

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one who was speaking, so different from any public speaker Philip had ever heard, addressing not the assembly, but the smaller circle round him, interrupted by other voices: the accused in his place and the witness—standing there more distinctly at the bar than the culprit was—bearing his testimony before earth and heaven, with the fate of another hanging on his words. The boy was so full of the novel sight—which yet he had heard of so often that he could identify every part of it, and soon perceived the scope of what was going on—that he did not at first listen, so full was he of the interest of what he saw. The imperturbable judge, grave, letting no emotion appear on his face; the jury, just the reverse, showing how this and that piece of evidence affected them; the barristers who were engaged, so keenly alive to everything, starting up now and then when the witness swerved from the subject, when the opposition proposed a leading question, or one that was irrelevant to the issue; the others who were not ‘in it,’ as Simmons said, so indifferent; and then the spectators who had places about or near the central interest. Philip saw, with a sudden leap of his heart,

the ladies of the theatre and park, the witch and the girl with the keen eyes, in a conspicuous place; the old lady, as he called her, full of movement and gesture, making signs to others near her, keeping up an interrupted whispering, the girl at her side as impassive as the judge himself. And then Pippo's roving eye caught a figure seated among the barristers with an opera-glass, which made his heart jump still more. Was that the man? He had at the moment Philip perceived him his opera-glass in his hand: a tall man leaning back with a look of interest, very conspicuous among the wigged heads about him, with grey hair in a mass on his forehead as if it had grown thin, and had been coaxed to cover some denuded place, and a face which it seemed to Philip he had seen before, a face worn—was it with study, was it with trouble? Pippo knew of no other ways in which the eyes could be so hollowed out, and the lines so deeply drawn. A man, perhaps, hard worn with life and labour and sorrow. A strange sympathy sprang up in the boy's mind: he was sure he knew the face. It was a face full of records, though young Philip could not read them—the face, he thought,



of a man who had had much to bear. Was it the same man who had fixed so strange a gaze upon himself at the theatre? And what interest could this man have in the trial that was going on?

The accused at the bar was certainly not of a kind to arouse the interest which sprang into being at sight of this worn and noble hero. He had the air of a comfortable man of business, a man evidently well off, surprised at once and indignant to find himself there, sometimes bursting with eagerness to explain, sometimes leaning back with an air of affected contempt—not a good man in trouble, as Philip would have liked to think him, nor a criminal fully conscious of what might be awaiting him: but a man of the first respectability, indignant and incredulous that anything should be brought against him. Philip felt himself able to take no interest whatever in Mr. Brown.

It was not till he had gone through all these surprises and observations that he began to note what was being said. Philip was not learned in the procedure of the law, nor did he know anything about the case: but it became vaguely apparent to him after a while that the immediate

question concerned the destruction of the books of a joint-stock company, of which Brown was the manager, an important point which the prosecution had some difficulty in bringing home to him. After it had been proved that the books had been destroyed, and that so far as was known it was to Brown's interest alone to destroy them, the evidence as to what had been seen on the evening on which this took place suddenly took a new turn, and seemed to introduce a new actor on the scene. Some one had been seen to enter the office in the twilight who could not be identified with Brown; whom, indeed, even Philip, with his boyish interest in the novelty of the proceedings, vaguely perceived to be another man. The action of the piece, so to speak (for it was like a play to Philip), changed and wavered here—and he began to be sensible of the character of the different players in it. The counsel for the prosecution was a well-known and eminent barrister, one of the most noted of the time, a man before whom witnesses trembled, and even the Bench itself was sometimes known to quail. That this was the case on the present occasion Philip vaguely perceived. There were points con-



tinually arising which the opposing counsel made objections to, appealing to the judge: but it rarely failed that the stronger side, which was that of the prosecution, won the day. The imperious accuser, whose resources of precedent and argument seemed boundless, carried everything with a high hand. The boy, of course, was not aware of the weakness of the representative of the majesty of the law, nor the inferiority, in force and skill, of the defence: but he gradually came to a practical perception of how the matter stood.

Philip listened with growing interest, sometimes amused, sometimes indignant, as the remorseless prosecutor ploughed his way through the witnesses, whom he bullied into admissions that they were certain of nothing, and that in the dusk of that far-off evening, the man whom they had sworn at the time to be quite unlike him, might in reality have been Brown. Philip got greatly interested in this question. He took up the opposite side himself with much heat, feeling as sure as if he had been there that it was not Brown: and he was delighted in his excitement, when there stood up one man who would not be bullied: a man who had the air

of a respectable clerk of the lower class, and who held his own. He had been an office boy, the son apparently of the housekeeper in charge of the premises referred to when the incident occurred, and the gist of his evidence was that the prisoner at the bar—so awful a personage once to the little office-boy, so curtly discussed now as Brown—had left the office at four o'clock in the afternoon of the 6th September, and had not appeared again.

‘A different gentleman altogether came in the evening, a much taller man, with a large moustache.’

‘Where was it that you saw this man?’

‘Slipping in at the side door of the office as if he didn't want to be seen.’

‘Was that a door which was generally open or used by the public?’

‘Never, sir; but none of the doors were used at that time of night.’

‘And how then could any one get admittance there?’

‘Only those that had private keys; the directors had their private keys.’

‘Then your conclusion was that it was a director, and that he had a right to be there?’

‘I knew it was a director, sir, because I knew the gentleman,’ the witness said.

‘You say it was late in the evening of the sixth of September. Was it daylight at the time?’

‘Oh, no, sir; nearly dark—a sort of a half light.’

‘Did the person you saw go in openly, or make any attempt at concealment?’

‘He had a light coat on, like the coats gentlemen wear when they go to the theatre, and something muffled round his throat, and his hat pulled down over his face.’

‘Like a person who wished to conceal himself?’

‘Yes, sir,’ said the witness.

‘And how, then, if he was muffled about the throat, and his hat pulled over his face, in the half light late in the evening, could you see that he had a large moustache?’

The witness stood and stared with his mouth open, and made no reply.

The counsel, with a louder voice and those intonations of contemptuous insinuation which are calculated to make a man feel that he is convicted of the basest perjury, and is being held up to the reprobation of the world, repeated the ques-

tion, 'How could you see that he had a large moustache?'

'I saw it,' said the witness hotly, 'because I knew the gentleman.'

'And how did you know the gentleman? You thought you recognised the gentleman, and therefore, though you could not possibly perceive it, you saw his moustache? I fear that is not an answer that will satisfy the jury.'

'I submit,' said the counsel for the defence, 'that it is very evident what the witness means. He recognised a man with whose appearance he was perfectly familiar.'

'I saw him,' said the witness, 'as clear as I see you, sir.'

'What! in the dark, late on a September night, with a coat collar up to his ears, and a hat pulled down over his face? You see my learned friend in broad daylight, and with the full advantage of standing opposite to him and studying his looks at your leisure. You might as well say because you know the gentleman that you could see his hair was dark and abundant under his wig.'

At this a laugh ran through the court, at which Philip listening was furiously indignant, as it interrupted the course of the investigation. It

was through the sound of this laugh that he heard the witness demand loudly, 'How could I be mistaken, when I saw Mr. Compton every day?'

Mr. Compton! Philip's heart began to beat like the hammers of a steam-engine. Was this, then, the real issue? And who was Mr. Compton? He could not have told how it was that he somehow identified the man whom the witness had seen, or had not seen, with the man who had the opera-glass, and who had fixed a dreadful blank stare upon the other in the witness-box during a great part of this discussion. Was it he who was on his trial, and not Brown? And who was he? And where was it that Philip had known and grown familiar with that face, which, so far as he could remember, he had never seen before, but which belonged to this man who bore his own name?

When the counsel for the prosecution had turned the unfortunate witness inside out, and proved that he knew nothing and had seen nobody: and that, besides, he was a man totally unworthy of credit, who had lied from his cradle, and whose own mother and friends put no trust in him, the court adjourned for lunch. But Philip

forgot that he required any lunch. His mind was filled with echoes of that name. He began to feel a strange certainty that it was the same man who had fixed him with the same gaze in the theatre. Who was Mr. Compton, and what was he? The question took the boy's breath away.

He sat through the interval, finding a place where he could see better, through the kind offices of the usher to whom Simmons had commended him, and waiting with impatience till the trial should be resumed. Nobody remarked the boy among the crowd of the ordinary public, many of whom remained, as he did, to see it out. Philip cared nothing about Brown: all that he wanted to know was about this namesake of his—this Compton, this other man, who was not Brown. If it was the man with the opera-glass, he was not so much excited as his young namesake, for he went to luncheon with the rest; while the boy remained counting the minutes, eager to begin the story, the drama again. The impression left, however, on Philip's impartial mind was that the last witness, though driven and badgered out of what wits he had by the examination, had really seen a man whom he

knew perfectly, his recognition of whom was not really affected either by the twilight or the disguise.

The thrill of interest which he felt running through all his veins as the court filled again was like, but stronger than, the interest with which he had ever seen the curtain rise in the theatre. His heart beat: he felt as if in some sort it was his own fate that was going to be decided: all his prepossessions were in favour of that other accused, yet not openly accused, person who was not Brown; and yet he felt almost as sure as if he had been there that the office-boy of twenty years ago had seen that man stealing in at the side door.

Young Philip did not catch the name of the next witness who was called: such a thing will happen sometimes even with the quickest ear at a moment when every whisper is important. If he had heard he would probably have thought that he was deceived by his excitement, impossible as it was that such a name should have anything to do with this or any other trial. The shock therefore was unbroken when, watching with all the absorbed interest of a spectator at the most exciting play, the boy saw a lady come slowly

forward into the witness-box. Philip had the same strange sense of knowing who it was that he had felt the previous witness to have in respect to the man whom he could not see, but yet had infallibly recognised: but he said to himself, No! it was not possible! No! it was not possible! She came forward slowly, put up the veil that had covered her face, and grasped the bar before her to support herself; and then the boy sprang to his feet, in the terrible shock which electrified him from head to feet! His movements, and the stifled cry he uttered, made a little commotion in the crowd, and called forth the cry of 'Silence in the court.' His neighbours around him hustled him back into his place, where he sank down incapable indeed of movement, knowing that he could not go and pluck her from that place—could not rush to her side, could do nothing but sit there and gasp and gaze at his mother. His mother, in such a place! in such a case! with which—surely, surely—she could have nothing to do. Elinor Compton, at the time referred to Elinor Dennistoun, of Windyhill, in Surrey—there was no doubt about the name now. And Philip had time enough to identify everything, name and person, for there rose a vague



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surging of contention about the first questions put to her, which were not evidence, according to the counsel on the other side, which he felt with fury was done on purpose to prolong the agony. During this time she stood immovable, holding on by the rail before her, her eyes fixed upon it, perfectly pale, like marble, and as still. Among all the moving, rustling, palpitating crowd, and the sharp volleys of the lawyers' voices, and even the contradictory opinions elicited from the harassed judge himself—to look at that figure standing there, which scarcely seemed to breathe, had the most extraordinary effect. For a time Philip was like her, scarcely breathing, holding on in an unconscious sympathy to the back of the seat before him, his eyes wide open, fixed upon her. But as his nerves began to accustom themselves to that extraordinary, inconceivable sight, the other particulars of the scene came out of the mist, and grew apparent to him in a lurid light that did not seem the light of day. He saw the eager looks at her of the ladies in the privileged places, the whispers that were exchanged among them. He saw underneath the witness-box, almost within reach of her, John Tatham with an anxious look on his face. And

then he saw, what was the most extraordinary of all, the man—who had been the centre of his interest till now—the man whose name was Philip Compton, like his own; he who fixed the last witness with the stare of his opera-glass, who had kept it in perpetual use. He had put it down now on the table before him, his arms were folded on his breast, and his head bent. Philip thought he detected now and then a furtive look under his brows at the motionless witness awaiting through the storm of words the moment when her turn would come: but though he had leant forward all the time, following every point of the proceedings with interest, he now drew back, effaced himself, retired as it were from the scene. What was there between these two? Was there any link between them? What was the drama about to be played out before Pippo's innocent and ignorant eyes? At last the storm and wrangling seemed to come to an end, and there came out low but clear the sound of her voice. It seemed only now, when he heard his mother speak, that he was certified that so inconceivable a thing as that she should be here was a matter of fact: his mother here! Philip fixed his whole being upon her—eyes, thoughts,

absorbed attention, he scarcely seemed to breathe except through her. Could she see him, he wondered, through all that crowd? But then he perceived that she saw nothing with those eyes that looked steadily in front of her, not turning a glance either to the right or left.

For some time Philip was baffled completely by the questions put, which were those to which the counsel on the other side objected as not evidence, and which seemed even to the boy's inexperienced mind, to be mere play upon the subject, attempts to connect her in some way with the question as to Brown's guilt or innocence. Something in the appearance, at this stage, of a lady so unlike the other witnesses, seemed to exercise a certain strange effect, however, quickening everybody's interest, and when the examining counsel approached the question of the date which had already been shown to be so momentous, all interruptions were silenced, and the court in general, like Philip, held its breath. There were many there expecting what are called in the newspapers, 'revelations': the defence was taken by surprise, and did not know what new piece of evidence was about to be produced: and even the ex-

aming counsel was, for such a man, subdued a little by the other complicating threads of the web among which he had to pick his way.

‘You recollect,’ he said in his most soothing tones, ‘the evening of the 6th September, 1863?’

She bowed her head in reply. And then as if that was sparing herself too much, added a low ‘Yes.’

‘As I am instructed, you were not then married, but engaged to Mr. Philip Compton. Is that so?’

‘Yes.’

‘One of the directors of the company of which the defendant was manager?’

‘I believe so.’

‘I am sorry to have to enter upon matters so private: but there was some question, I believe, about an investment to be made of a portion of your fortune in the hands of this company?’

‘Yes.’

‘You received a visit from Mr. Compton on the subject on the day I have mentioned?’

The witness made a slight movement and pause: then answered as before, but more firmly, ‘Yes’: she added, ‘not on this subject,’ in a lower tone.

‘You can recollect, more or less exactly, the time of his arrival?’

‘Yes. It was in the evening, after dinner; in the darkening before the lamps were lit.’

‘Were you looking for him on that night?’

‘No; it was an unexpected visit. He was going to Ireland, and paused on his way through town to come down to Windyhill.’

‘You have particular reasons for remembering the date, which make it impossible that there could be any mistake?’

‘No; there could be no mistake.’

‘You will perhaps inform the court, Mrs. Compton, why your memory is so exact on this point.’

Once more she hesitated for a moment, and then replied—

‘It was exactly ten days before my marriage.’

‘I think that will do, Mrs. Compton. I will trouble you no further,’ the counsel said.

The hubbub which sprang up upon this seemed to Philip for the moment as if it were directed against his mother, which, of course, was not the case, but intended to express the indignant surprise of the defence at the elaborate examination of a witness who had nothing to say on the main subject.

The leader on the other side, however, though taken by surprise, and denouncing the trick which his learned brother had played upon the court by producing evidence which had really nothing to do with the matter, announced his intention to put a further question or two to Mrs. Compton. Young Philip in the crowd started again from his seat with the feeling that he would like to fly at that man's throat.

'Twenty-years is a long time,' he said, 'and it is difficult to be sure of any circumstance at such a distance. Perhaps the witness will kindly inform us what were the circumstances which fixed this, no doubt one of many visits, on her mind?'

Elinor turned for the first time to the side from which the question came with a little movement of that impatience which was habitual to her, which three persons in that crowd recognised in a moment as characteristic. One of these was John Tatham, who had brought her to the court, and kept near that she might feel that she was not alone; the other was her son, of whose presence there nobody knew; the third—sat with his eyes cast down, and his arms folded on his breast, not looking at her, yet seeing every movement she made.

‘It was a very simple circumstance,’ she said, with the added spirit of that impetuous impulse: but then the hasty movement failed her, and she came back to herself and to a consciousness of the scene in which she stood. A sort of tremulous shiver came into her voice. She paused and then resumed, ‘There was a calendar hanging in the hall; it caught Mr. Compton’s eye, and he pointed it out to me. It marked the sixth. He said, “Just ten days”——’

Here her voice stopped altogether. She could say no more. And there was an answering pause throughout the whole crowded court, a holding of the general breath, the response to a note of passion seldom struck in such a place. Even in the cross-examination there was a pause.

‘Till when? What was the other date referred to?’

‘The sixteenth of September,’ she said in a voice that was scarcely audible to the crowd. She added still more low so that the judge curved his hand over his ear to hear her, ‘Our wedding day.’


‘I regret to enter into private matters, Mrs. Compton, but I believe it is not a secret that your married life came to a—more rapid conclusion

than could have been augured from such a beginning. May I ask what your reasons were for——’

But here the other counsel sprang to his feet, and the contention arose again. Such a question was clearly not permissible. And the prosecution was perfectly satisfied with the evidence. It narrowed the question by the production of this clear and unquestionable testimony—the gentleman whom it had been attempted to involve being thus placed out of the question, and all the statements of the previous witness about the moustache which he could not see, &c., set aside.

Philip, it may be supposed, paid little attention to this further discussion. His eyes and thoughts were fixed upon his mother, who for a minute or two stood motionless through it, as pale as ever, but with her head a little thrown back, facing, though not looking at, the circling lines of faces. Had she seen anything she must have seen the tall boy standing up as pale as she, following her movements with an unconscious repetition which was more than sympathy, never taking his gaze from her face.

And then presently her place was empty, and she was gone.





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Philip was not aware how the discussion of the lawyers ended, but only that in a moment there was vacancy where his mother had been standing, and his gaze seemed thrown back to him by the blank where she had been. He was left in the midst of the crowd, which, after that one keen sensation, fell back upon the real trial with interest much less keen.

## CHAPTER XLV.

PHILIP did not know how long he remained, almost paralyzed, in the court, dazed in his mind, incapable of movement. He was in the centre of a long row of people, and to make his way out was difficult. He felt that the noise would call attention to him, and that he might be somehow identified—identified, as what? He did not know—his head was not clear enough to give any reason. When he came more to himself, and his eyes regained a little their power of vision, it seemed to him that everybody had stolen away. There was the judge, indeed, still sitting imperturbable, the jury restless in their box, the lawyers' going on with their eternal quarrel over a bewildered witness, all puppets carrying on some unintelligible,

wearisome, automaton process, contending for ever about nothing. But all that had secured Philip's attention was gone. John Tatham's head was no longer visible under the witness-box: the ladies had disappeared from their elevated seats: the man with the opera-glass was gone. They were all gone, and the empty husks of a question which only concerned the comfort and life of the commonplace culprit in the dock were being turned over and over like chaff by the wind. And yet it was some time before poor young Pippo, shy of attracting attention, feeling some subtle change even in himself which he did not understand, afraid to have people look at him and divine him, knowing more of him perhaps than he himself knew, could make up his mind to move. He might have remained there till the court broke up but for the movement of someone beside him, who gathered up his hat and umbrella, and with some commotion pushed his way between the rows of seats. Philip followed, thankful of the opportunity, and, as it happened, the sensation of the day being over, many others followed too, and thus he got out into the curious, wondering daylight, which seemed

to look him in the face, as if this Philip had never been seen by it before. That was the impression given him—that when he first came out the atmosphere quivered round him with a strange novelty, as if he were some other being, someone without a name, new to the world, new to himself. He did not seem sure that he would know his way home, and yet he did not call a passing hansom, as he would have done yesterday, with a schoolboy's pleasure in assuming a man's careless, easy ways. It is a long way from the law-courts to Ebury Street, but it seemed a kind of satisfaction to be in motion, to walk on along the crowded streets. And, as a matter of fact, Philip did lose his way, and got himself entangled in a web of narrow streets and monotonous little openings, all so like each other that it took him a long time to extricate himself and find again the thread of a locality known to him. He did not know what he was to do when he got in. Should he find her there, in the little dingy drawing-room as usual, with the tea on the table? Would she receive him with her usual smile, and ask where he had been and what he had seen, and if the Marshalls had enjoyed it, exactly as if nothing had

happened? Even this wonder was faint in Philip's mind, for the chief wonder to him was himself, and to find out how he had changed since the morning—what he was now, who he was? what were the relations to him of other people, of that other Philip Compton who had been seated in the court with the opera-glass, who had arrived at Windyhill to visit Elinor Dennistoun on the sixth of September, 1863, twenty years ago? Who was that man? and what was he, himself Philip Compton, of Lakeside, called Pippo, whom his mother had never once in all his life addressed by his real name?

To his great wonder, and yet almost relief, Philip found that his mother had not yet returned when he got to Ebury Street. 'Mrs. Compton said as she would very likely be late. Can I get you some tea, sir? or, perhaps, you haven't had your lunch, for you're looking tired and worried,' said the landlady, who had known Pippo all his life. He consented to have tea, partly to fill up the time, and went up languidly to the deserted room, which looked so miserable and desert a place without her who put a soul into it and made it home. He did not know what to do with himself, poor boy, but sat

down vacantly, and stared into empty space, seeing, wherever he turned, the rows of faces, the ladies making signs to each other, the red robes of the judge, the lawyers contending, and that motionless pale figure in the witness-box. He shut his eyes and saw the whole scene, then opened them again, and still saw it—the dingy walls disappearing, the greyness of the afternoon giving a depth and distance to the limited space. Should he always carry it about with him wherever he went, the vision of that court, the shock of that revelation? He did not yet know what the revelation was; the confusion in his mind was too great, amidst the dust and mist that rose up about him as all the old building of his life crumbled and fell away.

‘I’m sure as it’s that nasty trial, sir, as has been turning your mamma all out of her usual ways,’ said the landlady, appearing with her tray.

‘Oh, the trial! Did you know about the trial?’ said Philip.

‘Not, Mr. Pippo, as she ever mentioned it to me. Mrs. Compton is a lady as isn’t that confidential, though always an affable lady, and not a bit proud; but when you’ve known folks for

years and years, and take an interest, and put this and that together.—Dear, dear, I hope as you don't think it's taking a liberty. It's more kindness nor curiosity, sir, and I hope as you won't mention it to your mamma.'

Pippo shook his head and waved his hand, at once to satisfy the woman and dismiss her if possible: but this was not so easy to do.

'And Lord St. Serf so bad, sir,' she said. 'Lord, to think that before we know where we are there may be such changes, and new names, and no knowing what to say! But it's best not talk of it till it comes to pass, for there's many a slip between the cup and the lip, and there's no saying what will happen with a man that's been a-dying for years and years.'

What did the woman mean? He got rid of her at length, chiefly by dint of making no reply: and then, to tell the truth, Pippo's eye had been caught by the pile of sandwiches which the kind woman, pitying his tired looks, had brought up with the tea. He was ashamed of himself for being hungry in such a dreadful emergency as this, but he was so, and could not help it, though nothing would have made him confess so much, or even touch the sandwiches

till she had gone away. He pretended to ignore them till the door was shut after her, but could not help vividly remembering that he had eaten nothing since the morning. The sandwiches did him a little good in his mind as well as in his body. He got rid of the vision of the faces and of the red figure on the bench. He began to believe that when he saw his mother she would tell him. Had she not said that after a while he should hear everything, and that all should be as it was before? All as it was before—in the time when she told him everything, even things that granny did not know. But she had never told him this, and the other day she had told him that it was other people's secrets, not her own, that she was keeping from him. 'Other people's secrets'—the secrets of the man who was Philip Compton, who went to Windyhill on the sixth of September, ten days before Elinor Dennistoun's marriage-day. What Philip Compton? Who was he? What had he to do with her? What, oh, what, Pippo said to himself, has he to do with me? After all, that was the most tremendous question. The others, or anything that had happened twenty years ago, were nothing to that.



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Meanwhile Elinor, of all places in the world, was in John Tatham's chambers, to which he had taken her to rest. I cannot tell how Mr. Tatham, a man so much occupied, managed to subtract from all he had to do almost a whole day to see his cousin through the trial, and stand by her, sparing her all the lesser annoyances which surround and exaggerate such a great fact. He had brought her out into the fresh air, feeling that movement was the best thing for her, and instead of taking her home in the carriage which was waiting, had made her walk with him, supported on his arm, on which she hung in a sort of suspended life, across the street to the Temple, hoping thus to bring her back, by the necessity of exertion, to herself. And indeed she was almost more restored to herself by this remedy than John Tatham had expected or hoped. For though he placed her in the great easy-chair, in which her slender person was engulfed and supported, expecting her to rest there and lie motionless, perhaps even to faint, as women are supposed to do when it is particularly inconvenient and uncomfortable, Elinor had not been there two minutes before she rose up again and began to walk

about the room, with an aspect so unlike that of an exhausted and perhaps fainting woman, that even John, used as he was to her capricious ways, was confounded. Instead of being subdued and thankful that it was over, and this dreadful crisis in her life accomplished, Elinor walked up and down, wringing her hands, moaning and murmuring to herself; what was it she was saying? 'God forgive me! God forgive me!' over and over and over again, unconscious apparently that she was not alone, that any one heard or observed her. No doubt there is in all our actions, the very best, much for God to forgive; mingled motives, imperfect deeds, thoughts full of alloy and selfishness; but in what her conscience could accuse her now he could not understand. She might be to blame in respect to her husband, though he was very loth to allow the possibility; but in this act of her life, which had been so great a strain upon her, it was surely without any selfishness, for his interest only, not for her own. And yet John had never seen such a fervour of penitence, so strong a consciousness of evil done. He went up to her, and laid his hand upon her arm.

'Elinor, you are worn out. You have done too

much. Will you try and rest a little here, or shall I take you home?’

She started violently when he touched her.

‘What was I saying?’ she said.

‘It does not matter what you were saying. Sit down and rest. You will wear yourself out. Don’t think any more. Take this and rest a little, and then I will take you home.’

‘It is easy to say so,’ she said with a faint smile. ‘Don’t think! Is it possible to stop thinking at one’s pleasure?’

‘Yes,’ said John, ‘quite possible; we must all do it or we should die. And now your trial’s over, Nelly, for goodness’ sake, exert yourself and throw it off. You have done your duty.’

‘My duty! do you think that was my duty? Oh, John, there are so many ways to look at it.’

‘Only one way, when you have a man’s safety in your hands.’

‘Only one way—when one has a man’s safety—his honour, honour! Do you think a woman is justified in whatever she does, to save that?’

‘I don’t understand you, Elinor; in anything you have done, or could do, certainly you are justified. My dear Nelly, sit down and take this. And then I will take you home.’

She took the wine from his hand and swallowed a little of it; and then looking up into his face with the faint smile which she put on when she expected to be blamed, and intended to deprecate and disarm him, as she had done so often, 'I don't know,' she said, 'that I am so anxious to get home, John. You were to take Pippo to dine with you, and to the House to-night.'

'So I was,' he said. 'We did not know what day you would be called. It is a great nuisance, but if you think the boy would be disappointed not to go——'

'He would be much, much disappointed. The first chance he has had of hearing a debate.'

'He would be much better at home, taking care of you.'

'As if I wanted taking care of! or as if the boy, who has always been the object of everybody's care himself, would be the proper person to do it! If he had been a girl, perhaps—but it is a little late at this time of day to wish for that now.'

'You were to tell him everything to-night, Elinor.'

'Oh, I was to tell him! Do you think I have not had enough for one day? enough to wear

me out body and soul? You have just been telling me so, John.'

He shook his head. 'You know,' he said, 'and I know, that in any case you will have it your own way, Elinor; but you have promised me to tell him.'

'John, you are unkind. You take advantage of me being here, and so broken down, to say that I will have my own way. Has this been my own way at all? I would have fled if I could, and taken the boy far, far away from it all; but you would not let me. Yes, yes, I have promised. But I am tired to death. How could I look him in the face and tell him——' She hid her face suddenly in her hands with a moan.

'It will be in the papers to-morrow morning, Elinor.'

'Well! I will tell him to-morrow morning,' she said.

John shook his head again; but it was done behind her, where she could not see the movement. He had more pity for her than words could say. When she covered her face with her hands in that most pathetic of attitudes, there was nothing that he would not have forgiven her. What was to become of her now? Her position

through all these years had never been so dangerous, in John's opinion, never so sad as now. Philip Compton had been there looking on while she put his accusers to silence, at what cost to herself John only began dimly to guess; and guessing forbade himself to inquire. The fellow had been there all the time. He had the grace not to look at her, not to distract her with the sight of him—probably for his own sake, John thought bitterly, that she might not risk breaking down. But he was there, and knew where she was to be found. And he had seen the boy, and had cared enough to fix his gaze upon him, that gaze which John had found intolerable at the theatre. And he was on the eve of becoming Lord St. Serf, and Pippo his heir. What was to be the issue of these complications? What was to happen to her who had hid the boy so long, who certainly could hide him no more?

He took her home to Ebury Street shortly after, when Philip, weary of waiting, and having made a meal he much wanted off the sandwiches, had gone out again in his restlessness and unhappiness. Elinor, who had become paler and paler as the carriage approached Ebury Street, and who by the time she reached the house, looked

really as if at last she must swoon, her heart choking her, her breathing quick and feverish, had taken hold of John to support herself, clutching at his arm. When she was told that Philip was out she came to herself instantly on the strength of the news. 'Tell him when he comes in to make haste,' she said, 'for Mr. Tatham is waiting for him. As for me, I am fit for nothing but bed. I have had a very tiring day.'

'You do look tired, ma'am,' said the sympathetic landlady. 'I'll run up and put your room ready, and then I'll make you a nice cup of tea.'

John Tatham thought that, notwithstanding her exhaustion, her anxiety, all the realities of trouble present and to come that were in her mind and in her way, there was a flash of something like triumph in Elinor's eyes. 'Tell Pippo,' she said, 'he can come up and say good-night to me before he goes. I am good for nothing but my bed. If I can sleep I shall be able for all that is before me to-morrow.' The triumph was quenched, however, if there had been triumph, when she gave him her hand with a wistful smile, and a sigh that filled that to-morrow with the terror and the trouble that must be in it, did she do what she said. John went up to the little drawing-room to

wait for Pippo, with a heavy heart. It seemed to him that never had Elinor been in so much danger. She had exposed herself to the chance of losing the allegiance of her son: she was at the mercy of her husband, that husband whom she had renounced, yet whom she had not refused to save, whose call she had obeyed to help him, though she had thrown off all the bonds of love and duty towards him. She had not had the strength either way to be consistent, to carry out one steady policy. It was cruel of John to say this, for but for him and his remonstrances Elinor would, or might have, fled, and avoided this last ordeal. But she had not done so, and now here she was, in the middle of her life, her frail ship of safety driven about among the rocks, dependent upon the magnanimity of the husband from whom she had fled, and the child whom she had deceived.

‘Your mother is very tired, Philip,’ he said, when the boy appeared. ‘I was to tell you to go and bid her good-night before you went out: for it will probably be late before you get back, if you think you are game to sit out the debate.’

‘I will sit it out,’ said Philip, with no laughter



in his eye, with an almost solemn air, as if announcing a grave resolution. He went upstairs, not three steps at a time, as was his wont, but soberly, as if his years had been forty instead of eighteen. And he showed no surprise to find the room darkened, though Elinor was a woman who loved the light. He gave his mother a kiss and smoothed her pillow with a tender touch of pity. 'Is your head very bad?' he said.

'It is only that I am dreadfully tired, Pippo. I hope I shall sleep, and it will help me to think you are happy with Uncle John.'

'Then I shall try to be happy with Uncle John,' he said, with a sort of smile. 'Good night, mother; I hope you'll be better to-morrow.'

'Oh, yes,' she said. 'To-morrow is always a new day.'

He seemed in the half light to nod his head, and then to shake it, as one that assents, but doubts—having many troubled thoughts and questions in his mind. But Pippo did not at all expect to be happy with Uncle John.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

It cannot be said that Uncle John was very happy with Philip, but that was a thing the others did not take into account. John Tatham was doing for the boy as much as a man could do. A great debate was expected that evening, in which many eminent persons were to speak, and Mr. Tatham gave Philip a hasty dinner in the House so that he should lose nothing, and he found him a corner in the distinguished strangers' gallery, telling him with a smile that he expected him hereafter to prove his title to such a place. But Philip's smile in return was very unlike the flush of pleasure that would have lighted it up only yesterday. John felt that the boy was not at all the delightful young companion, full of interest in everything, that he had been. Perhaps he was on his good

behaviour, on his dignity, bent upon showing how much of a man he was and how little influenced by passing sentiments, as some boys do. Anyhow it was certain that he was much less agreeable in this self-subdued condition. But John was fortunately much interested in the discussion, in which, indeed, he took himself a slight part, and, save for a passing wonder and the disappointment of the moment, did not occupy himself so very much with Pippo. When he looked into the corner, however, in a lull of the debate, when one of those fools who rush in at unguarded moments, when the Speaker chances to look their way, had managed to get upon his foolish feet to the despair of all around, the experienced man of the world received a curious shock from the sight of young Philip's intense gravity, and the self-absorbed, unconscious look he wore. The boy had the look of hearing nothing, seeing nothing that was around him, of being lost in thoughts of his own, thoughts far too serious and troubled for his age. Had he discovered something? What did he know? This was the instinctive question that rose in John's mind, and not an amused anticipation of Pippo's original boyish view of the question and

the speakers, such as had delighted him on the boy's previous visits to the House. And indeed Philip's attention was little fixed upon the debate. He tried hard to bring it back, to keep it there, to get the question into his mind, but in spite of himself his thoughts flew back to the other public assembly in which he had sat unnoticed that day: till gradually the aspect of things changed to him, the Speaker became the judge, the wigged clerks became the pleaders, and he almost expected to see that sudden apparition, that sight that had plucked him out of his careless life of boyhood and trust, the sight of his mother standing before the world on trial for her life. Oh, no, no, not on trial at all! he was aware of that: a harmless witness, doing only good. The judge could have nothing but polite regard for her, the jury admiration and thanks for the clear testimony which took a weight from their shoulders. But before her son she was on her trial, her trial for more than life—and he who had said with so much assurance that his mother had no secrets from him! until the moment arrived, without any warning, in the midst of his security, which proved that everything had been secret, and

that all was mystery—all mystery! and nothing sure in life.

It crossed Philip's mind more than once to question John Tatham upon this dreadful discovery of his—John, who was a relation, who had been the universal referee of the household as long as he could remember, Uncle John must know. But there were two things which held him back: first, the recollection of his own disdainful offence at the suggestion that Uncle John, an outsider, could know more than he did of the family concerns; and partly from the proud determination to ask no questions, to seek no information that was not freely given to him. He made up his mind to this while he looked out from his corner upon the lighted House, seeing men move up and down, and voices going on, and the sound of restless members coming and going, while the business of the country went on. It was far more important than any private affairs that could be passing in an individual brain, and Philip knew with what high-handed certainty he would have put down the idea that to himself at his age there could be anything private half so exciting, half so full of interest, as a debate on the policy of

the country which might carry with it the highest issues. But conviction comes readily on such subjects when the personal interest comes which carries every other away. It was while a minister was speaking, and everything hanging on his words, that the boy made up his mind finally that he would ask no questions. He would ignore that scene in the law-courts as if it had not been. He would say nothing, try to look as if nothing had passed, and wait to see if there would be any explanation.

It was not, perhaps, then to be wondered at if John found him a much less interesting companion than ever before, as they walked home together in the small hours of the night. Mr. Tatham's own speech had been short, but he had the agreeable consciousness that it had been an effective one, and he was prepared to find the boy excited by it, and full of applause and satisfaction. But Philip did not say a word about the speech. He was only a boy, and it may be supposed that any applause from him would have had little importance for the famous lawyer—the highly esteemed member who kept his independence, and whose speeches always secured the attention of the House, and carried

weight as among the few utterances which concerned the real import of a question and not its mere party meaning. But John was hurt more than he could have thought possible by Philip's silence. He even tried to lead the conversation artfully to that point in the debate, thinking perhaps the boy was shy of speaking on the subject—but with no effect. It was exceedingly strange. Had he been deceived in Philip? had the boy really no interest in subjects of an elevated description? or was he ill? or what was the matter with him? It troubled John to let him go on alone from Halkin Street to his lodging, with a vague sense that something might happen. But that was, of course, too absurd. 'Tell your mother I'll come round in the afternoon to-morrow, as soon as I am free,' he said, holding Philip's hand. And then he added paternally, still holding that hand, 'Go to bed at once, boy. You've had a tiring day.'

'Yes—I suppose so,' said Philip, drawing his hand away.

'I hope you haven't done too much,' said John, still lingering. 'You're too young for politics—and to sit up so late. I was wrong to keep you out of bed.'

‘I hope I’m not such a child as that,’ said Philip, with a half smile: and then he went away, and John Tatham, with an anxious heart, closed behind him his own door. If it were not for Elinor and her boy what a life free of anxiety John would have had! Never any need to think with solicitude of anything outside that peaceful door, no trouble with other people’s feelings, with investigations what this or that look or word meant. But perhaps it was Elinor and her boy, after all (none of his! thinking of him as an outsider, having nothing to do with their most intimate circle of confidence and natural defence) who, by means of that very anxiety, kept alive the highest principles of humanity in John Tatham’s heart.

Philip went home, walking quickly through the silent streets. They were very silent at that advanced hour, yet not so completely but that there was a beggar who came up to the boy at the corner. Philip neither knew nor desired to know what he said. He thought nothing about him one way or another. He took a shilling out of his pocket and threw it to him as he passed—walking on with the quick, elastic step which the sudden acquaintance he



had made with care had not been able to subdue. He saw that there was still a faint light in his mother's window when he reached the house, but he would not disturb her. How little would he have thought of disturbing her on any other occasion! 'Are you asleep, mother?' he would have said, looking in; and the time had never been when Elinor was asleep. She had always heard him, always replied, always been delighted to hear the account of what he had been doing, and how he had enjoyed himself. But not to-night. With a heart full of longing, yet of a sick revolt against the sight of her, he went past her door to his room. He did not want to see her, and yet—oh, if she had only called to him, if she had but said a word!

Elinor for her part was not asleep. She had slept a little while she was sure that Philip was safely disposed of and herself secured from all interruption; but when the time came for his return she slept no longer, and had been lying for a long time holding her breath, listening to every sound, when she heard his key in the latch and his foot on the stair. Would he come in as he always did? or would he remember her complaint of being tired, a complaint she so

seldom made? It was as a blow to Elinor when she heard his step go on past her door: and yet she was glad. Had he come in, there was a desperate thought in her mind that she would call him to her bedside and in the dark with his hand in hers, tell him—all that there was to tell. But it was again a relief when he passed on, and she felt that she was spared for an hour or two, spared for the new day, which perhaps would give her courage. It was an endless night, long hours of dark, and then longer hours of morning light, too early for anything, while still nobody in the house was stirring. She had scarcely slept at all during that long age of weary and terrible thought. For it was not as if she had but one thing to think of. When her mind turned, like her restless body, from one side to another, it was only to a change of pain. What was it she had said, standing up before earth and heaven, and calling God to witness that what she said was true? It had been true, and yet she knew that it was not, and that she had saved her husband's honour at the cost of her own. Oh, not in those serious and awful watches of the night can such a defence be accepted as that the letter of her testimony was true! She

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did not attempt to defend herself. She only tried to turn to another thought that might be less bitter, and then she was confronted by the confession that she must make to her boy. She must tell him that she had deceived him all his life, hid from him what he ought to have known, separated him from his father and his family, kept him in ignorance, despite all that had been said to her, despite every argument. And when Elinor in her misery fled from that thought, what was there else to think of? There was her husband, Pippo's father, from whom he could no longer be kept. If she had thought herself justified in stealing her child away out of fear of the influence that father might have upon him, how would it be now when they must be restored to each other, at an age much more dangerous for the boy than in childhood, and with all the attractions of mystery and novelty and the sense that his father had been wronged? When she escaped from that the most terrible thought of all, feeling her brain whirl and her heart burn as she imagined her child turning from the mother who had deceived him to the father who had been deprived of him, her mind went off to that father himself, from whom she had fled, whom

she had judged and condemned, but who had repaid her by no persecution, no interference, no pursuit, but an acceptance of her verdict, never molesting her, leaving her safe in the possession of her boy. Perhaps there were other ways in which Phil Compton's magnanimity might have been looked at, in which it would have shown in less favourable colours. But Elinor was not ready to take that view. Her tower of justice and truth and honour had crumbled over her head. She was standing among her ruins, feeling that nothing was left to her, nothing upon which she could build herself a structure of self-defence. All was wrong; a series of mistakes, and failures, to say no worse. She had driven on ever wilful all through, escaping from every pang she could avoid, throwing off every yoke that she did not choose to bear: until now here she stood to face all that she had fled from, unable to elude them more, meeting them as so many ghosts in her way. Oh, how true it was what John had said to her so long, so long ago—that she was not one who would bear; who if she were disappointed and wronged could endure and surmount her trouble by patience! Oh, no, no! She had been one who had put up with nothing,

who had taken her own way. And now she was surrounded on every side by the difficulties she had thrust away from her, but which now could be thrust away no more.

It may be imagined what the night was which Elinor spent sleepless, struggling one after another with these thoughts, finding no comfort anywhere she turned. She had not been without many a struggle even in the most quiet of the years that had passed—in one long dream of peace as it seemed now: but never as now had she been met wherever she turned by another and another lion in the way. She got up very early, with a feeling that movement had something lulling and soothing in it, and that to lie there a prey to all these thoughts was like lying on the rack—to the great surprise of the kind landlady, who came stealing into her room with the inevitable cup of tea, and whose inquiry how the poor lady was, was taken out of her mouth by the unexpected apparition of the supposed invalid, fully dressed, moving about the room, with all the air of having been up for hours. Elinor asked, with a sudden precaution, that the newspapers might be brought up to her, not so much for her own satisfaction—for it

made her heart sick to think of reading over in dreadful print, as would be done that morning at millions of breakfast-tables, her own words: perhaps with comments on herself and her history, which might fall into Pippo's hands, and be read by him before he knew: which was a sudden spur to herself and evidence of the dread necessity of letting him know that story from her own lips, which had not occurred to her before. She glanced over the report with a sickening sense that all the privacy of sheltered life and honourable silence was torn off from her, and that she was exposed as on a pillory to the stare and the remarks of the world, and crushed the paper away like a noxious thing into a drawer where the boy at least would never find it. Vain thought! as if there was but one paper in the world, as if he could not find it at every street corner, thrust into his hand even as he walked along; but at all events for the moment he would not see it, and she would have time—time to tell him before that revelation could come in his way. She went downstairs, with what a tremor in her and sinking of her heart it would be impossible to say. To have to condemn herself to her only child: to humble herself before him, her boy, who thought

there was no one like his mother : to let him know that he had been deceived all his life, he who thought she had always told him everything. Oh, poor mother! and oh, poor boy!

She was still sitting by the breakfast-table, waiting, in a chill fever, if such a thing can be, for Philip, when a thing occurred which no one could have thought of, and yet which was the most natural thing in the world—which came upon Elinor like a thunderbolt—shattering all her plans again just at the moment when, after so much shrinking and delay, she had at last made up her mind to the one thing that must be done at once. The sound of the driving up of a cab to the door made her go to the window to look out, without producing any expectation in her mind : for people were coming and going in Ebury Street all day long. She saw, however, a box which she recognised upon the cab, and then the door was opened and Mrs. Dennistoun stepped out. Her mother! the wonder was not that she came now, but that she had not come much sooner. No letters for several days, her child and her child's child in town, and trouble in the air! Mrs. Dennistoun had borne it as long as she could, but there had come a moment when she could

bear it no longer, and she too had followed Pippo's example and taken the night mail. Elinor stood motionless at the window, and saw her mother arrive, and did not feel capable of going to meet her, or of telling whether it was some dreadful aggravation of evil, or an interposition of Providence to save her for another hour at least from the ordeal before her.



## CHAPTER XLVII.

MRS. DENNISTOUN had a great deal to say about herself and the motives which had at the last been too much for her, which had forced her to come after her children at a moment's notice, feeling that she could bear the uncertainty about them no longer; and it was a thing so unusual with her to have much to say about herself that there was certainly something apologetic, something self-defensive in this unaccustomed outburst. Perhaps she had begun to feel a little the unconscious criticism that gathers round the elder person in a house, the inclination involuntarily—which every one would repudiate, yet which nevertheless is true—to attribute to her a want of perception, perhaps—oh, not unkindly!—a little blunting of the faculties, a suggestion quite unintentional that she is not what she once was. She explained herself so distinctly that there was

no doubt there was some self-defence in it. 'I had not had a letter for three days.'

And Elinor was far more humble than her wont. 'I know, mother: I felt as if it were impossible to write—till it was over—'

'My darling! I thought at last I must come and stand by you. I felt that I ought to have seen that all the time—that you should have had your mother by your side to give you countenance.'

'I had John with me, mother.'

'Then it is over!' Mrs. Dennistoun cried.

And at that moment Pippo, very late, pale, and with eyes which were red with sleeplessness, and perhaps with tears, came in. Elinor gave her mother a quick look, almost of blame, and then turned to the boy. She did not mean it, and yet Mrs. Dennistoun felt as if the suggestion, 'He might never have known had you not called out like that,' was in her daughter's eyes.

'Pippo!' she said; 'why, Elinor! what have you been doing to the boy?'

'He does not look well,' said Elinor, suddenly waking up to that anxiety which had been always so easily roused in respect to Pippo. 'He was very late last night. He was at the House with John,' she added involuntarily, with an apology

to her mother for the neglect which had extended to Pippo too.

‘There is nothing the matter with me,’ he said, with a touch of sullenness in his tone.

The two women looked at each other with all the vague trouble in their eyes suddenly concentrated upon young Philip: but they said nothing more, as he sat down at table and began to play with the breakfast, for which he had evidently no appetite. No one had ever seen that sullen look in Pippo’s face before. He bent his head over the table as if he were intent upon the food which choked him when he tried to eat, and which he loathed the very sight of—and did not say a word. They had certainly not been very light-hearted before, but the sight of the boy thus obscured and changed made all the misery more evident. There was always a possibility of overriding the storm so long as all was well with Pippo: but his changed countenance veiled the very sun in the skies.

‘You don’t seem surprised to see me here,’ his grandmother said.

‘Oh!—no, I am not surprised. I wonder you did not come sooner. Have you been travelling all night?’ he said.

‘Just as you did, Pippo. I drove into Penrith last night and caught the mail train. I was seized with a panic about you, and felt that I must see for myself.’

‘It is not the first time you have taken a panic about us, mother,’ said Elinor, forcing a smile.

‘No; but it is almost the first time I have acted upon it,’ said Mrs. Dennistoun, with that faint instinct of self-defence; ‘but I think you must have needed me more than usual to keep you in order. You must have been going out too much, keeping late hours. You are pale enough, Elinor, but Pippo—Pippo has suffered still more.’

‘I tell you,’ said Philip, raising his shoulders and stooping his head over the table, ‘granny, that there is nothing the matter with me.’

And he took no part in the conversation as they went on talking of any subjects but those that were most near their hearts. They had, indeed, no thoughts at all to spare but those that were occupied with the situation, and with this new feature in it, Pippo’s worn and troubled looks, yet had to talk of something, of nothing, while the meal went on, which was no meal at all for any of them. When it was over at last Pippo rose abruptly from the table.

‘Are you going out?’ Elinor said, alarmed, rising too. ‘Have you any engagement with the Marshalls for to-day?’

‘I don’t know,’ Philip said; ‘Mr. Marshall was ill yesterday. I didn’t see them. I’m not going out. I am going to my room.’

‘You’ve got a headache, Pippo!’

‘Nothing of the kind! I tell you there is nothing the matter with me. I’m only going to my room.’

Elinor put her hands on his arm. ‘Pippo, I have something to say to you before you go out? Will you promise to let me know before you go out? I don’t want to keep you back from anything, but I have something that I must say.’

He did not ask with his usual interest what it was. He showed no curiosity; on the contrary, he drew his arm out of her hold almost rudely. ‘Of course,’ he said, ‘I will come in here before I go out. I have no intention of going out now.’

And thus he left them, and went with a heavy step, oh, how different from Pippo’s flying foot! so that they could count every step, upstairs.

‘What is the matter, what is the matter, Elinor?’

‘I know nothing,’ she said; ‘nothing! He was like himself yesterday morning, full of life.’

Unless he is ill, I cannot understand it. But, mother, I have to tell him—everything to-day.’

‘God grant it may not be too late, Elinor!’ Mrs. Dennistoun said.

‘Too late! How can it be too late? Yes; perhaps you are right, John and you. He ought to have known from the beginning; he ought to have been told when he was a child. I acknowledge that I was wrong; but it is no use,’ she said, wiping away some fiery tears, ‘to go back upon that now.’

‘John could not have told him anything?’ Mrs. Dennistoun said, doubtfully.

‘John! my best friend, who has always stood by me. Oh, never, never. How little you know him, mother! He has been imploring me every day, almost upon his knees, to tell Pippo everything: and I promised to do it as soon as the time was come. And then last night I was so glad to think that he was engaged with John, and I so worn out, not fit for anything. And then this morning——’

‘Then—this morning I arrived, just when I should have been better away!’

‘Don’t say that, mother. It is always, always well you should be with your children. And,

oh, if I had but taken your advice years and years ago!’

How easy it is to wish this when fate overtakes us, when the thing so long postponed, so long pushed away from us, has to be done at last! There is, I fear, no repentance in it, only the intolerable sense that the painful act might have been over long ago, and the soul free now of a burden which is so terrible to bear.

Philip did not leave his room all the morning. His mother, overwhelmed now by the new anxiety about his health, which had no part in her thoughts before, went to his door and knocked several times, always with the intention of going in, of insisting upon the removal of all barriers, and of telling her story, the story which now was as fire in her veins and had to be told. But he had locked his door, and only answered from within that he was reading—getting up something that he had forgotten—and begged her to leave him undisturbed till lunch. Poor Elinor! Her story was, as I have said, like fire in her veins; but when the moment came, and a little more delay, an hour, a morning was possible, she accepted it like a boon from heaven: though she knew very well all the same

that it was but prolonging the agony, and that to get it accomplished—to get it over—was the only thing to desire. She tried to arrange her thoughts, to think how she was to tell it, in the hurrying yet flying minutes when she sat alone, listening now and then to Philip's movements over her head, for he was not still as a boy should be who was reading, but moved about his room, with a nervous restlessness that seemed almost equal to her own. Mrs. Dennistoun, to leave her daughter free for the conversation that ought to take place between Elinor and her son, had gone to lie down, and lay in Elinor's room, next door to the boy, listening to every sound, and hoping, hoping that they would get it over before she went downstairs again. She did not believe that Philip would stand out against his mother, whom he loved. Oh, if they could but get it over, that explanation—if the boy but knew! But it was apparent enough, when she came down to luncheon, where Elinor awaited her, pale and anxious, and where Philip followed, so unlike himself, that no explanation had yet taken place between them. And the luncheon was as miserable a pretence at a meal as the breakfast had been—worse as a repetition, yet



better in so far that poor Pippo, with his boyish wholesome appetite, was by this time too hungry to be restrained even by the unusual burden of his unhappiness, and ate heartily, although he was bitterly ashamed of so doing: which perhaps made him a little better, and certainly did a great deal of good to the ladies, who thus were convinced that whatever the matter might be, he was not ill at least. He was about to return upstairs after luncheon was over, but Elinor caught him by the arm: 'You are not going to your room again, Pippo?'

'I—have not finished my reading,' he said.

'I have a claim before your reading. I have a great deal to say to you, and I cannot put it off any longer. It must be said——'

'As you please, mother,' he replied, with an air of endurance. And he opened the door for her and followed her up to the drawing-room, the three generations going one before the other, the anxious grandmother first, full of sympathy for both, the mother trembling in every limb, feeling the great crisis of her life before her, the boy with his heart seared, half bitter, half contemptuous of the explanation which he had forestalled, which came too late. Mrs. Dennis-

toun turned and kissed first one and then the other with quivering lips. 'Oh, Pippo, be kind to your mother; she never will have such need of your kindness again in all your life.' The boy could almost have struck her for this advice. It raised a kind of savage passion in him to be told to be kind to his mother—kind to her, when he had held her above all beings on the earth, and prided himself all his life upon his devotion to her! What Mrs. Dennistoun said to Elinor I cannot tell, but she clasped her hands and gave her an imploring look, which was almost as bitterly taken as her appeal to Philip. It besought her to tell everything, to hide nothing; and what was Elinor's meaning but to tell everything, to lay bare her heart?

But once more at this moment, an interruption—the most wonderful and unthought-of of all interruptions—came. I suppose it must have been announced by the usual summons at the street-door, and that in their agitation they had not heard it. But all that I know is, that when Mrs. Dennistoun turned to leave the mother and son to their conversation, which was so full of fate, the door of the drawing-room opened almost upon her as she was about to go out, and with

a little demonstration and pride, as of a name which it was a distinction even to be permitted to say, of a visitor whose arrival could not be but an honour and delightful surprise, the husband of the landlady—the man of the house, once a butler of the highest pretensions, now only condescending to serve his lodgers when the occasion was dignified—swept into the room, noiseless and solemn, holding open the door, and announced ‘Lord St. Serf.’ Mrs. Dennistoun fell back as if she had met a ghost; and Elinor, too, drew back a step, becoming as pale as if she had been the ghost her mother saw. The gasp of the long breath they both drew made a sound in the room where the very air seemed to tingle; and young Philip, raising his head, saw, coming in, the man whom he had seen in court—the man who had gazed at him in the theatre, the man of the opera-glass. But was this then not the Philip Compton for whom Elinor Dennistoun had stood forth, and borne witness before all the world?

He came in and stood without a word, waiting for a moment till the servant was gone and the door closed; and then he advanced with a step, the very assurance and quickness of which showed

his hesitation and uncertainty. He did not hold out his hands—much less his arms—to her. ‘Nell?’ he said, as if he had been asking a question, ‘Nell?’

She seemed to open her lips to speak, but brought forth no sound; and then Mrs. Dennistoun came in with the grave voice of every day, ‘Will you sit down?’

He looked round at her, perceiving her for the first time. ‘Ah,’ he said, ‘mamma! how good that you are here. It is a little droll though, don’t you think, when a man comes into the bosom of his family after an absence of eighteen years, that the only thing that is said to him should be, “Will you sit down?” Better that, however, a great deal, than “Will you go away?”’

He sat down as she invited him with a short laugh. He was perfectly composed in manner. Looking round him with curious eyes, ‘Was this one of the places,’ he said, ‘Nell, that we stayed in in the old times?’

She answered ‘No’ under her breath, her paleness suddenly giving way to a hot flush of feverish agitation. And then she took refuge in a vacant chair, unable to support herself, and

he sat too, and the party looked—but for that agitation in Elinor's face, which she could not master—as if the ladies were receiving and he paying a morning call. The other two, however, did not sit down. Young Philip, confused and excited, went away to the second room, the little back drawing-room of the little London house, which can never be made to look anything but an anteroom—never a habitable place—and went to the window, and stood there as if he were looking out, though the window was of coloured glass, and there was nothing to be seen. Mrs. Dennistoun stood with her hand upon the back of a chair, her heart beating too, and yet the most collected of them all, waiting with her eyes on Elinor for a sign to know her will, whether she should go or stay. It was the visitor who was the first to speak.

‘Let me beg you,’ he said, with a little impatience in his voice, ‘to sit down too. It is evident that Nell's reception of me is not likely to be so warm as to make it unpleasant for a third party. There was a fourth party in the room a minute ago, if my eyes did not deceive me. Ah!’—his glance went rapidly to where Philip's tall boyish figure, with his back turned,

was visible against the further window—‘that’s all right,’ he said, ‘now I presume everybody’s here.’

‘Had we expected your visit,’ said Mrs. Dennistoun, faltering, after a moment, as Elinor did not speak, ‘we should have been—better prepared to receive you, Mr. Compton.’

‘That’s not spoken with your usual cleverness,’ he said, with a laugh. ‘You used to be a great deal too clever for me, you and Nell too. But if she did not expect to see me, I don’t know what she thought I was made of—everything that is bad, I suppose: and yet you know I could have worried your life out of you if I had liked, Nell.’

She turned to him for the first time, and, putting her hands together, said almost inaudibly, ‘I know—I know. I have thought of that, and I am not ungrateful.’

‘Grateful! Well, perhaps you have not much call for that, poor little woman. I don’t doubt I behaved like a brute, and you were quite right in doing what you did; but you’ve taken it out of me since, Nell, all the same.’

Then there was again a silence, broken only by the labouring of her breath, which she could not quite conceal.

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‘You wouldn’t believe me,’ he resumed after a moment, ‘if I were to set up a sentimental pose, like a sort of a disconsolate widower, eh, would you? Of course it was a position that was not without its advantages. I was not much made for a family man, and both in the way of expense and in—other ways, it suited me well enough. Nobody could expect me to marry them or their daughters, don’t you see, when they knew I had a wife alive. So I was allowed my little amusements. You never went in for that kind of thing, Nell. Don’t snap me up. You know I told you I never was against a little flirtation. It makes a woman more tolerant, in my opinion, just to know how to amuse herself a little. But Nell was never one of that kind——’

‘I hope not, indeed,’ said Mrs. Dennistoun, to whom he had turned, with indignation.

‘I don’t see where the emphasis comes in. She was one that a man could be as sure of as of Westminster Abbey. The heart of her husband rests upon her—isn’t that what the Bible says, or words to that effect? Nell was always a kind of a Bible to me. And you may say that in that case to think of her amusing herself! But you will allow she always did take everything too

much *au grand sérieux*. No? to be sure, you'll allow nothing. But still that was the truth. However, I'll allow something if you won't. I'm past my first youth. Oh, you, not a bit of it! You're just as fresh and as pretty, by George! as ever you were. When I saw you stand up in that court yesterday looking as if—not a week had passed since I saw you last, by Jove! Nell— And how you were hating it, poor old girl, and had come out straining your poor little conscience, and saying what you didn't want to say—for the sake of a worthless fellow like me—'

A sob came out of Elinor's breast, and something half inaudible besides, like a name.

'I can tell you this,' he said, turning to Mrs. Dennistoun again, 'I couldn't look at her. I'm an unlikely brute for that sort of thing, but if I had looked at her I should have cried. I dare-say you don't believe me. Never mind, but it's true.'

'I do believe you,' said the mother, very low.

'Thank you,' he said with a laugh. 'I have always said for a mother-in-law you were the least difficult to get on with I ever saw. Do you remember giving me that money to make ducks and drakes of? It was awfully silly of you. You



didn't deserve to be trusted with money to throw it away like that: but still I have not forgotten it. Well! I came to thank you for yesterday, Nell. And there are things, you know, that we must talk over. You never gave up your name. That was like your pluck. But you will have to change it now. It was indecent of me to have myself announced like that and poor old St. Serf not in his grave yet. But I daresay you didn't pay any attention. You are Lady St. Serf now, my dear. You don't mind, I know, but it's a change not without importance. Well, who is that fellow behind there standing in the window? I think you ought to present him to me. Or rather I'll present him to you instead. I saw him in the theatre, by Jove! with that fellow Tatham, that Cousin John of yours that I never could bear, smirking and smiling at him as if it were *his* son! but *I* saw the boy then for the first time. Nell, I tell you there are some things in which you have taken it well out of me——'

'Mr. Compton,' she said, labouring to speak. 'Lord St. Serf. Oh, Phil, Phil!——'

'Ah,' he said, with a start, 'do you remember at last? the garden at that poky old cottage with all the flowers, and the days when you looked

out for wild Phil Compton that all the world warned you against? And here I am an old fogey without either wife or child, and Tatham taking my boy about and Nell never looking me in the face.'

Philip, at the window looking out at nothing through the hideous-coloured glass, had heard every word, with wonder, with horror, with consternation, with dreadful disappointment and sinking of the heart. For indeed he had a high ideal of a father, the highest, such as fatherless boys form in their ignorance. And every word made it more sure that this was his father, this man who had so caught his eyes and filled him with such a fever of interest. But to hear Phil Compton talk had brought the boy's soaring imagination down, down to the dust. He had not been prepared for anything like this. Some tragic rending asunder he could have believed in, some wild and strange mystery. But this man of careless speech, of chaff and slang, so little noble, so little serious, so far from tragic! The disappointment had been too sudden and dreadful to leave him with any ear for those tones that went to his mother's heart. He had no pity, no sense of the pathos that was in them. He stood in his young

absolutism disgusted, miserable. This man his father!—this man! so talking, so thinking. Young Philip stood with his back to the group, more wretched than words could tell. He heard some movement behind, but he was too sick at heart to think what it was, until suddenly he felt a hand on his shoulder, and most unwillingly suffered himself to be turned round to meet his father's eyes. He gave one glance up at the face, which he did not now feel was worn with study and care—which now that he saw it near was full of lines and wrinkles which meant something else, and which even the emotion in it, emotion of a kind which Pippo did not understand, hidden by a laugh, did not make more prepossessing—and then he stood with his eyes cast down, not caring to see it again.

The elder Philip Compton had, I think, though he was, as he said, an unlikely subject for that mood, tears in his eyes—and he had no inclination to see anything that was painful in the face of his son, whose look he had never read, whose voice he had never heard, till now. He held the boy with his hands on his shoulders, with a grasp more full perhaps of the tender strain of love (though he did not know him) than ever he had laid upon any human form before. The boy's

looks were not only satisfactory to him, but filled his own heart with an unaccustomed spring of pride and delight—his stature, his complexion, his features, making up as it were the most wonderful compliment, the utmost sweetness of flattery that he had ever known. For the boy was himself over again, not like his mother, but like the unworthy father whom he had never seen. It took him some time to master the sudden rush of this emotion which almost overwhelmed him: and then he drew the boy's arm through his own and led him back to where the two ladies sat, Elinor still too much agitated for speech. 'I said I'd present my son to you, Nell—if you wouldn't present him to me,' he said, with a break in his voice which sounded like a chuckle to that son's angry ears. 'I don't know what you call the fellow—but he's big enough to have a name of his own, and he's Lomond from this day.'

Pippo did not know what was meant by those words: but he drew his arm from his father's and went and stood behind Elinor's chair, forgetting in a moment all his grievances against her, taking her side with an energy impossible to put into words, clinging to his mother as he had done when he was a little child.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

IT was while this conversation was going on that John Tatham, anxious and troubled about many things, knocked at the door in Ebury Street. He was anxious to know how the explanations had got accomplished; how the boy took it, how Elinor had borne the strain upon her of such a revelation. Well as he knew Elinor, he still thought, as is generally thought in circumstances so painful, that a great crisis, a great mental effort would make her ill. He wanted to know how she was, he wanted to know how Pippo had borne it, what the boy thought. It had glanced across him that young Philip might be excited by so wonderful a new thing, and form some false impression of his father (whom doubtless she would represent under the best light, taking blame upon herself, not to

destroy the boy's ideal), and be eager to know him—which was a thing, John felt, that would be very difficult to bear.

The door was opened to him not by good Mrs. Jones, the kind landlady, but by the magnificent Jones himself, who rarely appeared. John said 'Mrs. Compton?' as a matter of course, and was about to pass in, in his usual familiar way. But something in the man's air made him pause. He looked at Jones again, who was bursting with importance. 'Perhaps she's engaged?' he said.

'I think, sir,' said Jones, 'that her ladyship is engaged—his lordship is with her ladyship upstairs.'

'His—what?' John Tatham cried.

'His lordship, Mr. Tatham. I know, sir, as the title is not usually assumed till after the funeral; but in the very 'ouse where her ladyship is residing for the moment, there's allowances to be made. Naturally we're a little excited over it, being, if I may make so bold as to say so, a sort of 'umble friends, and long patronized by her ladyship, and young Lord Lomond too.'

'Young Lord Lomond too!' John Tatham

stood for a moment and stared at Mr. Jones; and then he laughed out, and turned his back and walked away.

Young Lord Lomond too! The boy! who had been more like John's boy than anything else, but now tricked out in a new name, a new position, his father's heir. Oh, yes, it was John himself who had insisted on that only a few days ago: 'The heir to a peerage can't be hid.' It was he that had quoted this as an aphorism worthy of a social sage. But when the moment came and the boy was taken from him, and introduced into that other sphere, by the side of that man who had once been the *dis*-Honourable Phil! Good heavens, what changes life is capable of! What wrongs, what cruelties, what cuttings-off, what twists and alterations of every sane thought and thing! John Tatham was a sensible man as well as an eminent lawyer, and knew that between Elinor's son, who was Phil Compton's son, and himself, there was no external link at all—nothing but affection and habit, and the ever-strengthening link that had been twisted closer and closer with the progress of these years; but nothing real, the merest shadow of relationship, a cousin, who could count how

often removed? And it was he who had insisted, forced upon Elinor the necessity of making his father known to Philip, of informing him of his real position. Nobody had interfered in this respect but John. He had made himself a weariness to her by insisting, never giving over, blaming her hourly for her delay. And yet now, when the thing he had so worked for, so constantly urged, was done——!

He smiled grimly to himself as he walked away: they were altogether, the lordship and the ladyship, young Lord Lomond too!—and Phil Compton, whitewashed, a peer of the realm, and still, the scoundrel! a handsome fellow enough: with an air about him, a man who might still dazzle a youngster unaccustomed to the world. He had re-entered the bosom of his family, and doubtless was weeping upon Philip's neck, and bandying about that name of 'Nell' which had always seemed to John an insult—an insult to himself. And in that moment of bitterness John did not know how she would take it, what effect it would produce upon her. Perhaps the very sight of the fellow who had once won her heart, the lover of her youth, with whom John had never for a moment put himself in competition,



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notwithstanding the bitter wonder in his heart that Elinor—Elinor of all people!—could ever have loved such a man. Yet she had loved him, and the sight of him again after so many years, what effect might it not produce? As he walked away, it was the idea of a happy family that came into John Tatham's mind—mutual forgiveness, mutual return to the old traditions which are the most enduring of all; expansions, confessions, recollections, and lives of reunion. Something more than a prodigal's return, the return of a sinner bringing a coronet in his hand, bringing distinction, a place and position enough to dazzle any boy, enough to make a woman forgive. And was not this what John wished above all things, every advancement for the boy, and an assured place in the world, as well as every happiness that might be possible—happiness! yet it was possible she might think it so—for Elinor? Yes, this was what he had wished for, been ready to make any sacrifice to secure. In the sudden shock Mr. Tatham thought of the only other person who perhaps—yet only perhaps—might feel a little as he did—the mother, Mrs. Dennistoun, upon whom he thought all this would come like a thunder-clap, not knowing


that she too was upstairs in the family party, among the lordships and the ladyship.

He went home and into his handsome library, and shut the door upon himself, to have it out there—or rather to occupy himself in some more sensible way, and shut this foolish subject out of his mind. It occurred to him, however, when he sat down that the best thing to do would be to write an account of it all to Mrs. Dennistoun, who doubtless in the excitement would have a long time to wait for news of this great change. He drew his blotting-book towards him with this object, and opened it, and dipped his pen in the ink, and wrote ‘My dear Aunt,’ but he did not get much further. He raised his head, thinking how to introduce his narrative, for which she would in all likelihood be wholly unprepared, and in so doing looked round upon his book-cases, on one shelf of which the reflection of a ray of afternoon sunshine caught in the old Louis-Treize mirror over the mantelpiece was throwing a shaft of light. He got up to make sure that it was only a reflection, nothing that would harm the binding of a particular volume upon which he set great store—though of course he knew very well that it could only be reflec-

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tion, no impertinent reality of sunshine being permitted to penetrate there. And then he paused a little to draw his hand lovingly over the line of choice books—very choice—worth a little fortune, which he laughed at himself a little for being proud of, fully knowing that what was inside them (which generally is the cream of a book, as of a letter, according to Tony Lumpkin) was in many cases worth nothing at all. And then John went and stood upon the hearthrug, and looked round him upon this the heart of his domain. It was a noble library, any man might have been proud of it. He asked himself whether it did not suit him better, with all the comforts and luxuries beyond it, than if he had been like other men, with an entirely different centre of life upstairs in the empty drawing-room, and the burden upon him of setting out children, boys and girls, upon the world.

When a man asks himself this question, however complacent may be the reply, it betrays perhaps a doubt whether the assurance he has is so very sure after all; and he returned to his letter to Mrs. Dennistoun, which would be quite easy to write if it were only once well begun. But he had not written above a few words,



having spent some time in his previous reflections, when he paused again at the sound of a tumultuous summons at the street-door. As may be well supposed, his servant took more time than usual to answer it, resenting a noise so out of character with the house, during which John listened half-angrily, fearing, yet wishing for a diversion. And then his own door burst open; not, I need hardly say, by any intervention of legitimate hands, but by the sudden rush of Philip, who seemed to come in in a whirl of long limbs and eager eyes, flinging himself into a chair and fixing his gaze across the corner of the table upon his astonished yet expectant friend. 'Oh, Uncle John!' the boy cried, and had not breath to say any more.

John put forth his hand across the table, and grasped the young flexible warm hand that wanted something to hold. 'Well, my boy,' he said.

'I suppose you know,' said Philip. 'I have nothing to tell you, though it is all so strange to me.'

'I know—nothing about what interests me most at present—yourself, Pippo, and what has happened to you.'

John had always made a great stand against that particular name, but several times had used it of late, not knowing why.

‘I don’t know what you thought of me last night,’ said the boy, ‘I was so miserable. May I tell you everything, Uncle John?’

What balm that question was! He clasped Pippo’s hand in his own, but scarcely could answer to bid him go on.

‘It was unnecessary all she wanted to tell me. I fought it off all the morning. I was there yesterday in the court and heard it all.’

‘In the court! At the trial?’

‘I had no meaning in it,’ said Philip. ‘I went by chance, as people say, because the Marshalls had not turned up. I got Simmons to get me into the court. I had always wanted to see a trial. And there I saw my mother stand up—my mother, that I never could bear the wind to blow on, standing up there alone with all those people staring at her to be tried—for her life.’

‘Don’t be a fool, Philip,’ said John Tatham, dropping his hand; ‘tried! she was only a witness. And she was not alone. I was there to take care of her.’

‘I saw you—but what was that? She was alone all the same; and for me, it was she who was on her trial. What did I know about any other? I heard it every word.’

‘Poor boy!’

‘So what was the use of her making herself miserable to tell me? She tried to all this morning, and I fought it off. I was miserable enough. Why should I be made more miserable to hear her perhaps excusing herself to me? But at last she had driven me into a corner; angry as I was—Uncle John, I was angry, furious, with my mother—fancy! with my mother.’

John did not say anything, but he nodded his head in assent. How well he understood it all!

‘And just then, at that moment, *he* came. I am angry with her no more. I know whatever happened she was right. Angry with her, my poor dear, dearest mother! Whatever happened she was right. It was best that she should not tell me. I am on her side all through—all through! Do you hear me, Uncle John! I have seen you look as if you blamed her. Don’t again while I am there. Whatever she has done it has been the right thing all through!’

‘Pippo,’ said John, with a little quivering about the mouth, ‘give me your hand again, old fellow, you’re my own boy.’

‘Nobody shall so much as look as if they blamed her,’ cried the boy, ‘while I am alive.’

Oh, how near he was to crying, and how resolute not to break down, though something got into his throat and almost choked him, and his eyes were so full that it was a miracle they did not brim over. Excitement, distress, pain, the first touch of human misery he had ever known almost overmastered Philip. He got up and walked about the room, and talked and talked. He who had never concealed anything, who had never had anything to conceal. And for four-and-twenty hours he had been silent with a great secret upon his soul. John was too wise to check the outpouring. He listened to everything, assented, soothed, imperceptibly led him to gentler thoughts.

‘And what does he mean,’ cried the boy at last, ‘with his new name? I shall have no name but my own, the one my mother gave me. I am Philip Compton, and nothing else. What right has he, the first time he ever saw me, to put upon me another name?’

‘What name?’

‘He called me Lomond—or something like that,’ said young Philip: and then there came a sort of stillness over his excitement, a lull in the storm. Some vague idea what it meant came all at once into the boy’s mind, and a thrill of curiosity, of another kind of excitement, of rising thoughts which he was hardly able to understand, struggled up through the other zone of passion. He was half ashamed, having just poured forth all his feelings, to show that there was something else, something that was no longer indignation, nor anger, nor the shock of discovery, something that had a tremor perhaps of pleasure in it, behind. But John was far too experienced a man not to read the boy through and through. He liked him better in the first phase, but this was natural too.

‘It happens very strangely,’ he said, ‘that all these things should come upon you at once: but it is well you should know now all about it. Lomond is the second title of the Comptons, Earls of St. Serf. Haven’t I heard you ask what Comptons you belonged to, Philip? It has all happened within a day or two. Your father was only Philip Compton yesterday at the trial, and



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a poor man. Now he is Lord St. Serf, if not rich, at least no longer poor. Everything has changed for you—your position, your importance in the world. The last Lord Lomond bore the name creditably enough. 'I hope you will make it shine.' He took the boy by the hand and grasped it heartily again. 'I am thankful for it,' said John. 'I would rather you were Lord Lomond than——'

'What! Uncle John?'

'Steady, boy. I was going to say Philip Compton's son: but Lord St. Serf is another man.'

There was a long pause in the room, where John Tatham's life was centred among his books. He had so much to do with all this business, and yet so little. It would pass away with all its tumults, and he after being absorbed by it for a moment would be left alone to his own thoughts and his own unbroken line of existence. So much the better! It is not good for any man to be swept up and put down again at the will of others in matters in which he has no share. As for Philip, he was silent chiefly to realise this great thing that had come upon him. He, Lord Lomond, a peer's son, who was only Pippo of Waterdale like

any other lad in the parish, and not half so important at school as Musgrave, who did not get that scholarship. What the school would say! the tempest that would arise! They would ask a holiday, and the headmaster would grant it. Compton a lord! Philip could hear the roar and rustle among the boys, the scornful incredulity, the asseverations of those who knew it was true. And a flush that was pleasure had come over his musing face. It would have been strange if in the wonder of it there had not been some pleasure too.

He had begun to tolerate his father before many days were over, to cease to be indignant and angry that he was not the ideal father of his dreams. That was not Lord St. Serf's fault, who was not at all aware of his son's dreams, and had never had an ideal in his life. But John Tatham was right in saying that Lord St. Serf was another man. The shock of a new responsibility, of a position to occupy and duties to fulfil, were things that might not have much moved the dis-Honourable Phil two years before. But he was fifty, and beginning to feel himself an old fogey, as he confessed. And his son overawed Lord St. Serf. His son, who was so like

him, yet had the mother's quick, impetuous eyes, so rapid to see through everything, so disdainful of folly, so keen in perception. He was afraid to bring upon himself one of those lightning flashes from the eyes of his boy, and doubly afraid to introduce his son anywhere, to show him anything that might bring upon him the reproach of doing harm to Pippo. His house, which had been very decent and orderly in the late Lord St. Serf's time, became almost prim in the terror Phil had lest they should say that it was bad for the boy.

As for Lady St. Serf, it was popularly reported that the reason why she almost invariably lived in the country was her health, which kept her out of society—a report, I need not say, absolutely rejected by society itself, which knew all the circumstances better than you or I do: but which sufficed for the outsiders who knew nothing. When Elinor did appear upon great occasions, which she consented to do, her matured beauty gave the fullest contradiction to the pretext on which she continued to live her own life. But old Lord St. Serf, who got old so long before he need to have done, with perhaps the same sort of constitutional weakness which had carried

off all his brothers before their time, or perhaps because he had too much abused a constitution which was not weak—grew more and more fond in his latter days of the country too, and kept appearing at Lakeside so often that at last the ladies removed much nearer town to the country-house of the St. Serfs which had not been occupied for ages, where they presented at last the appearance of a united family; and where 'Lomond' (who would have thought it very strange now to be addressed by any other name) brought his friends, and was not ill-pleased to hear his father discourse in a way which sometimes still offended the home-bred Pippo, but which the other young men found very amusing. It was not in the way of morals, however, that Lord St. Serf ever offended. The fear of Elinor kept him as blameless as any good-natured preacher of the endless theme that all is vanity could do.

These family arrangements, however, and the modified happiness obtained by their means, were still all in the future, when John Tatham, a little afraid of the encounter, yet anxious to have it over, went to Ebury Street the day after these occurrences, to see Elinor for the first time under her new character as Lady St. Serf. He found

her in a langour and exhaustion much unlike Elinor, doing nothing, not even a book near, lying back in her chair, fallen upon herself, as the French say. . Some of those words that mean nothing passed between them, and then she said, 'John, did Pippo tell you that he had been there?'

He nodded his head, finding nothing to say.

'Without any warning, to see his mother stand up before all the world to be tried—for her life.'

'Elinor,' said John, 'you are as fantastic as the boy.'

'I was—being tried for my life—before him as the judge. And he has acquitted me; but, oh, I wonder, I wonder if he would have done so had he known all that I know?'

'I do so,' said John, 'perhaps a little more used to the laws of evidence than Pippo.'

'Ah, you!' she said, giving him her hand, with a look which John did not know how to take, whether as the fullest expression of trust, or an affectionate disdain of the man in whose partial judgment no justice was. And then she asked a question which threw perhaps the greatest per-

plexity he had ever known into John Tatham's life. 'When you tell a fact—that is true—with the intention to deceive: John, you that know the laws of evidence, is that a lie?'

THE END.

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## INDEX.

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
ABBEY (E. A.) . . . . .	37	ATTWELL (H.) . . . . .	20	BERNARD (J. H.) . . . . .	25
ABBOT (F. E.) . . . . .	33	AUSTIN (Alfred) . . . . .	14	BERNARD (M.) . . . . .	12
ABBOTT (Rev. E.) 3, 13, 30, 31, 33	22	AUTENRIETH (Georg) . . . . .	7	BERNERS (J.) . . . . .	11
ACLAND (Sir H. W.) . . . . .	28	AWDRY (F.) . . . . .	38	BESANT (W.) . . . . .	4
ADAMS (Sir F. O.) . . . . .	28	BACON (Francis) . . . . .	19, 20	BETHUNE-BAKER (J. F.) . . . . .	33
ADAMS (Herbert B.) . . . . .	28	BAINES (Rev. E.) . . . . .	33	BETTANY (G. T.) . . . . .	6
ADDISON . . . . .	4, 20	BAKER (Sir S. W.) 28, 30, 37, 38	12	BICKELTON (T. H.) . . . . .	22
AGASSIZ (L.) . . . . .	3	BALCH (Elizabeth) . . . . .	12	BIGELOW (M. M.) . . . . .	12
AINGER (Rev. A.) . . . . .	4, 20, 33	BALDWIN (Prof. J. M.) . . . . .	26	BIKÉLAS (D.) . . . . .	17
AINSLIE (A. D.) . . . . .	14	BALFOUR (Rt. Hon. A. J.) 25	5, 6	BINNIE (Rev. W.) . . . . .	33
AIRY (Sir G. B.) . . . . .	2, 27	BALFOUR (F. M.) . . . . .	6	BIRKS (T. R.) . . . . .	6, 25, 30, 33
AITKEN (Mary C.) . . . . .	20	BALFOUR (J. B.) . . . . .	6	BJÖRNSON (B.) . . . . .	17
AITKEN (Sir W.) . . . . .	23	BALL (V.) . . . . .	38	BLACK (W.) . . . . .	4, 17
ALBEMARLE (Earl of) . . . . .	3	BALL (W. Platt) . . . . .	6	BLACKBURNE (E.) . . . . .	3
ALDRICH (T. B.) . . . . .	14	BALL (W. W. R.) . . . . .	22	BLACKIE (J. S.) . . . . .	9, 14, 19
ALEXANDER (C. F.) . . . . .	20	BALLANCE (C. A.) . . . . .	22	BLAKE (J. F.) . . . . .	2
ALEXANDER (T.) . . . . .	8	BARKER (Lady) . . . . .	2, 8, 37	BLAKE (W.) . . . . .	3
ALEXANDER (Bishop) . . . . .	33	BARNARD (C.) . . . . .	27	BLAKISTON (J. R.) . . . . .	8
ALLBUTT (T. C.) . . . . .	22	BARNES (W.) . . . . .	3	BLANFORD (H. F.) . . . . .	9, 27
ALLEN (G.) . . . . .	6	BARRY (Bishop) . . . . .	33	BLANFORD (W. T.) . . . . .	9, 24
ALLINGHAM (W.) . . . . .	20	BARTHOLOMEW (J. G.) . . . . .	30	BLOMFIELD (R.) . . . . .	9
AMIEL (H. F.) . . . . .	3	BARTLETT (J.) . . . . .	7	BLYTH (A. W.) . . . . .	11
ANDERSON (A.) . . . . .	14	BARWELL (R.) . . . . .	22	BÖHM-BAWERK (Prof.) . . . . .	28
ANDERSON (Dr. McCall) . . . . .	22	BASTABLE (Prof. C. F.) . . . . .	28	BOISSEVAIN (G. M.) . . . . .	28
ANDREWS (Dr. Thomas) . . . . .	26	BASTIAN (H. C.) . . . . .	6, 22	BOLDREWOOD (Rolf) . . . . .	17
APPLETON (T. G.) . . . . .	37	BATESON (W.) . . . . .	6	BONAR (J.) . . . . .	28
ARCHER-HIND (R. D.) . . . . .	36	BATH (Marquis of) . . . . .	28	BOND (Rev. J.) . . . . .	31
ARNOLD, M. 8, 14, 19, 20, 21, 30	9	BATHER (Archdeacon) . . . . .	33	BOOLE (G.) . . . . .	26
ARNOLD (Dr. T.) . . . . .	9	BAXTER (L.) . . . . .	3	BOUGHTON (G. H.) . . . . .	37
ARNOLD (W. T.) . . . . .	9	BREEM (Mr.) . . . . .		BOUGHTON (F.) . . . . .	

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
BRIGHT (H. A.)	9	CLARKE (C. B.)	9, 28	DILLWYN (E. A.)	17
BRIGHT (John)	28, 29	CLAUDIUS (R.)	27	DOBSON (A.)	4
BRIMLEY (G.)	19	CLIFFORD (Ed.)	3	DONALDSON (J.)	33
BRODIE (Sir B. C.)	7	CLIFFORD (W. K.)	19, 26	DONISTHORPE (W.)	29
BRODRIBB (W. J.)	13, 37	CLIFFORD (Mrs. W. K.)	38	DOWDEN (E.)	4, 13, 15
BROOKE (Sir J.)	3	CLOUGH (A. H.)	14, 19	DOYLE (Sir F. H.)	14
BROOKE (S. A.)	13, 14, 21	COBDEN (R.)	29	DOYLE (J. A.)	10
BROOKS (Bishop)	33	COHEN (J. B.)	7	DRAKE (B.)	36
BROWN (A. C.)	26	COLENSO (J. W.)	12	DRUMMOND (Prof. J.)	34
BROWN (J. A.)	1	COLERIDGE (S. T.)	34	DRYDEN	20
BROWN (Dr. James)	4	COLLIER (Hon. John)	2	DU CANE (E. F.)	29
BROWN (T. E.)	14	COLLINS (J. Churton)	19	DUFF (Sir M. E. Grant)	20, 29, 37
BROWNE (J. H. B.)	11	COLQUHOUN (F. S.)	14	DUNSMUIR (A.)	17
BROWNE (Sir T.)	20	COLVIN (Sidney)	4, 20	DÜNTZER (H.)	4, 5
BROWNE (W. R.)	27	COMBE (G.)	8	DUPRÉ (A.)	7
BRUNTON (Dr. T. Lauder)	22, 33	CONGREVE (Rev. J.)	33	DYER (L.)	1
BRYCE (James)	9, 28, 37	CONWAY (Hugh)	17	EADIE (J.)	4, 30, 31
BUCHHEIM (C. A.)	20	COOK (E. T.)	2	EASTLAKE (Lady)	32
BUCKLAND (A.)	5	COOKE (C. Kinloch)	24	EBERS (G.)	17
BUCKLEY (A. B.)	9	COOKE (J. P.)	7, 34	EDGEWORTH (Prof. F. Y.)	28
BUCKNILL (Dr. J. C.)	22	CORBETT (J.)	4, 17, 38	EDMUNDS (Dr. W.)	22
BUCKTON (G. B.)	40	CORFIELD (W. H.)	11	EDWARDS-MOSS (Sir J. E.)	30
BUNYAN	4, 19, 20	CORRY (T. H.)	6	EIMER (G. H. T.)	6
BURGON (J. W.)	14	COTTERILL (J. H.)	8	ELDERTON (W. A.)	9
BURKE (E.)	28	COTTON (Bishop)	34	ELLERTON (Rev. J.)	34
BURN (R.)	1	COTTON (C.)	12	ELLIOT (Hon. A.)	29
BURNETT (F. Hodgson)	17	COTTON (J. S.)	29	ELLIS (T.)	2
BURNS	14, 20	COUES (E.)	40	EMERSON (R. W.)	4, 20
BURY (J. B.)	9	COURTHOPE (W. J.)	4	EVANS (S.)	14
BUTCHER (Prof. S. H.)	13, 19, 36	COWELL (G.)	23	EVERETT (J. D.)	26
BUTLER (A. J.)	37	COWPER	20	FALCONER (Lanoe)	17
BUTLER (Rev. G.)	53	COX (G. V.)	9	FARRAR (Archdeacon)	5, 30, 34
BUTLER (Samuel)	14	CRAIK (Mrs.)	14, 17, 19, 20, 37, 38	FARRER (Sir T. H.)	29
BUTLER (W. Archer)	33	CRAIK (H.)	8, 29	FAULKNER (F.)	7
BUTLER (Sir W. F.)	4	CRANE (Lucy)	2, 39	FAWCETT (Prof. H.)	28, 29
BYRON	20	CRANE (Walter)	12, 14, 39	FAWCETT (M. G.)	5, 28
CAIRNES (J. E.)	29	CRAVEN (Mrs. D.)	8	FAY (Amy)	24
CALDECOTT (R.)	12, 38, 39	CRAWFORD (F. M.)	17	FEARNLEY (W.)	27
CALDERWOOD (Prof. H.)	8, 25, 26, 33	CREIGHTON (Bishop M.)	4, 10	FEARON (D. R.)	8
CALVERT (Rev. A.)	31	CRICHTON-BROWNE (Sir J.)	8	FERREL (W.)	27
CAMERON (V. L.)	37	CROSS (J. A.)	30	FERRERS (N. M.)	27
CAMPBELL (J. F.)	37	CROSSLEY (E.)	2	FESSENDEN (C.)	26
CAMPBELL (Dr. J. M.)	33	CROSSLEY (H.)	37	FINCK (H. T.)	1
CAMPBELL (Prof. Lewis)	5, 13	CUMMING (L.)	26	FISHER (Rev. O.)	26, 27
CAPES (W. W.)	13	CUNNINGHAM (C.)	28	FISKE (J.)	6, 9, 25, 29, 34
CARLES (W. R.)	37	CUNNINGHAM (Sir H. S.)	17	FISON (L.)	1
CARLYLE (T.)	3	CUNNINGHAM (Rev. J.)	31	FITCH (J. G.)	8
CARMARTHEN (Lady)	17	CUNNINGHAM (Rev. W.)	31, 33, 34	FITZ GERALD (Caroline)	14
CARNARON (Earl of)	36	CUNYNGHAME (Sir A. T.)	23	FITZGERALD (Edward)	14, 20
CARNOT (N. L. G.)	27	CURTEIS (Rev. G. H.)	32, 34	FITZMAURICE (Lord E.)	5
CARPENTER (Bishop)	33	DAHN (F.)	17	FLEAY (F. G.)	13
CARR (J. C.)	2	DAKYNs (H. G.)	37	FLEISCHER (E.)	7
CARROLL (Lewis)	26, 38	DALE (A. W. W.)	31	FLEMING (G.)	17
CARTER (R. Brudenell)	22, 23	DALTON (Rev. J. N.)	37	FLOWER (Prof. W. H.)	39
CASSEL (Dr. D.)	9	DANTE	3, 13, 37	FLÜCKIGER (F. A.)	23
CAUTLEY (G. S.)	14	DAVIES (Rev. J. Ll.)	20, 31, 34	FORBES (A.)	4, 37
CAZENOVE (J. G.)	33	DAVIES (W.)	5	FORBES (Prof. G.)	3
CHALMERS (J. B.)	8	DAWKINS (W. B.)	1	FORBES (Rev. G. H.)	34
CHALMERS (M. D.)	29	DAWSON (G. M.)	9	FOSTER (Prof. M.)	6, 27
CHAPMAN (Elizabeth R.)	14	DAWSON (Sir J. W.)	9	FOTHERGILL (Dr. J. M.)	8, 23
CHASSERESSE (Diana)	30	DAWSON (J.)	1	FOWLE (Rev. T. W.)	29, 34
CHEERY (R. R.)	12	DAY (L. B.)	17	FOWLER (Rev. T.)	4, 25
CHEYNE (C. H. H.)	2	DAY (R. E.)	26	FOWLER (W. W.)	24
CHEYNE (T. K.)	30	DEFOE (D.)	4, 20	FOX (Dr. Wilson)	23
CHRISTIE (J.)	23	DEIGHTON (K.)	15	FOXWELL (Prof. H. S.)	28
CHRISTIE (W. D.)	20	DELAMOTTE (P. H.)	2	FRAMJI (D.)	9
CHURCH (Prof. A. H.)	6	DELL (E. C.)	12	FRANKLAND (P. F.)	1
CHURCH (Rev. A. J.)	4, 30, 37	DE MORGAN (M.)	39	FRASER (Bishop)	34
CHURCH (F. J.)	20, 37	DE VERE (A.)	20	FRASER-TYTLER (C. C.)	14
		DICEY (A. V.)	12, 29	FRAZER (J. G.)	1

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
FRIEDMANN (P.)	3	HARTE (Bret)	17	JONES (Prof. D. E.)	27
FROST (A. B.)	38	HARTIG (Dr. R.)	6	JONES (F.)	7
FROUDE (J. A.)	4	HARTLEY (Prof. W. N.)	7	KANT	25
FURNISS (Harry)	38	HARWOOD (G.)	21, 29, 32	KARI	39
FURNIVALL (F. J.)	14	HAYES (A.)	14	KAVANAGH (Rt. Hn. A. M.)	4
FYFFE (C. A.)	10	HEADLAM (W.)	36	KAY (Rev. W.)	31
FYFE (J. H.)	10	HELPS (Sir A.)	21	KEARY (Annie)	10, 18, 39
GAIRDNER (J.)	4	HEMPEL (Dr. W.)	7	KEARY (Eliza)	39
GALTON (F.)	1, 27	HERODOTUS	3 <sup>5</sup>	KEATS	4, 20, 21
GAMGEE (Arthur)	27	HERRICK	20	KELLNER (Dr. L.)	25
GARDNER (Percy)	1	HERTEL (Dr.)	8	KELLOGG (Rev. S. H.)	34
GARNETT (R.)	14	HERVEY (Lord A.)	34	KEMPE (A. B.)	26
GARNETT (W.)	5	HILL (F. Davenport)	29	KENNEDY (Prof. A. B. W.)	8
GASKELL (Mrs.)	12	HILL (O.)	26	KENNEDY (B. H.)	36
GASKOIN (Mrs. H.)	30	HIORNS (A. H.)	23	KEYNES (J. N.)	26, 28
GEDDES (W. D.)	13, 37	HOBART (Lord)	21	KIEPERT (H.)	9
GEE (W. H.)	25, 27	HOBDAY (E.)	9	KILLEN (W. D.)	32
GEIKIE (Sir A.)	4, 9, 27	HODGSON (Rev. J. T.)	4	KINGSLEY (Charles)	4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 21, 24, 32, 37, 39
GENNADIUS (J.)	17	HOPFFING (Prof. H.)	26	KINGSLEY (Henry)	20, 37
GIBBINS (H. de B.)	10	HOPFMAN (A. W.)	7	KIPLING (J. L.)	38
GIBBON (Charles)	3	HOLE (Rev. C.)	7, 10	KIPLING (Rudyard)	18
GILCHRIST (A.)	3	HOLIDAY (Henry)	38	KIRKPATRICK (Prof.)	34
GILES (P.)	25	HOLLAND (T. E.)	12, 29	KLEIN (Dr. E.)	6, 23
GILMAN (N. P.)	28	HOLLWAY-CALTHROP (H.)	38	KNIGHT (W.)	14
GILMORE (Rev. J.)	13	HOLMES (O. W., junr.)	12	KUENEN (Prof. A.)	30
GLADSTONE (Dr. J. H.)	7, 8	HOMER	13, 36	KYNASTON (Rev. H.)	34, 27
GLADSTONE (W. E.)	13	HOOKE (Sir J. D.)	6, 37	LABBERTON (R. H.)	3
GLAISTER (E.)	2, 8	HOOLE (C. H.)	30	LAFARGUE (P.)	18
GODFRAY (H.)	3	HOOPER (G.)	4	LAMB	4, 20, 21
GODKIN (G. S.)	5	HOOPER (W. H.)	2	LANCIANI (Prof. R.)	2
GOETHE	4, 14	HOPE (F. J.)	9	LANDAUER (J.)	7
GOLDSMITH	4, 12, 14, 20, 21	HOPKINS (E.)	14	LANDOR	4, 20
GOODALE (Prof. G. L.)	6	HOPPUS (M. A. M.)	18	LANE-POOLE (S.)	20
GOODFELLOW (J.)	11	HORACE	13, 20	LANFREY (P.)	5
GORDON (General C. G.)	4	HORT (Prof. F. J. A.)	30, 32	LANG (Andrew)	2, 12, 21, 36
GORDON (Lady Duff)	37	HORTON (Hon. S. D.)	28	LANG (Prof. Arnold)	39
GOSCHEN (Rt. Hon. G. J.)	28	HOVENDEN (R. M.)	37	LANGLEY (J. N.)	27
GOSSE (Edmund)	4, 13	HOWELL (George)	28	LANKESTER (Prof. Ray)	6, 21
GOW (J.)	1	HOWES (G. B.)	40	LASLETT (T.)	6
GRAHAM (D.)	14	HOWITT (A. W.)	1	LEAF (W.)	13, 36
GRAHAM (J. W.)	17	HOWSON (Very Rev. J. S.)	32	LEAHY (Sergeant)	30
GRAND HOMME (E.)	8	HOZIER (Col. H. M.)	24	LEA (M.)	18
GRAY (Prof. Andrew)	26	HÜBNER (Baron)	37	LEE (S.)	20, 37
GRAY (Asa)	6	HUGHES (T.)	4, 15, 18, 20, 37	LEPER (A.)	37
GRAY	4, 14, 21	HULL (E.)	2, 9	LEGE (A. O.)	10, 34
GREEN (J. R.)	9, 10, 12, 20	HULLAH (J.)	2, 20, 24	LEMON (Mark)	20
GREEN (Mrs. J. R.)	4, 9, 10	HUME (D.)	4	LESLIE (A.)	38
GREEN (W. S.)	37	HUMPHRY (Prof. Sir G. M.)	28, 39	LETHBRIDGE (Sir Roper)	10
GREENHILL (W. A.)	20	HUNT (W.)	10	LEVY (Amy)	18
GREENWOOD (J. E.)	39	HUNT (W. M.)	2	LEWIS (R.)	13
GRIFFITHS (W. H.)	23	HUTTON (R. H.)	4, 21	LIGHTFOOT (Bp.)	21, 30, 31, 33, 34
GRIMM	39	HUXLEY (T.)	4, 21, 27, 28, 29, 40	LIGHTWOOD (J. M.)	18
GROVE (Sir G.)	9, 24	IDDINGS (J. P.)	9	LINDSAY (Dr. J. A.)	23
GUEST (E.)	10	ILLINGWORTH (Rev. J. R.)	34	LOCKYER (J. N.)	3, 7, 27
GUEST (M. J.)	10	INGRAM (T. D.)	10	LODGE (Prof. O. J.)	21, 27
GUILLEMIN (A.)	26, 27	IRVING (J.)	10	LOEY (B.)	26
GUIZOT (F. P. G.)	5	IRVING (Washington)	12	LOFTIE (Mrs. W. J.)	2
GUNTON (G.)	28	JACKSON (Helen)	18	LONGFELLOW (H. W.)	20
HALES (J. W.)	16, 20	JACOB (Rev. J. A.)	34	LONSDALE (J.)	20, 37
HALLWARD (R. F.)	12	JAMES (Henry)	4, 18, 21	LOWE (W. H.)	30
HAMERTON (P. G.)	2, 21	JAMES (Rev. H. A.)	34	LOWELL (J. R.)	15, 21
HAMILTON (Prof. D. J.)	23	JAMES (Prof. W.)	26	LUBBOCK (Sir J.)	6, 8, 21, 22, 40
HAMILTON (J.)	34	JAMES (Sir W. M.)	10	LUCAS (F.)	15
HANBURY (D.)	6, 23	JARDINE (Rev. R.)	26	LUPTON (S.)	7
HANNAY (David)	4	JEANS (Rev. G. E.)	34, 37	LYALL (Sir Alfred)	4
HARDWICK (Archd. C.)	31, 34	JEBB (Prof. R. C.)	4, 10, 13	LYTE (H. C. M.)	10
HARDY (A. S.)	17	JELLETT (Rev. J. H.)	34	LYTTON (Earl of)	18
HARDY (T.)	17	JENKS (Prof. Ed.)	29	MACALISTER (D.)	23
HARE (A. W.)	20	JENNINGS (A. C.)	10, 30	MACARTHUR (M.)	16
HARE (J. C.)	20, 34	JEVONS (W. S.)	4, 26, 28, 29	MACANILAN (G. C.)	26
HARPER (Ezra)	20, 34	JEX-BLAKE (Srbia)	8		



	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
MACDONELL (J.)	29	MORRIS (Mowbray)	4	POLLOCK (Lady)	2
MACKAIL (J. W.)	37	MORRIS (R.)	20, 25	POLLOCK (W. H.)	2
MACKENZIE (Sir Morell)	23	MORSHEAD (E. D. A.)	36	POOLE (M. E.)	22
MACLAGAN (Dr. T.)	23	MOULTON (L. C.)	15	POOLE (R. L.)	11
MACLAREN (Rev. Alex.)	34	MUDIE (C. E.)	15	POPE	4, 20
MACLAREN (Archibald)	39	MUIR (M. M. P.)	7	POSTE (E.)	27, 36
MACLEAN (W. C.)	23	MÜLLER (H.)	6	POTTER (L.)	22
MACLEAN (Rev. Dr. G. F.)	30, 32	MULLINGER (J. B.)	11	POTTER (R.)	35
M'LENNAN (J. F.)	1	MURPHY (J. J.)	26	PRESTON (T.)	27
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MACMILLAN (Rev. H.)	22, 35, 38	MURRAY (E. C. G.)	38	PRICKARD (A. O.)	22
MACMILLAN (Michael)	5, 15	MYERS (E.)	15, 36	PRINCE ALBERT VICTOR	37
MACNAMARA (C.)	23	MYERS (F. W. H.)	4, 15, 22	PRINCE GEORGE	37
MACQUOID (K. S.)	18	MYLNE (Bishop)	35	PROCTER (F.)	32
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MARSHALL (Prof. A.)	28	NORRIS (W. E.)	18	REICHEL (Bishop)	35
MARSHALL (M. P.)	28	NORTON (Charles Eliot)	3	REID (J. S.)	37
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MARTIN (Frederick)	28	OLIPHANT (T. L. K.)	4, 11, 13, 19, 20, 39	RENDU (M. le C.)	9
MARTIN (H. N.)	40	OLIVER (Prof. D.)	22, 25	REYNOLDS (H. R.)	35
MARTINEAU (H.)	5	OLIVER (Capt. S. P.)	6	REYNOLDS (J. R.)	35
MARTINEAU (J.)	5	OMAN (C. W.)	3	REYNOLDS (O.)	11
MASSON (D.)	4, 5, 15, 16, 20, 22, 26	OSTWALD (Prof.)	4	RICHARDSON (B. W.)	11, 23
MASSON (G.)	7, 20	OTTÉ (E. C.)	7	RICHEY (A. G.)	12
MASSON (R. O.)	16	PAGE (T. E.)	11	ROBINSON (Preb. H. G.)	35
MATURIN (Rev. W.)	35	PALGRAVE (Sir F.)	31	ROBINSON (J. L.)	24
MAUDSLEY (Dr. H.)	26	PALGRAVE (F. T.)	2, 15, 16, 20, 21, 33, 39	ROBINSON (Matthew)	5
MAURICE (Fredk. Denison)	8, 22, 25, 30, 31, 32, 35	PALGRAVE (R. F. D.)	28	ROCHESTER (Bishop of)	5
MAURICE (Col. F.)	5, 24, 29	PALGRAVE (R. H. Inglis)	20	ROCKSTRO (W. S.)	4
MAX MÜLLER (F.)	25	PALGRAVE (W. G.)	15, 29, 38	ROGERS (J. E. T.)	11, 28, 29
MAYER (A. M.)	27	PALMER (Lady S.)	19	ROMANES (G. J.)	6
MAYOR (J. B.)	31	PARKER (T. J.)	6, 39	ROSCOE (Sir H. E.)	7
MAYOR (Prof. J. E. B.)	3, 5	PARKER (W. N.)	40	ROSENBUSCH (H.)	9
MAZINI (L.)	39	PARKINSON (S.)	27	ROSS (P.)	19
M'CORMICK (W. S.)	13	PARKMAN (F.)	11	ROSSETTI (C. G.)	15, 39
MELDOLA (Prof. R.)	7, 26, 27	PARSONS (Alfred)	12	ROUTLEDGE (J.)	20
MENDENHALL (T. C.)	27	PASTEUR (L.)	7	ROWE (F. J.)	16
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MEREDITH (G.)	15	PATMORE (Coventry)	20, 39	RUSHBROOKE (W. G.)	31
MEREDITH (L. A.)	12	PATTISON (J. C.)	5	RUSSELL (Dean)	35
MEYER (E. von)	7	PATTISON (Mark)	4, 5, 35	RUSSELL (Sir Charles)	29
MIALL (A.)	5	PAVNE (E. J.)	10, 29	RUSSELL (W. Clark)	4, 19
MICHELET (M.)	11	PEABODY (C. H.)	8, 27	RYLAND (F.)	13
MILL (H. R.)	9	PEEL (E.)	15	RYLE (Prof. H. E.)	30
MILLER (R. K.)	3	PEILE (J.)	25	ST. JOHNSTON (A.)	19, 38, 39
MILLIGAN (Rev. W.)	31, 35	PELLISSIER (E.)	25	SADLER (H.)	2
MILTON	13, 15, 20	PENNELL (J.)	2	SAINTSBURY (G.)	4, 13
MINCHIN (Prof. G. M.)	15	PENNINGTON (R.)	9	SALMON (Rev. G.)	35
MINTO (Prof. W.)	4, 18	PENROSE (F. C.)	1, 3	SANDFORD (M. E.)	5
MITFORD (A. B.)	18	PERRY (Prof. J.)	27	SANDYS (J. E.)	38
MITVART (St. George)	28	PETTIGREW (J. B.)	6, 28, 40	SAYCE (A. H.)	11
MIXTER (W. G.)	7	PHILLIMORE (J. G.)	12	SCHAFF (P.)	30
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MOORHOUSE (Bishop)	35			SEATON (Dr. E. C.)	23

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
SEWELL (E. M.)	11	TANNER (H.)	1	WARD (A. W.)	20
SHAIRP (J. C.)	4, 15	TAVERNIER (J. B.)	38	WARD (H. M.)	4, 13, 20, 6
SHAKESPEARE	13, 15, 20, 21	TAYLOR (Franklin)	24	WARD (S.)	16
SHANN (G.)	8, 27	TAYLOR (Isaac)	25, 35	WARD (T. H.)	16
SHARP (W.)	5	TAYLOR (Sedley)	24, 27	WARD (Mrs. T. H.)	19, 39
SHELLEY	15, 21	TEGETMEIER (W. B.)	8	WARD (W.)	5, 32
SHIRLEY (W. N.)	35	TEMPLE (Bishop)	35	WARINGTON (G.)	36
SHORTHOUSE (J. H.)	19	TEMPLE (Sir R.)	4	WATERS (C. A.)	28
SHORTLAND (Admiral)	24	TENNANT (Dorothy)	38	WATERTON (Charles)	24, 38
SHUCHHARDT (Carl)	2	TENNIEL	38	WATSON (E.)	5
SHUCKBURGH (E. S.)	11, 36	TENNYSON	14, 16, 21	WATSON (R. S.)	38
SHUFELDT (R. W.)	40	TENNYSON (Frederick)	16	WEBB (W. T.)	16, 37
SIBSON (Dr. F.)	23	TENNYSON (Hallam)	12, 39	WEBSTER (Mrs. A.)	39
SIDGWICK (Prof. H.)	26, 28, 29	THOMPSON (D' A. W.)	6	WELBY-GREGORY (Lady)	32
SIME (J.)	9, 10	THOMPSON (E.)	10	WELLDON (Rev. J. E. C.)	36
SIMPSON (Rev. W.)	32	THOMPSON (S. P.)	27	WESTCOTT (Bp.)	30, 31, 32, 36
SKEAT (W. W.)	13	THOMSON (A. W.)	8	WESTERMARCK (E.)	1
SKRINE (J. H.)	5, 15	THOMSON (Sir C. W.)	40	WETHERELL (J.)	11
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SLOMAN (Rev. A.)	31	THOMSON (Sir Wm.)	24, 26, 27	WHEWELL (W.)	5
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SMALLEY (G. W.)	22	THORNTON (J.)	6	WHITE (Dr. W. Hale)	23
SMETHAM (J.)	5	THORNTON (W. T.)	26, 29, 37	WHITE (W.)	27
SMITH (A.)	20	THORPE (T. E.)	7	WHITHAM (J. M.)	8
SMITH (C. B.)	16	THRING (E.)	8, 22	WHITNEY (W. D.)	8
SMITH (Goldwin)	4, 5, 29	THRUUP (J. F.)	30	WHITTIER (J. G.)	16, 22
SMITH (H.)	16	THUDICHUM (J. L. W.)	7	WICKHAM (Rev. E. C.)	36
SMITH (J.)	6	THURSFIELD (J. R.)	4	WICKSTEED (P. H.)	28, 30
SMITH (Rev. T.)	35	TODHUNTER (I.)	5, 8	WIEDERSHEIM (R.)	40
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SMITH (W. S.)	35	TOURGÉNIEF (I. S.)	19	WILKINS (Prof. A. S.)	2, 13, 36
SOMERVILLE (Prof. W.)	6	TOUT (T. F.)	11	WILKINSON (S.)	24
SOUTHEY	5	TOZER (H. F.)	9	WILLIAMS (G. H.)	9
SPENDER (J. K.)	23	TRAILL (H. D.)	4, 29	WILLIAMS (Montagu)	5
SPENSER	20	TRENCH (Capt. F.)	29	WILLIAMS (S. E.)	13
SPOTTISWOODE (W.)	27	TRENCH (Archbishop)	35	WILLOUGHBY (F.)	39
STANLEY (Dean)	35	TREVELYAN (Sir G. O.)	11	WILLS (W. G.)	16
STANLEY (Hon. Maude)	29	TRIBE (A.)	7	WILSON (A. J.)	29
STATHAM (R.)	29	TRISTRAM (W. O.)	12	WILSON (Sir C.)	4
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STEPHEN (C. E.)	8	TRUMAN (J.)	16	WILSON (Dr. G.)	4, 5, 22
STEPHEN (H.)	13	TUCKER (T. G.)	36	WILSON (Archdeacon)	36
STEPHEN (Sir J. F.)	11, 13, 22	TULLOCH (Principal)	35	WILSON (Mary)	13
STEPHEN (J. K.)	13	TURNER (C. Tennyson)	16	WINGATE (Major F. R.)	24
STEPHEN (L.)	4	TURNER (G.)	1	WINKWORTH (C.)	5
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STEWART (A.)	39	TYLOR (E. B.)	1	WOOD (Rev. E. G.)	36
STEWART (Balfour)	26, 27, 35	TYRWHITT (R. St. J.)	2, 16	WOODS (Rev. F. H.)	1
STEWART (S. A.)	6	VAUGHAN (C. J.)	31, 32, 35, 36	WOODS (Miss M. A.)	16, 33
STOKES (Sir G. G.)	27	VAUGHAN (Rev. D. J.)	20, 36	WOODWARD (C. M.)	8
STORY (R. H.)	3	VAUGHAN (Rev. E. T.)	36	WOOLNER (T.)	16
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STRACHEY (Sir E.)	20	VELEY (M.)	19	WORTHY (Mrs.)	19
STRACHEY (Gen. R.)	9	VENN (Rev. J.)	26, 36	WRIGHT (Rev. A.)	31
STRANGFORD (Viscountess)	38	VERNON (Hon. W. W.)	13	WRIGHT (C. E. G.)	8
STRETTELL (A.)	16	VERRALL (A. W.)	13, 36	WRIGHT (J.)	21
STUBBS (Rev. C. W.)	35	VERRALL (Mrs.)	1	WRIGHT (L.)	27
STUBBS (Bishop)	31	WAIN (Louis)	39	WRIGHT (W. Aldis)	8, 15, 20, 31
SUTHERLAND (A.)	9	WALDSTEIN (C.)	2	WURTZ (Ad.)	7
SYMONDS (J. A.)	4	WALKER (Prof. F. A.)	28	WYATT (Sir M. D.)	2
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SYMONS (A.)	16	WALLACE (Sir D. M.)	29	YOUNG (E. W.)	8
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TAIT (Prof. P. G.)	26, 27, 35				