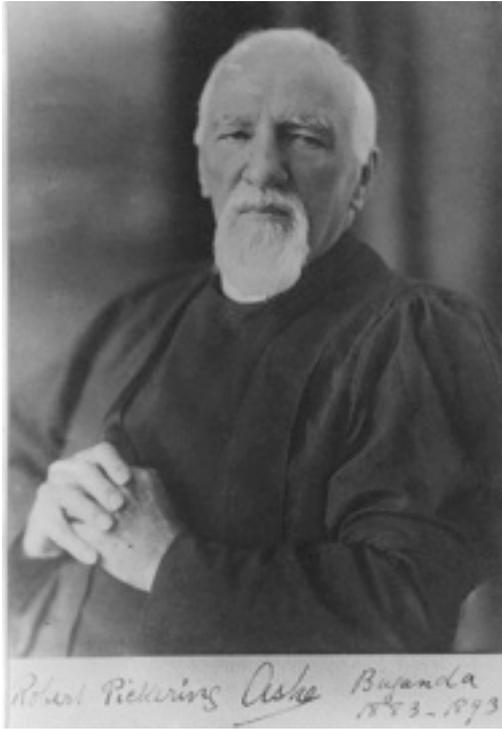


Short Stories



by

Robert Pickering Ashe
M.A., F.R.G.S.

The Ashe Arms



Fight

Not for ourselves but for everyone

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Robert Pickering Ashe
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Other publications by Robert Ashe:

From Phnom Penh to Paradise – Ghost-writer (1987)
Flying into the Unknown (2008)

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Preface

My Grandfather, Robert Pickering Ashe, was one of the first missionaries into Uganda, and he was also a prolific author writing books (“Two Kings of Uganda” and “Chronicles of Uganda”), plays, poems, and short stories. This is a collection of his short stories, all of which make very interesting reading.

Sadly, he died before I was born, but I have got to know him through the collection of materials that his son, my father, kept. My Grandfather was a remarkable man, and I am proud to have been named after him.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Robert Ashe". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single, long, horizontal stroke.

For Marion

The best mother in the world





Robert Pickering Ashe.
circa 1861

CHEKERJI

A Turkish Brigand

Chapter 1

The 'Sisters of Armenia' were meeting in a large drawing room in Lancaster Gate, Mrs. Blantire in the Chair. Mrs. Blantire, a wealthy Scots lady with a strong mind and will, practically ran the 'Sisters' and though others of them contributed handsomely to the funds of the Association, no one put down quite so large an offering as Mrs. Blantire herself.

Mrs. Blantire had no children, but she had a nephew whom she had educated at a public school and who had lately left the University. She thought it would be well for him to see something of foreign countries, and so she had framed a plan for a Traveling Secretary of the Association, which position, with a nice little salary, she intended should be offered to her nephew, Leonard Neville B.A.

Indeed Mrs. Blantire had gone so far as to write to Leonard definitely offering him the post. He was to visit Asia Minor, she wrote, report on the position there, and organise definite help in the way of an Orphanage School, and a Labour Home for adults. It only remained to get her Committee's consent for the scheme.

Mrs. Blantire had laid down her facts, marshaled her figures and proved her points to the entire satisfaction of the meeting which was about to appoint Mr. Neville to the important post of Traveling Secretary, when meek little Miss Miggs, the Honorary Secretary reminded the ladies that by Rule 4 of their Constitution they must confirm any motion passed at one meeting, at the next, before it could be considered as definitely settled. Some of the ladies remarked that of course it would be all right, but Miss Miggs who usually was the first to agree with Mrs. Blantire, maintained a discreet silence, and the meeting dispersed.

At their next meeting Mrs. Blantire was in the Chair as usual. Mrs. Ladbrook was about to propose the adoption of Mrs. Blantire's plan of appointing Mr. Neville as Travelling Secretary, when Miss Miggs asked for permission to read a letter from a young lady who offered to go to Asia Minor at her own expense, and undertake the duties of Secretary without remuneration. Miss Miggs also read one or two letters highly commending the character and ability of Miss Wilmott which clearly showed the great acquisition she would prove to the 'Sisters of Armenia'. Mrs. Repping, who was opposed to Mrs. Blantire's autocracy made a vigorous little speech saying that they would be most unwise to spend the large sum needed for a Secretary and his

expenses when an efficient and highly recommended lady offered to do the work free of cost and pay all her own expenses into the bargain. The meeting unanimously agreed to accept Miss Wilmot's offer, and Mrs. Blantire found herself for once absolutely in a minority of one. As Chairperson she had not voted, and therefore with the best grace she could, she accepted Miss Wilmott as Secretary. She then said, "Ladies, I have an offer from an anonymous friend who, approving our choice, is willing to pay the salary and expenses of a gentleman secretary, and since unhappily the work is so large, and the need so great, personally I feel that this offer ought to be accepted; especially as he has written some very powerful letters to English newspapers on behalf of the oppressed Armenians, pointing out the cruelty of their oppressors. The lady can go out first and base herself in Smyrna, and the gentleman can go later and eventually proceed to Adana or some other place in the interior."

This proposal was warmly agreed to by the Committee, and Mrs. Blantire left the meeting murmuring, 'The best laid schemes of mice and men . . . !'

Chapter 2

Miss Audrey Wilmot did not, as a matter of fact, precede her fellow secretary. Business, connected with her property delayed her journey, with the result that she and Mr. Neville became fellow travelers, and met on the steamer which was to take them from Marseilles to Smyrna. He in his fine university manner was stiff, unbending and somewhat supercilious. She, on the other hand being a person of humble disposition, put forth no pretensions on her own part, nor made any claims on the grounds either of what she was or what she had, and was in danger of being valued by him at her own modest estimate. She thought that probably he was going out as a Consul or Attaché to Constantinople as he had told her that he was going to take up an appointment in the East. He presumed that possibly she was a governess or perhaps a missionary, as she seemed of a somewhat pious, not to say sorrowful disposition. This may well be, for she had lately lost the kindest and most loving father, of whom she was sole heiress. But whatever she was, she was a pretty, ladylike girl, so he took as his motto, 'carpe diem', and became quite friendly with her.

It was strange that they reached Smyrna without discovering that they were fellow secretaries of the S. O. A. Association. He was almost afraid of

discovering what was her job, and she was far too polite to press for a confidence which had not been given. The sun was setting as they approached the long gulf on which the sunlit, smokeless city of Smyrna lies. The two secretaries were sitting side by side, the girl with limbs stretched out in a long deck chair, her hands folded idly in her lap. Her brown eyes fringed with long lashes and set wide apart in the small oval face, gazed dreamily over the blue slow-moving waters.

"It's very lovely." She broke the silence by saying. Neville glanced down at her, the slight graceful figure, the curve of her cheek, and the delicate line of her white throat.

"Yes, very, very lovely" he murmured, looking perhaps too fondly on her face, while she, totally unconscious went on, "And the mountains are so wonderful with their exquisite colouring. How strange to think" she added, "that those mountain recesses may be the haunts of dangerous brigands."

Neville answered her by saying, "As far as I know, the days of brigands are gone for ever; one of the romantic features of the past perhaps to be regretted. Oh well," he laughed, "We have plenty of Bill Sykeses, and I suppose there are what corresponds to them among the people of Asia Minor!"

The conversation was becoming a little more intimate when the Ship's very cheerful purser came up and joined them, pouring out a flood of reminiscences of the various ports he had visited in his career. The remorseless dinner-bell now sounded and ended the last opportunity of a familiar talk between them.

They were not able to land that night and next morning they were to part. The close association of the voyage, many common tastes, hopes and aspirations had drawn them together. Neville now knew that he loved her, but the uncertainty of his position and prospects, and the attitude of his aunt to a possibly penniless bride kept him from telling Audrey what was really in his heart. He did however, in parting hand her a copy of verses addressed to "My Love", which she was to treasure and weep over in days soon to come.

So:

She is going to start work from the American Mission in Smyrna, while he is to stay with Greene, an old College friend who is Acting Consul in Smyrna, in the absence of the Consul General. She is taken charge of by the kindly American ladies. He goes off grandly in the Consular boat under a waving British flag, where they talk over Turkish politics, and look up steamer routes for

Mersina, the port for Adana. But before Neville leaves, his host suggests a day's duck shooting a few miles up the railway as a pleasant diversion.

Everything was prepared, when suddenly some important consular business cropped up which made it impossible for Leonard Neville's friend to undertake the expedition on the day fixed, and as the steamer for Mersina left on the day following, the day's sport had either to be given up, or Neville must go on his own. Greene insisted on his going, and provided him with a 'Cavass' as a guard, and also a gun-bearer, Dimitri, a quiet, respectable Greek. Neville was also taking with him as interpreter, Vidori, who apparently knew all languages and had the rare gift of interpreting the meaning and not just the words.

Chapter 3

In spite of Neville's belief that there were no more brigands, in fact there were several bands ranging the hills. The king of them all was Chekerji, a Turk, with a hate against all Turkish officials, and especially against Albanians, as they had been employed by the Government to hunt him down.

Chekerji's story is a sad one and unhappily not very rare in the treacherous and blood-stained annals of his Country. His father was driven into outlawry by some injustice and had taken to the hills and become a thorn in the side of the Governor of Smyrna. The Governor sent a message to him that, if he would give himself up, he would receive a free pardon for himself and his followers. Trusting to the word of the Governor, he and his wife and his band went to Smyrna and gave themselves up. They were received with impressive honour, but a day or two later they were executed and their heads displayed on lamp posts in the city as a warning to other brigands. Chekerji's mother was handed over to the soldiers, and died shortly afterwards.

Because of these murders of his family, Chekerji grew up and lived only to be revenged on his father's treacherous slayers, and woe to any Turkish official that came within range of his rifle. He became a sort of Robin Hood; he robbed the rich

and fed the poor, and gave money for useful works like road making and bridge building. He and his men had sure hiding places in every village, and the people were his spies and helpers. For many long years he defied the authorities and evaded capture. Each year added to the death toll of his enemies, and many men perished in the attempt to take him or kill him.

Neville duly set out on his expedition, but he did not have very good sport. He hardly saw any duck. He was about to give up, when Vidori told him of a splendid place only an hour or two's walk away, where he would be sure to get a wild boar. The Cavass seemed to be making objections which Vidori overruled, and the party started for the foothills under some high mountains. It turned out to be a lot further than Vidori had made out, and the Cavass suddenly fell lame. He sat on a stone groaning and holding his foot in his hand. The result was that the Cavass said he must remain behind, while Neville, Dimitri and Vidori, carrying a spare rifle and some food continued on their journey.

They went on, and found themselves in a sort of ravine. Neville noticed three or four men moving towards them among the rocks. A sudden exclamation from Dimitri made him look round. Four fellows were approaching from behind with rifles raised.

"These very bad fellows;" Vidori said., "Better keep still".

Neville was surrounded; He was relieved of his gun, and made prisoner. He had been seized by brigands; he just could not believe it was happening. Dimitri and Vidori also had their hands tied. The brigands then set off at a rapid pace till they came to an open glade where a number of horses were waiting. Neville was told to mount, and the rest all took horse, one leading Neville's animal, and a quick ascent of the mountain began.

During the ride Neville noticed that one of the brigands who appeared to be the leader, seemed hardly able to hold up his head, and to his surprise the man came up to him and said in English, "Have you any medicine? I have very bad fever. I think I am going to die."

Neville remembered that he had some quinine tablets and some aspirin, and told the man that if they stopped he could give him some. The party stopped for a few minutes, and Neville gave the pills to the man, who chewed them up, and they continued on their way.

Chapter 4

Neville felt tired out, and dazed by the misfortune that had overtaken him. In time they arrived at a sort of encampment where other brigands were sitting round a fire cooking. The sick brigand handed Neville over to the man who was evidently the Captain, and then went and lay down groaning.

The brigands had their supper, and gave the prisoners an ample share. Wild boar was the 'pièce de resistance', showing that the brigands were Christians, not Turks. After supper Vidori was called, and Neville was told that he must write a letter asking for a ransom fixed at 3,000 gold Napoleons, and that failing the payment of this he most certainly would be killed.

The brigands produced pen and ink and paper, and poor Neville sat down and wrote the letter addressing it to his friend Greene. Vidori was sent off in charge of one of the brigands, and the party settled themselves down to sleep. After what seemed like a couple of hours, Neville was woken up, and another march began. Towards dawn a halt was called, and the sick brigand came up to Neville and spoke to him, "Me better now. Very good medicine. I tell you something. When you free, Albanians wait to take you. Sultan give order kill you." The man then went away.

Neville remembered something his friend Greene had told him. Abdul Hamid, the Sultan of Turkey had consuls and spies in many places in the United Kingdom who had orders to send him anything appearing in English Newspapers. Neville now thought of his own letters referring to the Sultan as the 'Great Assassin'. Some of his spies must have told the Sultan of his coming to Turkey.

But what could he do? While he was turning things over in his mind, the Brigand Captain Jani, accompanied by his friend who spoke English, came to him and said, "You must write other letter – quickly, quickly, to hurry up ransom."

Jani was not prepared to take the chance of the first letter going astray so he planned to send Dimitri, the gun-bearer with a duplicate letter demanding the same ransom of three thousand gold Napoleons. Neville wrote the letter but added, 'Do not send any ransom; I am to be set free only to be handed over to the Albanians and killed.'

Dimitri set off, but delivered this letter a full day after Vidori's first letter arrived.

Chapter 4

Mr. Greene received the first letter and had immediately communicated with the American Mission and told them that a Mr. Neville, the Secretary of the Sisters of Armenia had been taken prisoner by brigands who were demanding a ransom of 3,000 gold Napoleons. He said that he understood that Miss Wilmott was also a Secretary of the Association, and that she should be informed. Miss Wilmot was staggered when she realised that her fellow Secretary was the man she had met on the ship. She immediately went to her room to weep and pray and read again the verses that Leonard Neville had given her.

When she came out, her mind was made up; she arranged on her own behalf to pay the ransom. The money was duly sent off by a trusty messenger. The kind Missionaries assured the distraught girl that in a day or two she would see her lover and fellow Secretary safe and sound.

It was then that the second letter arrived and an anxious council was held. Mr. Landor, one of the Americans, had spent delightful holidays in the mountains of the Bog Dagh, not far from where Chekerji operated. He had often met him, and he felt sure that if the brigands were Chekerji's men he could be induced to protect Neville. But from

Dimitri's account it appeared that these brigands were not Chekerji's men, and this made the hope of enlisting help very unlikely. No one knew where Chekerji was to be found; no one would undertake the quest; it was too vague, too uncertain, too risky. It was not Chekerji they feared so much as the other gangs of brigands, and the still more dangerous Albanians.

Miss Wilmott, so mild and unassuming, the girl Secretary of the S. of A. suddenly announced that she would go herself. The Missionaries were all shocked, and did all they could to dissuade her, but she was adamant. In the end, Aslian an Armenian lad, who taught at the American College, volunteered to accompany her as interpreter, and these two with a Turkish guide took the train as far as Odemish. Then, hiring horses, they set off up the mountain in the hope of finding the famous Bandit Chief. The search was by no means as wild as it seemed, as every villager knew Chekerji, and many of the Head Men were aware more or less of his movements. Unhappily it came on to rain, and as night fell the guide led them into a tiny village where, in the headman's house a little room was found for Audrey.

"Buyurun", 'welcome', said her courteous host, and they brought her coffee. Through the interpreter, she made enquiries as to Chekerji's whereabouts, and

learned that he was not in the neighbourhood, and might not return for ten days. Poor Audrey wept bitterly at the thought of her lover's plight, and almost like Jonah wished that she might die. However, this was not her prayer, and, relieved both by her tears and her prayers, she again took counsel with the faithful Armenian, Petro Aslian, who told her that nothing more could be done that night, so she had better rest and begin the quest next day. She lay down and revolved things in her mind till she at last took the desperate resolve to seek out the brigands who had taken Leonard captive, or even the dreaded Albanians, and to plead or bargain for her lover's life.

She then fell into a troubled sleep.

Chapter 5

She was roused by the barking of dogs, the clatter of horses' hoofs and the jingle of their appointments. Aslian was lying at the open door of her little den of a room. He unrolled himself and went out to see what was happening. After a little while he returned with a very excited look on his face which shone in the dim light of the 'Kadilaki', the little lighted wick floating in olive oil.

"He's come! Chekerji himself has arrived, and he has heard you are here."

"Oh, when can I see him?" cried Audrey.

"I will go and find out."

It seemed hours before Aslian returned to tell her that Chekerji would see her. She followed the lad who led her to another house where a bright light was burning and where the Bandit Chief was sitting. He eyed her a little suspiciously at first, but then was obviously impressed with her appearance, made her welcome and enquired her business. She explained, Aslian putting her words into good Turkish.

"Do you know who I am?" asked Chekerji.

"Yes, you are a friend to those who need help."

"Don't you know that I am a robber?"

"Yes," she replied, "But a helper of the poor."

"Did you not know I could seize you and demand a heavy ransom?"

"Yes". replied the girl.

"Were you not afraid to meet me?"

"Before I saw you, I was afraid; now that I have seen you, I am not afraid."

"Who is this man whose life you want?" he asked, "Is he your husband, brother, father?"

"No, none of these."

"Are you going to marry him?"

"Well," she blushed, and nearly broke down. "He does not want me".

The interpreter was faithful.

"By Allah," said Chekerji, "This Christian dog shall beg for you on his knees." And here perhaps Aslian smoothed things a little in his interpreting.

"Go away," he added, "Rest in peace. At dawn we start, and the man's life is yours. "Geuze guezelle!" 'Beautiful eyes' he muttered as the happy girl left his presence.

When the sun leapt over the mountain tops and rivers of light ran down into the valleys, Chekerji's

cavalcade left the village, its destination known only to the leader.

Chapter 6

To return now to the fortunes of Neville.

He was marched on next morning and the party halted for a brief period, and then moved on again. At last they reached a very wild place, where they remained. Some of the brigands disappeared, and after several hours they returned with two or three bags, which proved to be the ransom. The three thousand Napoleons were duly counted out to the Brigand Chief, and then the messenger sat down. The brigands brought out some food for the messenger and their prisoner. The friendly brigand, acting as interpreter said, "Now you free; you go with this man." Then in a low voice he added. "Hide if you can. Very bad men near."

The brigands then, leaving Neville and the messenger who had brought the money alone, left the place, and were soon out of sight. The messenger then handed Neville a message written in English which read, "Follow Manoli your guide. We are waiting for you with horses." And it was signed, R. Whitewell.

Leonard tried to make his guide understand their danger and the need for caution, but Manoli knew no English, and failed to catch his meaning, so Leonard, keeping a sharp look out, reluctantly followed his guide. They kept on for nearly a mile

until they entered one of the ravines, and Leonard realised that the game was up. The small valley was suddenly full of armed men, and in a few minutes he and Manoli were prisoners. This time it was a group of Albanians.

Manoli was subsequently released, but Leonard was tightly secured and marched off. Although inwardly fearful, he showed no signs of the trepidation which he felt, and accompanied his captors with simulated unconcern. The party halted at sundown; food was cooked, and then from among the party, increased now to about twenty, one was called out who knew a little English, and a kind of trial began.

The chief Albanian made a long harangue, gesticulating with great passion, and when he ceased, the interpreter began. "You very bad man. You write many lies against Sultan. Sultan order your head go to Istanbul. We kill you here."

Leonard said nothing, but looked scornfully into the eyes of his accusers. The orator then again made a long speech; once more with fiery ardour, but towards the end in gentler tones. The interpreter now turned to Neville saying, "You very bad, but you brave man. Chief meant hang you like dog, but daylight tomorrow they shoot you like soldier".

All that Leonard replied was, "Tell your chief I thank him. I too like to meet a brave man."

He then asked for writing materials, and the interpreter lent him a pencil and an old envelope. He wrote a few lines to Audrey, too sacred to be repeated. Then he tried to sleep; at the cold dawn he woke, rolled a cigarette, drank a small cup of coffee, and was led forth to his death.

A peasant coming to dig in his vineyard was pressed into service as grave-digger. The birds were piping sweet morning song but this, his requiem, was punctuated by the dull thud of the pick that was hollowing out his last resting place. Two of the Albanians now approached him and bound a handkerchief over his eyes and placed him at the edge of his grave. Leonard squared his shoulders and stood steady, praying that he might die like a man. He heard the rattle of the bolts as the firing party slipped the bullets into their rifles.

"Into Thy Hands . . .", he murmured, and the rifles rang out. He imagined himself pierced by a dozen bullets, but before he had time to fall, as he knew he must . . . He heard confused cries, shouts, swift running feet; another volley of shots. He stood still, then felt someone tearing the handkerchief from his eyes. It was Audrey.

Chekerji came up and stood looking very stern; some of his men grouped themselves around him, the rest were pursuing the flying Albanians.

Leonard stood astonished, waiting for the next act. The silence was broken by Chekerji calling for Aslian, who came up.

"Tell this Englishman I have given his life to this woman, but only on condition that he takes her to wife."

This was carefully rendered by the interpreter.

"Tell him he shall swear by his God, his King, and his father and mother and by all that he holds sacred, or he shall die like a dog."

Audrey turned pale as death. Leonard stepped forward took her hand now as cold as ice, and in a clear voice replied, "I swear by my God and my King, by my father and mother and by all that I hold sacred, to take this woman to wife, if she will graciously consent."

A pressure from the cold hand assured him of that; the oath was duly translated to Chekerji whose stern features relaxed as the Englishman stepped up to him and grasped his hand.

The party, after drinking coffee, eating eggs, fish, bread and fruit left the grave and the imperturbable peasant, now at the pleasanter task of digging his vineyard, and they made their way towards Odemish. In half an hour Chekerji left them, the

Chief sending one or two men to guard and guide them till they came to the railway station.

Lovers' conversations, interesting as they may appear to themselves, are caviar to the general public, so need not be narrated. It is enough to say that they reached Smyrna safely. Leonard there learned who had paid the ransom.

The wedding was duly celebrated. At the bridal gathering a stranger appeared with a message in Turkish and a heavy package. Aslian was called to translate the message.

"Chekerji returns the money recovered from the Albanians as a wedding gift, and wishes you joy here and hereafter."

Some years later Chekerji received a magnificent gold watch with a Turkish inscription which the Englishman and his wife had sent "To their dear friend and preserver, Chekerji."



MARIELLA

Child wisdom shines from her eyes
Wisdom we seek through the years,
 We, at the last become wise
 With wisdom taught by our tears,
 With wisdom won with our years.
 Ephemeralia

You will see that what I am narrating happened long before young ladies knew anything about being 'on their own'. And when railways were even looked upon as being something of an innovation, and were kept as far as possible from country towns.

The old Manor House of Welford was not a very imposing pile of buildings considering the amount of land surrounding it and the number of farms belonging to the Lord of the Manor, but it had always been a comfortable and homely place. The present owner, George Ellingthorpe, had been for years a lonely bachelor. People hinted that he had suffered a disappointment in love, but however that may have been, he lived almost the life of a recluse, never visiting anywhere, nor receiving company, though to any rare visitors, he always showed the most scrupulous politeness and courtesy.

The Manor belonged to him in fee simple, and he had already made a will leaving his whole estate,

with the exception of certain charitable bequests, to a distant cousin, of his own name, William Ellingthorpe.

The present owner, George, the recluse, was taking his frugal breakfast one summer morning sometime in the late eighteen fifties, and reading a letter in an unfamiliar hand which he had received by that morning's post. The letter was from a firm of solicitors in a distant county announcing the death of another cousin, also an Ellingthorpe, and stating that the deceased had left a little orphaned daughter Mariella, whose mother had died four years previously in childbirth. This John Ellingthorpe's affairs were in order, all debts paid, but only a very small sum available towards the support of the child. The lawyers added that a faithful old servant of the family, Mary Philips, was prepared, if no other course was open, to take the child and work for her support, but they understood that he, Mr. George Ellingthorpe, was the nearest surviving relation of the deceased, and they begged to know if he had any alternative proposal for the benefit of the child.

This was the substance of the communication, and it is little wonder that it deeply disturbed the owner of Welford Manor. His tea was untasted, his toast untouched, as he pondered over the contents of the letter. At last he rose from the table, went out on the

terrace and paced up and down for more than an hour. Then he re-entered the house with a very stern face, and sat down and replied to the lawyers saying that, as a relation of the late John Ellingthorpe, he felt it was his duty to provide for the orphan child, adding that he would be glad to engage the woman, Mary Phillips, as the child's nurse and attendant, and that he would receive them both at Welford Manor. He enclosed a cheque for expenses of travel etc.

I am not much of a hand at recording conversations between nurses and children, but when Mary Philips read the news, she caught the little Mariella to her kindly breast, crying out, "Oh, thank God! Thank God." A few days later the two were installed in the old Manor House of Welford.

It might be interesting to describe how, by degrees, the little, shy Mariella found her way into uncle George's heart, and how from time to time Squire Ellingthorpe began to be seen abroad with his little niece. The old carriage was furbished up, and new horses champed and stamped in the stables. The old family pew in Church had new cushions, new brass rods and new curtains. And now on Sundays, bright little brown eyes would peep through the curtains at the congregation, and little fingers make the brass curtain rings jingle, to the delight of the younger, and scandal of the elder worshippers.

Time would fail to tell how Mariella learnt her Catechism from the Rector, and sums and the rudiments of Latin and Greek from the Curate; and how she became a lover of English literature, in this taste eagerly encouraged by Uncle George. Uncle George was indeed something of a scholar, and the two would read together, not only English poets and story writers, but the Gospels in Greek and the wanderings of Aeneas in Latin.

As the years rolled on, the Manor House became a centre of joyful mirth to the Gentry, and a source of help and happiness to the poor, very unlike its former self in the days of the Squire's loneliness.

It was in late October of 1875 that the two were sitting together in the Library having tea, when Uncle George suddenly asked Mariella her age.

"Why, Uncle," she replied, "I shall be nineteen next birthday."

"That is a very important age," he said, "Lovers will be coming, if they have not already arrived."

Mariella blushed prettily but said nothing. Her uncle interpreted her silence as a sort of half confession, and added,

"Have you a sweetheart, Child?"

"Yes," she replied. "And only one, a dear old white-headed Uncle George whom I would not exchange for a thousand sweethearts."

"Ah well!" he answered, "I was thinking of one, not a thousand."

Shortly after Mariella had left the room, the old man sat for a while in his armchair. He thought to himself, 'I really must write another will. The old one leaves everything to William and that sour wife of his.'

He employed himself for the next half hour drafting a brief document. When satisfied with it, he copied it out in beautiful copper-plate writing. He then sent for Mary Phillips and Wright, the coachman and made them witness his signature. When they left the room, he seemed strangely agitated and sank back in his deep leather armchair as though in a half faint. Seeming to recover a little, he rose and went to his writing table and picked up the draft which he carefully compared with the document just signed. Again he seemed overcome by faintness and sat down. When a little more recovered, he took the paper, and with trembling hands placed it in an envelope he had brought from his writing table.

"These attacks," he muttered, "are becoming more and more frequent."

He now closed the envelope, carefully sealed it and the next day sent it with a covering letter to his family lawyer, Mr. Pope, who only acknowledged its receipt.

The following year was a sad one for Mariella, because her dear Uncle as she always called him, was failing fast, and as the autumn of '76 drew on, his end was evidently approaching. His distant relative, and presumptive heir, William Ellingthorpe who, by the way was a wealthy man, on hearing of George's serious state, came over to Welford Manor accompanied with his wife Kate.

Kate was desperately afraid that George might have altered his will, and she was very insistent in urging her husband to represent to the dying Squire how unjust it would be to alter the former will which was known to be in her husband's favour.

"Of course, we cannot prevent his leaving Mariella a small legacy," she remarked, "But you must make him see how very wrong it would be to alter his will in her favour, at least to any important extent."

And then she added, "And if you are diffident about speaking, I at any rate will let him know his duty."

But when the good lady arrived with her meeker spouse, they found George quite unconscious, with Mariella sitting by his side. The Squire, who was breathing heavily suddenly opened his eyes, put his

hand on Mariella's bowed head and smiled at her. His hand slipped from her head. He had passed away.

I need do no more than refer to Mariella's grief, or to aunt Kate's ill timed enquiries about the will, her appropriating the keys to search uncle George's writing table and other places. Her husband was pained at her proceedings but remained quite passive, merely observing that George's will was probably in the hands of his lawyer.

The sad obsequies took place. Many sincere mourners stood round the grave, who had learnt in later years to love their landlord and friend. After the funeral, relations and friends, as the custom then was, adjourned to the library to hear the will read. Mr. Pope, the family lawyer rose to the solemnity and gravity of the occasion. When all were seated and waiting on tip toe of expectation, Mr. Pope put on his gold rimmed spectacles, took a large pinch of snuff, untied some papers enclosed in red tape, and spoke as follows:

"Our dear departed friend left in my keeping, two wills, one executed some 25 years ago, and the other within a year of his death. It will be in order to read the last one, as any former instrument will have become legally ineffective."

"Please read" snapped Cousin Kate.

The lawyer, taking another pinch of snuff, slowly broke the seal and read out a very brief document, making Mariella Ellingthorpe, daughter of the late John Ellingthorpe his sole heiress and executrix. (There were no charitable bequests, as the testator knew that his dear Mariella would continue their former benefactions, and probably add to them).

A sigh of satisfaction went through the room. The silence was broken by Cousin Kate's sharp voice uttering with ill suppressed venom: "Infamous".

Mr. Pope meanwhile was turning the will over and looking at it very closely. Once more he spoke. "This important document is unsigned, and unwitnessed, and therefore is not a legal instrument. Possibly among the deceased papers there is a properly executed will of which this present paper is a copy. In the meanwhile I will read the former will to which I referred."

He then read the will which made cousin William the sole heir and executor.

Cousin William indeed wished to do something in the way of justice for Mariella, but was met by such a storm of opposition from his wife that he dropped the question.

"He left you without one penny", Kate said, "and let him now be punished."

"You can't punish a dead man." replied her husband.

"Oh! can't I" said Kate. "I'll make that pert doll know her place!"

Poor Mariella, pert thou never wert, but rather one of the meek, but it seems just now thou art not to inherit the earth!

William and Kate took their departure but only to return. Since the missing will, if there had been one, was never found, they came with all their paraphernalia, and what was worse, their family. Before their advent, poor Mariella received the following formal letter from Cousin Kate:

Grimwreck Hall,
Dulchester

Dec. 3 / 1876

Dear Mariella,

My husband has most kindly acceded to my request that I might offer you a home with us at Welford. I trust that the somewhat lax and unwise upbringing you have had from our late Cousin George, may not have unfitted you for the duties and responsibilities, the labours and troubles of life. As my three daughters will reside with us, and as I am very particular about their associates, I must request you to endeavour to curb and restrict that tendency to

lightness and frivolity which I understand has for some time displayed itself in your character.

Believe me, one solicitous for your highest good,
Kate Ellingthorpe.

This was bad, but worse was to come. The fateful day of the family's arrival came. Uncle William was kind; Aunt Kate, cold; cousins Jane and Martha, supercilious, haughty and impertinent; Catherine, known as 'Pussy' was the least unpleasant. The fact is that Nature, who had lavished loveliness upon Mariella, had contented herself with bestowing poor figures, sharp features, blunt manners and somewhat weak eyes upon Kate's daughters. But what they wanted in looks, they were determined to make up for in asperity of manner, and insolence of demeanour.

Poor Mariella, even her sweet disposition had a hard struggle. She did indeed conquer Uncle William quite easily, and he became as kind to her as he dared. Even Pussy eventually succumbed to her sweetness and became friendly. Martha and Jane were inexorable, while their mother could never forgive Mariella her crimes of being strong and beautiful, crimes which each day seemed to grow greater.

Kate, the Squires was soon installed as despot and autocrat of Welford Manor. Her first business was to

dismiss all the old servants, She sent old Mrs. Bryce, the housekeeper, away to die, and though Uncle William and Pussy made a hard fight to retain Mary Phillips for Mariella, they suffered an ignominious defeat. Mary indeed clinched the matter of her dismissal by the plainness of her speech to the autocrat. Emboldened by her love for Mariella, she went so far as to tell Madam Kate, that she was certain there was another will, for she and Wright signed a paper which must have been the will, and then she added to the enraged lady.

"I'm sure you done away with it when you stole the poor dead master's keys and went a'rooting among his private papers a'fore the Lawyer came."

"You insolent woman," screamed Kate, turning crimson, "I could have you locked up for slander and sent to Botany Bay."

"Well," retorted Mary, nothing daunted, "I'd sooner be in prison in Botany Bay than stay in your house, you bad wicked woman. You and your daughters can't a'help bein' plain and ugly, but you can help bein' proud and cruel."

Madam was speechless, and Mary turned on her heel and left the room.

The parting between Mariella and her old friends was very sad, and that between Mary Phillips especially touching. Mary said she would go and set

up a little house somewhere, "And, deary," she added, "whenever you have need, you know that where I am, there you shall find a welcome."

Then Mary and the others departed.

Mariella spent some very sad days mourning for her Uncle and grieving at the strange circumstances in which she found herself. Her humility, and sweetness of disposition did indeed save her from the shock of the fall which would have been so terrible if she had had a proud and bitter spirit.

Aunt Kate had a fixed policy which as soon as possible she began to put into effect. First it was to keep Mariella out of the way when ever they had company, so that Mariella's beauty might not interfere with the matrimonial prospects of her own daughters. Secondly, it was to relegate Mariella almost to the position of a servant. Thirdly, it was to get her away from Welford as soon as she found it possible.

Mariella was now often to be found with a duster in her hand, arranging flowers, or helping set the table. The first time Aunt Kate gave a dinner party, she said to Mariella, in quite a kind manner, "I know that so soon after your dear uncle's death you will not like to join a dinner party, so you can have yours with Mr. Purcell, the housekeeper."

This was the beginning, and little by little she was edged out, until finally she had all her meals in the housekeeper's room and began to be treated, not as one of the family, but as what she really was, a poor and unwelcome dependant. Mariella had been so busy helping the servants, who had begun to love her as much as their dismissed predecessors, that she almost forgot her unpleasant position and that she was to be carefully excluded from the Ellingthorpes' social life.

Her amusements were few. Uncle William indeed, would sometimes, on the sly, take her riding with him, a form of exercise not much effected by her cousins. She could still visit the poor, but she had nothing to give them except loving words, and she learnt that love and sympathy were richly valued by those who knew that Mariella the generous, was now Mariella the poor. Uncle William eventually did a thing which surprised himself, for he put a considerable sum into her hand with which she was able to alleviate the more pressing needs of her friends. But he did this on the strict understanding that his wife and daughters were to know nothing about it. So having meekly accepted her lot, Mariella began to find many consolations, and though she no longer had money laid up, she was heaping up what she found better, a growing store of love.

Archery and croquet were amusements a good deal indulged in at that time, and the Miss Ellingthorpes were quite proficient in these sports. So it was arranged in the early summer to give a grand afternoon party at which archery and croquet were to be the chief features. Among the invited guests was a certain Major Roy, a man too open handed and generous ever to be rich, but owner of the adjoining estate of Swale, and a victim especially marked down by Aunt Kate for her eldest daughter Jane.

If match-making mothers could only know how impossible are the hopes which they sometimes nourish, fewer such schemes would be hatched. Jane became unconsciously the instrument of destruction of her mother's plans.

"Who arranged these flowers?" she asked, coming into the dining room where tables were laid out for tea, adorned with flowers arranged by Mariella.

"I did", replied Mariella, who was putting a last few touches to the table.

"There are deplorably few", said Jane, "Just run and get some more and give them to me. I will at least make the tables look decent."

Mariella took her basket and scissors and ran to the rose garden. A lovely picture she made among the queen of flowers, and someone whom she did not

see was watching her with unfeigned admiration. Her basket nearly full, she hastened to the house, when she came full on Major Roy, who accosted her.

"A Miss Ellingthorpe", he said.

"Yes", replied Mariella, and they shook hands.

"I have not lived at Swale for many years, or I should not be ignorant of which of my fair young hostesses I am addressing."

"Well, you know," said Mariella, "I am not really a hostess at all. It is my cousins who are giving the party. I am only helping to get things ready."

"Then you must be Mariella, my little friend of years ago - Mariella, whom everyone praises and loves."

Mariella blushed, and said, "I must run."

And away she sped to meet the angry comments of Jane for her long delay. Mariella said nothing of her meeting with the Major who meanwhile, with his whole soul full of the vision of Mariella among the roses, met Mrs. Kate, who introduced him to Martha, and then to Jane who had now come out onto the lawn. The Major hardly looked at Kate's daughters, and with a fine disregard for what is fitting, congratulated the mother on the beauty and goodness of her niece, and on her good fortune in

being able to give her a home. Mrs. Kate imposed upon herself an immense control and succeeded in being at least civil to the Major, whose praises for Mariella were sealing her doom, and assuring her exile from Welford Manor.

That very evening there was a stormy scene. Uncle William and Pussy pleaded hard for Mariella, but were dismally defeated, and the wrath of Aunt Kate prevailed, with the result that it was finally settled that Mariella was to leave Welford.

A few days later, Uncle William was to take Mariella riding, however, at the last moment, he sent a message to say that he was needed by Aunt Kate on an important business, so Mariella went off by herself. She went very slowly, lost in a kind of reverie, out through the Park gates. She passed to the High road, and was aroused from her pensive mood by hearing the quick trot of a horse's hoofs behind her. The rider reined up beside her. It was Major Roy.

"I'm in luck," he said, saluting her, "To come on the rose of roses this morning."

"You will not see her again very often," replied Mariella, "For I am leaving Welford."

"Leaving Welford," he repeated in a tone of consternation which, had he known the true nature of her departure, would have been more emphatic,

"Are you going on a visit?" he continued, and she replied, "My Aunt Kate does not wish me to remain at Welford, and she and Uncle William are arranging for me to live somewhere else."

"And where might that be, if I may venture to ask the question?"

"I really do not know" she replied, "but it is very kind of you to be interested enough to ask me."

"I am at a disadvantage" he said, not noticing her remark, "Everyone knows and loves you, I not the least, if not the most, but no one knows me here; I have lived away from Swale for so many years."

"I see you sometimes in Church," said Mariella, and it reminds me of the old days when I used to peep through the curtains, and how you sometimes smiled at me; and how terribly old I thought you were".

"I remember," she added, "How, one day coming out of Church you rescued me from old Mrs. Kew's dog which was barking at me, and what a fright I got."

"Oh, you remember that, do you?" said the Major, "How I brought you to the carriage and you rewarded me with a kiss."

"I don't remember that part of the story." laughed Mariella, "I think that is embroidery!"

By this time they had reached a further gate of the Park, and the Major rode with Mariella to the house, not unnoticed by Aunt Kate. At the door they parted, he begging her as an old friend that as soon as she was settled, she would let him know where she was living, and this, the poor friendless girl was glad to promise.

He turned and rode thoughtfully away. She entered the house to face the inevitable wiggling from Aunt Kate. A few days later, Aunt Kate informed Mariella that she had arranged with the Misses Nizbitt, proprietresses of an Academy for Young Ladies at Brixton, that Mariella should go to them as assistant mistress at a nominal salary, "And the day after tomorrow you will leave Welford to take up your new duties."

Mariella was not quite as unhappy at the thought of leaving her old home as she supposed she should have been. The excitement of having a change stirred her blood, or was it something else, some subtle feeling influencing her and giving her a kind of subconscious joy. She would of course be sorry to leave her friends among the cottagers, and Uncle William, Pussy, the servants, and of course such an old friend as Major Roy.

The evening before she left, the family was dining out. She wandered through the rooms, remembering

all the happy times she had had with Uncle George. She went into the sitting room; everything had been moved around, but the old Jacobean chest was still there. She stroked it lovingly, and then went to the Bible Box with 'M B 1660' carved into the front. She touched the smooth oak and wondered who M B was, and whether the initials were of a man or a woman, and if so, whether it was her maiden or her surname. Tomorrow she would leave it all, her childhood home, perhaps never to return.

So she moved pensively into what had been her Uncle George's study. That was still much as he had left it - the old leather armchair was there. He used to sit in it, sometimes with her on his knee. She sat down in it and remembered how she had once put her hand down between the seat and the back and found a silver florin, her treasure-trove! How the next day they had walked together over the stream to the village shop, and she had chosen a little glass ornament marked at two shillings.

She slipped her hand to where she had found the florin, and felt paper. She pulled it out and unfolded it. There on the bottom she saw her uncle's signature, and Mary Phillips' and the coachman Wright's. It was the will signed and witnessed! She held it in her hand, that precious paper - dear Uncle George had not forgotten her.

Mariella went up to her room and put the will into the small valise she had packed to take to Brixton. Her mind was in a turmoil and try as she might, she could not calm it down. She sat on the bed and then stretched out her hand and picked up the Bible which was on the bedside table. She opened it, looked down, and the verse that met her eye was:

'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.'

As she thought about Jesus, a wonderful calm came over her mind and she knew exactly what she had to do. She must go to Mr. Pope, the lawyer and show him the will.

She said nothing about her find when the family returned, which they did rather out of humour, Aunt Kate complaining of the forwardness of the girls, and Jane and Martha of the backwardness of the men, while Uncle William's complaint was about the poorness of the cooking and the badness of the wines.

The next day Mariella took her departure in very cheerful spirits. Pussy and some of the maids shed tears. Uncle William was frankly sorry, and Aunt Kate frankly glad at her departure. Jane and Martha were out of the way when she left, and she had to send them her goodbyes by Pussy. Uncle William sent her to the station in the good carriage. Aunt Kate thought it was ridiculous, the pony trap would

have done perfectly well. Uncle William put an envelope into her hand containing a ten pound note. And so she left her old home.

She had made her plans. Although she bought a ticket to London, she left the train at Dulchester, and made her way to the office of Mr. Pope the lawyer.

She said, "I have found something I want to show you."

"Where on earth did you get this?"

"I found it in the old armchair - it had slipped down between the seat and the back."

Mr. Pope studied it and pronounced it in perfect order and a valid legal instrument.

Mariella resumed her journey to London, but instead of going to Brixton to the Misses Nizbitts' Academy for Young Ladies, she rather went to Croydon to the house of Mary Phillips, who received her with a rapturous welcome and seemed almost disappointed that she was not to be allowed to take in and support Mariella as she had desired to do in the days long gone by.

But what a time those two had! What a tea regardless of expense! What amazement on the lodgers' faces at the feast they were made to share in!

Mr. Mathers on the first floor, and Miss Midgets higher up, even to this day expatiate on the beauty of a certain veal and ham pie, the crispness of the crumpets, the perfection of the muffins and the richness of the cakes, some of which were sent up to a new lady lodger, on the evening of her arrival.

We must now beg our readers to accompany us back to Welford, and to enter the breakfast room there a day or two later. Aunt Kate, having dispensed from a large silver urn a plentiful supply of weak tea to her family, took up a letter with a Brixton post mark on it, while her husband was opening one from Dulchester.

"Well I'm !" What he was, he had not time to explain as Kate shouted, "The creature never went to Brixton at all"

"What is it? What is it?" cried the three girls, "Tell us - do tell us."

"Yes, I will tell you," said their father, "The will has been found, and we must turn out and pay compensation, more than a year's rental."

"What", screamed Kate, "Oh, the odious creature! Oh my poor girls!"

"Don't be fool, Kate," said her husband, you know we are well off, rich in fact, only you are becoming a money lover and a miser."

Kate for once was silent, for there was something in her husband's tone and look that she did not like.

"Oh the shame and humiliation!" said Jane.

"The fiasco, the wretched fiasco," added Martha.

"But why?" said Pussy, "It's no more of a humiliation or shame or fiasco for us than it was for Mariella. At any rate she has shown us how to bear it."

Well said, Pussy, you may not be a beauty, but you are a brick!

To make a long story short, Uncle William and his family moved out and returned to Grimwick Hall. Mariella persuaded Uncle William to accept the money owed to her since George's death. Aunt Kate insisted that it was barely their due after all the trouble and expense they had been put to, to say nothing of all that she had done for Mariella.

And now we come to the last scene of all, which appropriately ends with a wedding.

But before this happened there was such a coming as never before. Mary Phillips came back as housekeeper. Wright returned as coachman. Mrs. Jordan, the cook came back, and others whose names need not be mentioned. Most of Kate's servants wanted to remain with Mariella, who found

herself with rather more attendants than she really needed.

Major Roy had been absent when these important events were taking place, and strange to say, he had heard nothing of Mariella's astonishing change of fortune. So it happened that the morning after his arrival back at Swale, he rode over to Welford, to try and get from Mrs. Kate, Mariella's address as he had not heard from her.

He rang at the door, and the servant who opened it was a stranger to him. "Is Mrs. Ellingthorpe at home?" he asked.

"Mrs. Ellingthorpe is not here, but Miss Ellingthorpe is at home."

"Well," replied the visitor, "If she can see me, I should like to speak with her."

The man showed him in, and sent a boy to look after the Major's horse.

As the Major waited, he could not help noticing a change in the arrangement of the furniture, things looked different. He heard a light step. He thought to himself. 'Now, how to tackle Jane'.

The door opened and Mariella herself stood before him, fresh as one of her own roses.

"Mariella", he cried, his face lightening up with joy; "You're here!"

And then, before she could utter a word, in her own drawing room, in her own Manor, he took the lady of the land into his arms and kissed her upturned face. He released her, and Mariella stood before him silent and blushing.

"What will your aunt say?" he asked, but went on, "Darling let me have the right as your husband to take you away from that old dragon and this place."

"But," said Mariella, beginning to realise his mistake, "I do not want to be taken away. I am very happy and content where I am."

"Has the old lady come round then?"

Then Mariella told him of finding the will and of the departure of Aunt Kate and the rest of them. Major Roy did not seem quite so pleased at her good fortune as might have been expected.

"Mariella", he said, "I spoke to you as to a poor girl."

"And kissed me, as a poor girl," she said with a somewhat quizzical look.

"That had nothing to do with it, but . . ."

"But," went on Mariella, "you loved me as a poor girl, and you wanted to marry me as a poor girl; and after all what is money compared to love?"

So the story ends with wedding bells. But before the marriage they had one or two serious talks. The Major insisted on a marriage settlement which left Mariella's fortune entirely in her own charge. She assented to this partly that she might continue that generous giving which she and her Uncle George had practiced in former days, and partly that she should be able to guard her husband's interests who was rather too ready to part with his money to any who seemed to be in need.

The Dulchester Advertiser contained a grandiloquent account of the wedding, but Mariella got most pleasure reading a letter from one of her bridesmaids, Catherine Ellingthorpe, addressed 'to one of my dearest friends', and signed, 'Pussy'.



The Prodigal Bride

Daily Services were the order at St. Benedicts, and on this particular Friday there was the usual sprinkling of devoted women present at Evensong, some of whom noted the commanding figure and fine ascetic face of the young assistant priest who was taking the Service. Edward Haliday had lately come from a populous Parish where he had won golden opinions from all, and the love of those who were poor and sad and sick to whom he ministered. And also, what was extremely awkward for him, the love of several young ladies both maids and married who had been members of the congregation. It was a strict rule of Haliday's not to allow his eyes to move over the faces of the worshippers, but this evening, as he turned to read the Lesson, glancing down the pews, a newcomer in the little gathering brought a sudden anguish to his heart, for in that glance he saw an exquisite angel face whose heavenly eyes were looking straight into his own. Strive as he might, that lovely face was before him in vision during the rest of the Service, though he carefully avoided looking her way. The owner of the angel face was a young girl sitting with an elderly lady, doubtless her mother, and both of them were dressed in deep mourning, evidently suffering from some recent bereavement.

When he returned to the vestry, Haliday asked the verger if he knew who these ladies were? "Why, yes," answered the man, "It's the widow and daughter of Bennett, him as was organist down at St. Jude's. They've taken one of Smith's houses in Grove Road, and they say the young lady is going to give music lessons."

The following Monday when the Vicar, his two assistant priests and other members of the Parish staff met to talk over the work, the Vicar remarked, "By the way, Haliday, I've been able to solve your problem of an organist for the Mission Church. I have secured the services of Viola Bennett, the daughter of the late organist of St. Jude's. Though she is very young, she is quite a good musician, and gives promise of becoming a fine singer. She wanted to do it gratis, but I told her of course she must have the small salary attached to the post which I think she and her mother must need."

Thus fate ordered that Haliday should be brought into official relations with a young, beautiful, thoughtless and wayward girl with whom at first sight he had fallen desperately in love - he who, for three years had withstood the batteries of fine eyes and managed to evade the well laid plans of not a

few hopeful Mamas. Viola was conversant with the technical and outward observances of religion, but unlike Haliday knew nothing of the realities of a devoted life. Viola soon saw how matters stood with Haliday, and was not a little flattered.

He was always careful to leave the hymn list for her on the harmonium, but she usually contrived to have some question to ask him and would invade the sacred precincts of his little vestry. She saw how her presence affected him, and musician as she was, she found in him a fine strung instrument on which she could play. Her presence caused in his soul a tumult of contending thoughts and desires. By conviction something of an ascetic, he had thought of embracing a celibate life, and the fact that up to this time he had been perfectly indifferent to the allurements of women had made him feel that he had the vocation for even a monastic life. Now this girl had stirred him to the depths, and awakened in him a very agony of passion.

On one supreme occasion, the little witch lingered a while, looked up to him with those heavenly, entrancing eyes, and stood as if waiting for something. He, wholly overcome by her ravishing smile, caught her to him and rained little kisses on her upturned face, her neck and ears. She slowly

disengaged herself and said,

"Oh, Mr. Haliday, ought you to have done that?"

"My little love," he answered, "I don't know. I couldn't help it. If I have annoyed you, my darling, forgive me."

"But Mr. Haliday, what would people say if they knew? They would blame us dreadfully, I'm sure. I will forgive you however, if you promise me not to act in this way again."

"I promise faithfully," he replied, "To do so whenever you are cruel enough to give me the opportunity. I love you, and loved you the first moment I set eyes on you. If you will allow me, I shall go straight to your mother and ask her to give you to me. May I?"

"Mr. Haliday, we all like you, and admire you and respect you, but I do not care for you as one should love a husband. So please do not attempt to kiss me again. I am sure it is not right of me to allow it - quite apart from the place you have unhappily chosen!"

"You are right," he said. "And I was very wrong, and I will not repeat the offence."

"Thank you," she said, "I know I can trust you, and for my part of course, I shall say nothing about it."

Mrs. Bennett soon saw that something was going

on, and took no pains to conceal her satisfaction, and lost no opportunity of commending to her daughter the advantages of a marriage with a handsome, gentlemanly and wealthy clergyman, whom doubtless dozens of girls were hoping to secure for themselves. For Viola it was rather the glamour of bringing off such a capture, and securing a prize which many others were seeking, rather than any real affection for her lover. It took six months of his fervent wooing before she was induced to consent to become his bride. Indeed her very coolness and coyness to his kisses only served to increase his passion. He was swept off his feet, and caught up to the seventh heaven of delight by her acceptance, yet all the time there was the uneasy feeling in his heart that he was undergoing some spiritual loss in order to satisfy what looked like a very earthly desire, for even his love could not blind him to the fact that young Viola lacked most of the qualities supposed to be necessary to the help-mate of an anglican parish priest. But the die was cast and at last he found himself off with her on his honeymoon.

They had come to a Hotel in an old Cathedral city. While they were dining together, he kept looking at her with adoring eyes. She said to herself, 'Yes, he is certainly very handsome but Oh, if only

he loved me less, I am sure I would like him more.' They tried to make conversation but were both distracted and preoccupied with their own thoughts. He had sometimes dreamed of a celibate vocation till she, with her childish loveliness, had come into his life and driven every other thought away. She was indeed beautiful, golden haired, blue eyed, a honey-throated maid, compact of wild roses - a very flower indeed. Her laughter and her gaiety answered to his lighter moods but she had nothing at present corresponding with the deeply religious vein in his character. Dinner over, they walked out in the lovely late spring evening to view the great Cathedral, on which he expatiated at considerable length. It was all somewhat boring to Viola, 'always Church and Churches,' she thought, and made some almost petulant remarks in answer to his enthusiasm. They returned to the hotel and had some coffee, and at his suggestion that perhaps she was tired and would like to go to her room, she left him.

He kept saying to himself, 'Is it sin? Is it sin? Have I fallen from grace?'

While she, as she went up the stairs was thinking, 'Have I sold myself for his money and the allowance he so generously makes to mother? I must keep my bargain, but is this my golden dream - a very religious clergyman? I had dreamt of a

dashing soldier who swept me off my feet.'

A little later she was in his arms while he was pouring into her ears words of rapturous love, 'Star of my soul! Light of my life! My Queen! My Idol! My Love!

Love made it heaven for him, and the lack of love made her comfort herself with the thought, 'How much nicer he really is than most of the men I know. Perhaps in time I shall get to like him better.' No, she was decidedly not in hell, if not exactly in her idea of heaven.

He was very good to her and quite amusing and interesting when he was not preaching. She had many interests at first, setting out their lovely flat, playing her splendid piano, setting out her presents, receiving visitors, seeing her mother. She had her music, her reading, but she could not help being a bit bored with her husband's 'religiosity' as she called it and his queer attacks of asceticism, and his confession of his sins. Once she said, "Wouldn't it be better, Edward to confess your sins in the first person singular instead of plural?"

He knew he was a sinner, and she felt she wasn't. The more he tried to please her, the more she found that she did not really love him and never had done

so. She felt that marriage wanting romance was really a failure. Well, she would loyally keep her side of the bargain and get what happiness she could out of life. There was one thing in her favour, his ascetic turn, and deep conscientiousness and his fear of offending her made him a most considerate and kindly companion, and she found that she had an almost sisterly affection for him. Had he been weak and fallen ill, she would have been motherly towards him. Her conscience sometimes smote her that she took from him much more than she gave, and then she would be sweet to him, but he was far too responsive and this made her again cold and coy. She tried to comfort herself by the reflection that her being cold and stand-offish supplied an object for his religious idea of self-denial. Sometimes Edward, poor man, would try and interest her in Church work, and suggest activities which she might undertake, mothers' meetings, girl guides, Sunday classes and the like. On one such occasion, she said, "Look here, Edward, it's no use my being a hypocrite. I haven't it in me to do the things you want. I will play the organ, play and sing at Church events, help to train the Choir, or anything else I can do; but please do not ask me for what I cannot give and have not got." He could only take her in his arms and kiss her, and say, "My love, I thank you for what you are and for

what you do, and I can only pray that some day you may see things as I do."

"Or as I do," added Viola.

One day he came into lunch with a very anxious and solemn face, and said,

"Viola Darling, I suppose you have heard that Father Sheldon, the other Curate is leaving."

"Has he got a fat living?" asked Viola.

"He has been given a Parish of his own, but the Vicar called me into his study and said that he wishes me, as a married Priest to hear Confessions as Sheldon used to do. The Vicar has secured the services of a much younger bachelor Parson, and he does not think he ought to entrust him with the sacred and delicate duty of hearing Confessions."

"Poor Mr. Sheldon," said Viola flippantly, "Was old enough and ugly enough to be pretty safe. I suppose the new Curate is not ugly enough for the job and so the Vicar has given it to you. Though even you are hardly plain enough for the purpose. It will be frightfully interesting to hear the girls' confessions, as a married Priest of course. I hope you will share their secrets with me!"

"Viola!" replied her husband, "Please do not jest upon such a serious subject. The seal of the Confessional is sacred, and no Priest may divulge, even to his wife, anything he hears."

"Oh," mocked Viola, "So I am not to enjoy the scandals you hear, or to know the pецadillos your pretty penitents pour into your sympathetic ears."
"Viola, darling, Please don't. You really are hurting me."

Viola answered with some asperity, "Well, I think it Popish and improper for any man to listen to the twaddling confessions of a lot of silly women. So there." And there the subject dropped.

Haliday was an assiduous visitor among the sick, and one day he brought home an infection which took hold of Viola and developed into a fever that threatened her life. Edward's distress was extreme when he saw himself the unwitting cause of her sickness, and soon he and young doctor Pringle and two or three nurses were battling with what turned out to be a mild case of smallpox. Fortunately, with her good constitution and the care of her doctor and nurses, she made a good recovery. Thanks to her doctor's skilful treatment, when her face cleared, it revealed to him Viola's astonishing beauty, unspoilt by the dreaded destroyer of good looks. Her gratitude to Dr. Pringle for saving her complexion caused her to gaze with grateful loving looks into his eyes - to press too fervently his hand, and at last to receive his kisses on her lips. Dreadfully unprofessional and dreadfully unwise and

imprudent of him, as he was only too soon to realise. Viola's convalescence was somewhat prolonged by Dr. Pringle's visits which continued rather more frequently than was necessary, and long after the nurses had departed. In the absence of the unsuspecting husband, he found opportunity for endearments with the misguided girl, which he found impossible to resist, and she to refuse.

"Oh William, let's run away together!"

Red danger lights flashed in his mind, "But where can we go?"

"Anywhere, it does not matter as long as we are together."

Finally, at Viola's repeated suggestion he consented to carry out her wish rather than his own misgivings and agreed that they should elope together as soon as possible.

Viola now became more cold and distant to her husband, yet one night, saying to herself, 'I am a treacherous little beast in not sticking to my bargain. I will force myself while under his roof, to go to him from time to time.'

With this idea she got up and went to place herself in his arms, only to find that owing to some Lenten Penance that he had imposed on himself he could not receive her. With what to him was heroic and saintly self-restraint, he repulsed her. She went to

her own bed enraged and full of resentment at what had happened. Then the dreadful thought occurred to her, 'Perhaps he suspects. Perhaps he knows!'

But at last the day came that was to lay Edward's tower of delight in the dust, and blast his life as though a hurricane from hell had swept his happiness away. One evening, coming in late after a tiring day, he did not find Viola, and asked the maid where her mistress was.

"Oh, Sir," the girl replied, "Missis has gone out, and told me she has left a note for you on her dressing table."

A strange feeling came over him - not yet perhaps of fear, but a preassage of some approaching disaster. He entered their room and switched on the light. How cold and desolate the room looked without Viola. Yes, there on the dressing-table was the letter. He took it and his hand shook as he opened it. It must be to say she has gone to her mother, but somehow he felt it was not so. What is this enclosed? Her rings! He read:

"Dear Edward

I am sorry to say I have a confession to make. I wonder if any of your penitents have ever made one like this. I fear I have never loved you as I feel married people ought to love one another. And now

I know what love really is, for I have found in Dr. Pringle the man of my heart. He has asked me to go to him, and as soon as you divorce me, we are going to be married. He has promised to continue the allowance you so kindly give to my mother. This ends the relation between us. I enclose my engagement and wedding rings. I have only taken the clothes I am wearing. I do from my heart thank you for your love and consideration and kindness of which I truly confess I have never in the least been worthy, but which I fully recognise. I know I have committed an unforgivable sin.

Good bye,
Viola.”

He took the letter, locked the door, and that night was his Gethsemany of dark hours until the dawn broke. When it was day, he went to his study to reply to Viola's letter. As he read again, 'I wonder if any of your penitents have ever made you a confession like this', a burning blush suffused his face as he remembered how two young women, one of them married, had unreservedly offered themselves to him, and confessed their passionate love. Sick at heart, he had gone to his Vicar and begged to be relieved of the duty of hearing confessions. The Vicar, experienced in such matters would not consent, but merely remarked if there

were any cases of especial difficulty Haliday might refer them to him. Edward had felt a deep disgust with these women's lightness, and sorrow for those nearest to them, the wronged husband and the unsuspecting parents whose secret misfortune was similar to his own open sorrow and shame. This is what he now wrote to Viola,

“My dearest Viola and wife,
My wandering lamb come back to me, for here is your love and your home. My arms are always open to receive you.

Yours till death,
Edward Haliday.

P.S. I return your rings. All your property will be held at your disposal. E.H.”

He meant to send this letter to her care of Dr. Pringle, but something, he knew not what, made him tear it up, put it in the grate, light a match, and burn it. He then wrote to his Vicar resigning his appointment and asking to be allowed to leave immediately, to which the good man, at no small inconvenience to himself, at once agreed. The terrible scandal was soon public property, and the scene of poor Edward's loving labours was to know him no more. It was only known that his things and furniture had been removed, the flat was to let, and

the previous tenant had departed, no one knew where.

Dr. Pringle and Viola moved into a cheap hotel, but he soon saw that what little he had in his Bank would soon be used up. He had to find a cheaper place, and got her a room in a Boarding House. There were five other girls living in it, with 'Madame'. When she realised it was a Bawdy House, she was shocked and made a derogatory remark to one of the girls.

"Don't you start getting hoity toity with me," the girl said, with her hand on her hip, "You are no better than we are, except you have the same feller each time."

Viola went to her room and lay on the bed sobbing. One of the other girls heard her. She went in and took Viola in her arms and gave her a hug and let her cry on her shoulder. She was a girl of about twenty, and Viola had heard her laughing and joking with the men. She was friendly to Viola, treated her with kindness and respect and used to bring her some food.

She said, "Look 'ere Miss, this is no place for you. We are a rough lot, and that feller what brought you 'ere is like the rest of them. He will want to keep you till he is tired of you, and then he will leave you to shift for yourself."

It was nearly a week before William came again to see her. She had no money as she had emptied her purse before leaving, and if it had not been for her friend she would have suffered from actual hunger. She had spent the most miserable days of her life, weeping and watching the dirty street where her lodging was. At last one day her doctor appeared. Her resentment at his long delay was forgotten in the delight of seeing him once more. As he entered her wretched room, she ran to fling herself into his arms, only to meet with a cold rebuff. She burst into bitter weeping and sobbed out, "Oh William." But she was too broken down and cowed to be angry and resentful as she had been at her ascetic husband's repulse.

"Mrs. Haliday," began the doctor in the speech he had prepared, "Do listen to me for a few moments...."

"Mrs. Haliday" cried Viola, "Is that what you call me? Oh you beast; you beast how I hate you."

"Good heavens," replied Pringle, "Your husband must be singing Te Deums to be rid of such a vixen. God knows, I should be!"

"William, what do you mean?" asked Viola now thoroughly alarmed.

"I mean," he said, "That you have ruined me. My

sister has threatened to turn me out, my patients have mostly left the Practice, and my creditors are pressing me. I tell you the truth, I am stony broke."

Viola was about to say, 'Look what I have given up for you; husband, home, reputation, security;' But on hearing the recital of his woes, she began to relent a little and thought of saying something romantic about their facing the world together. But the doctor continued his list, "I can't even pay for this room, and the Lady says you must leave within three days, and also that you are going to have a child. Good God, do you think I can support another man's wife and child when I cannot even make a living for myself? I am at my wits' end to know what to do."

"Oh", sobbed Viola, "To think what I have given up for you, and you can treat me so."

"Well you know, I did not urge you to come away. I knew the whole thing was impossible, only you insisted and pressed it on me. Indeed, you know you came to me before I was ready to receive you.

"I know, little idiot that I was. I did press you because I thought you loved me, and I could not go on deceiving my husband."

"Well, I did love you, and we could have gone on having our fun, and no one a wit the wiser."

"Oh you disgusting, mean beast! How can you think or say such despicable things?"

"And you, you little bitch, didn't you behave in rather a low-down manner in your husband's very home? So you need not reproach me!"

The dreadful epithet he had dared to use to her went through her heart like a sword. The horrible naked truth was like a brutal blow to Viola. A fit of blind fury swept over her making her feel faint and sick, and then a cold hatred and loathing for the man she had accepted as a lover. She heard him say,

"Of course you must arrange to go back to your mother. I have heard that she is not well."

There was a long pause while Viola tried to calm down; then she said,

"I will write at once and ask her to let me come home and look after her."

"That is the first sensible thing you've said. Now I must be off." He threw down three shillings and a few coppers onto the table. "I am sorry I haven't any more, but that should cover your bus fare home. I have paid the Lady of the house for the next three days. You will be all right when you get to your mother's. Now let us part as friends,"

He attempted to draw her to him to give her a kiss, but she freed herself from him saying,

"Please never touch me again."

And thus they parted for ever.

Late in the evening Viola came to her mother's house. How different this from the last visit to her mother. Then she was the admired wife of the most loved man in the Parish. Now she is the forsaken mistress of a spend-thrift and vulgar rascal. She had indeed drunk the cup of humiliation to the bitter dregs. She looked back with disgust on her own abusive words to her one-time lover, and humbled herself at the dreadful blasphemies he had lightly uttered against love. She acknowledged that she had laid herself open to his ribald reference to her sin.

Her mother received her kindly but was shocked at her appearance. Misery, hunger, and her state had deprived her of some of her beauty, but she was still a pathetic, childish figure. As soon as she had taken a bath and changed her clothes, her mother got her a good meal, noticing how from time to time her eyes would fill with tears.

A few days later, when they were sitting over the fire, Mrs. Bennett said,
"Viola dear, I have been talking with the Vicar as to what I ought to do. He says I can only receive you back on your giving me your word of honour never

to have any more dealings or association with Dr. Pringle. I know well that I can trust you."

Viola's eyes again filled with tears at anyone's expressing trust in her.

"Now can you, and will you give me your promise to have done with him?"

Mrs. Bennett would have been a little surprised had she realised how easily and how gladly Viola gave the most solemn undertaking never to see the doctor again, nor to have any kind of association with him.

Mrs. Bennett was greatly relieved at this, and then the conversation turned on their present circumstances and prospects. Though Haliday's lawyers continued to send the allowance Edward gave her, Mrs. Bennett had steadily refused to receive it, and had asked the lawyer to discontinue it. She would have been in some straits if the good Vicar, in whom she confided her trouble, had not told her he had a fund from which he could make her an allowance. He forbore to tell her that this fund was supplied by her wronged son-in-law

Viola seldom left the house; she could not bear to meet any old friends, and her mother decided that they had better go to a place where they were unknown, and where Viola might have her baby in their new abode. They both wore their old black dresses, Viola resumed her rings, and passed as a

young widow - indeed her sad face easily led to this supposition. At last the baby was born, and there came a great new joy of cloudless love into her life. Was there ever such a lovely child? He was dark, like his father. The new mother needed this joy to restore her to buoyant health. Her former loneliness, her experiences, her sorrow and sufferings, her sins and humiliations, and her repentance had wonderfully improved her character. There was a seriousness and thoughtfulness about her and consideration for others that her mother noticed with thankful joy.

Dr. Pringle had left the town, and indeed his past. A wealthy American widow from Los Angeles had come to "do" Europe, hoping in the process to find a husband. While in England she met the doctor, and although she was a good bit older than he, her wealth made her very attractive, and when she proposed, he accepted, and she swept him off to the States. So he passes out of our story.

Viola had made up her mind to go back and seek her husband's forgiveness, but she could not understand what had kept Edward from writing to her or her mother. She wondered whether he found what she had done was totally unforgivable, but she knew that unforgiveness was not in his character.

She did not realise that strange ascetic streak in his nature which made him resolve to let a whole year pass before he took any step towards reconciliation. He knew that she was with her mother, and they were safe and well.

When he left the Parish, he bought a small country house where he occupied himself with his garden and in reading. His experiences as an Anglican Priest had a good deal shaken his belief in the kind of Church that had evolved through the ages. At one time he had leaned a little towards Rome, but the staring blot of the Inquisition, and the startling contrast between the commands of Jesus Christ, and the practical working of the great hierarchical Institutions, with their Princes and Lords, their Holinesses and Monseigneurs, their Most Revs, Right Revs, Very Revs, Venerables and Reverends, their Holy Fathers and Fathers in God, their wholehearted acceptance of war and violence of all kinds as consistent with a Christian life, those things made him seek some other theory of belief than the one generally accepted.

His creed, shortly stated was that Jesus Christ is the Sun and centre of the faith, and that all Christians were as planets revolving round in a loving relationship to this Mighty Sun. He believed all men were eligible to admission, as they were all brothers

and sisters of a common Father in the Family of Christ.

He ceased to dress as a clergyman and did his best to cultivate friendly relations with all men, and especially with those who made practical obedience to Christ the end and aim of their life. He ceased to speak much about or discuss religious concerns, but set himself to try and help and comfort and encourage those among whom his lot was cast.

He had presented a site for a village Hall and Club, and encouraged the out-of-works to put it up themselves, supplying most of the material himself. There was a complaint that he was taking work from regular men, and the Trade Unions were stirring. He met the malcontents and said, "For every pound of estimated cost on the village Hall, I will spend an equal amount in adding to my house."

He built on a billiard room and a Library which employed many workers. He laid out several acres of his land in allotments, and promised that each year the man who raised most food, and adjudged by all the workers as having done best, should receive the freehold of his allotment. All were allowed to compete, while anyone who had already received his freehold and came out best, would receive a prize. His clerical training made him treat

both rich and poor with the same courtesy.

It was now ten months since Viola had left him, and he was looking eagerly forward to the end of the twelve months he had set himself before he could open communications with her and seek to get her back again. This was the position in the early part of December. There was a hard frost, but inside his home there was warmth and comfort. Once a week he held an evening Reception; billiards for the men, chess and cards in the living room, while the Library was thrown open to those who liked to read. Once a quarter there was a dance. All the arrangements were in the hands of a committee which was responsible for good order. Though Haliday did not preach, he exerted an extraordinary influence for good.

One evening, Martha, Edward's elderly housekeeper was preparing dinner, and a delicious smell of roasting pervaded the house. Edward was sitting in his study, reading. There hung over the mantelpiece a very beautiful painting of Viola which he had ordered shortly after their marriage from a rising artist.

The winter silence was suddenly broken by the sound of a car at the lodge gates. A little later the car drew up at the door, and the bell rang.

Martha, wiping her hands on her apron went to open the door, and was amazed at the vision of a most lovely girl holding in her arms a small bundle which looked like a baby.

"Well, who might you be?" asked Martha.

"Please," said a soft voice, "Does Mr. Haliday live here?"

"Yes, he does. Did you want to see him?"

"Yes please, if I may."

"Who shall I say it is?" asked Martha..

"Just say a poor girl wants to speak to him."

"Don't yer give no name?"

"No, Please just tell him what I say."

"Well, step inside, Miss, and I'll speak to him.

Martha went to the study. The Master was standing, with a strange look on his face. He had heard the bell, and asked,

"Who is it Martha?"

"Nay, I don't know. It's a bonny lass - a bit too bonny, I'm thinking. She says as she is a poor girl what wants to speak to you, but won't give no name".

'Oh could it be?' 'Could it possibly be Viola?' he thought.

"Martha, take her into the dining room, and I'll come."

Martha asked the stranger to follow her and said,

"Master's cummin'."

The girl entered the warm room, deposited the baby in a big armchair, and turned as Edward came in.

The light fell on Viola, but a Viola far more lovely than ever. Spell bound he gazed at her, then taking a step towards him, she sank down at his feet, clasped his knees, and said,

"Oh Edward, can you ever, ever forgive me"?

He lifted her up, drew her to him, kissed her and clasped her as though he would never let her go.

Martha was looking on with a half sympathetic, half disapproving manner. At last she said

"Taxi Driver wants to know what ter do wit t'luggage."

"Oh tell him to bring it in. Ask him his fare, and pay him. And give him an extra half crown,"

While Martha was gone, Viola said,

"Edward, I have brought a present for you - here's your son." And she placed the baby in Edward's arms.

Edward looked from the little sleeping face to the young mother.

Viola said, "He was born five months after I wickedly left you."

"Look here, Love," he said, "I want to exact a promise from you, which in return I make to you -

that neither of us ever speak, or hint, or refer to that unhappy incident."

"Edward darling, you will, I believe get to know how deeply and how truly I have repented of my dreadful madness. I came back fully knowing that I should have what I humbly beg from you - your wonderful forgiveness."

Her mouth was now closed by his renewed kisses. He was awakened from his dream by hearing Martha saying,

"Mr. 'Aliday, whoever is this lass?"

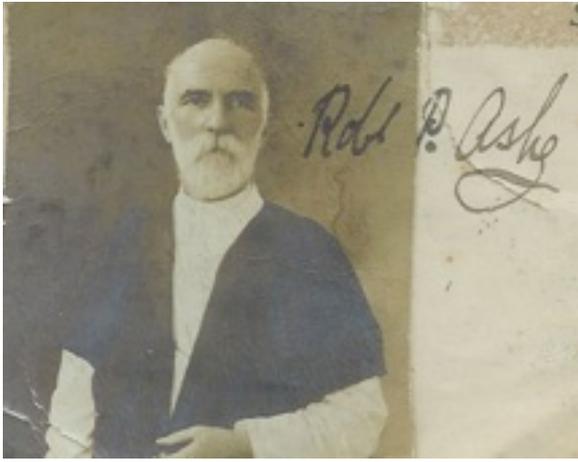
"Why, Martha, she's my wife! Don't you recognise her from her picture?"

"Well, she is like it, but a sight bonnier. Ye never tow'd me who that lass were, and I couldn't frame to ask ye"

Martha was now on her mettle - what a dinner! What roaring fires upstairs, downstairs and in my lady's chamber! What an evening! What a night!. Well might the happy husband murmur:

'This my love was dead, and is alive again;
She was lost and is found.

And they began to be merry.



THE PRINCESS OF JELLAND

At the beginning of the last century it was considered quite correct for an English nobleman or gentleman to marry an Indian Begum (a muslim lady of princely rank) should they be fortunate enough to find one. The story I am relating is perfectly true, at least the main facts are perfectly true, and it is only fair to the descendants of the persons who are mentioned here to substitute fictitious names for their own proper ones.

Within the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Major Curle had lately returned from India with his wealthy wife, the Begum of Jelland. This lady knew English fluently, but had learned the great lesson of how to be silent in the language she could perfectly understand. The Begum was of a gentle disposition, courteous to equals, scrupulously polite to inferiors, but she was possessed with an inexorable pride which was impossible to break down. She gave the impression that for all her gentleness and politeness, she felt herself, in some subtle way, superior to those with whom she came into contact for she expected, and received every attention as if it were at least her due.

She was frequently at Court, and was very much a favourite with the Queen. But her chief joy and solace was her little daughter Sarah Edith, a delicate, fairy-like child with her beautiful eyes, the hands and feet of a Princess, and with a rose-like bloom upon her cheek. The child was carefully taught at home by a Governess and various masters, and she had been promised a place at Court as a Maid of Honour as soon as she should become old enough for the position. It is needless to attempt a description of the life of a child of a doting father and a mother of whose eyes she was the light.

The circle of friends surrounding the Curles was of the highest class, and how one of the most important actors in this story had managed to worm himself into so exclusive a set, remains a mystery. But there was a certain Captain Wilcan, an acquaintance rather than a friend of Major Curle's who came from time to time to the Major's house. On one of these occasions he happened to catch sight of the little Sarah, now become a beautiful girl of sixteen years. It might have been difficult for an onlooker to say whether the handsome Captain's eyes devoured more eagerly the dark beauty of the girl, or the splendid pallor of the priceless necklace of pearls which she was wearing.

That evening the family were discussing some of their visitors when the name of Captain Wilcan was mentioned.

"He's a handsome fellow," said the Major.

"Handsome, yes", replied the Begum, "But there is something tigerish about his good looks. A splendid animal", she continued, "Rather than a fine man".

Sarah was listening with unusual interest, and she broke in, "I seem to see soul in his eyes."

"Perhaps," laughed her father, "you see in his, the reflection of your own eyes."

From this time there began a kind of strange duel between mother and daughter. The quiet but fierce determination of the Begum that Captain Wilcan should have no opportunity of seeing Sarah, or of speaking with her. This was matched against the petulant girl's obstinate determination to have her own way and to see her handsome Captain as often as she could.

The Begum and Sarah were talking one day, and the mother said, "You will have great opportunities at Court, and should marry no one less than a peer - a Lord, not just of today or yesterday, but of the oldest blood of England."

"But mother," replied Sarah "You were a Princess,

yet you married Papa who was not a Lord."

"No, that is true, but he belongs to one of the oldest families in England."

The Begum was well up in genealogical matters which she considered of great importance.

"What is the family of Captain Wilcan?" asked Sarah.

"There is no such family." replied the Begum, "he carries the baseness of his Caste in his countenance; ough! A beast, and nothing more."

"He is not a beast," replied Sarah hotly. "but a splendid and noble gentleman." So the conversation closed.

For the next few days, Sarah spent much of her time with her Governess, Miss Smyth, a highly educated and strictly honourable lady but one strangely ignorant of the wiles of beautiful women or the guile of wicked men. Miss Smyth, absorbed in the contemplation of great works of art which she should have been encouraging her pupil to appreciate, did not notice Sarah's occasional disappearance for a few minutes, nor the close conversation her charge had with a handsome Captain in a secluded corner of the Gallery. Nor indeed did she see the note the Captain slipped into Sarah's hand.

When she got home, she shut herself in her room and read with shining eyes the rather poor handwriting of the Captain's love-letter, and devoured with rapture some lines addressed to herself:

"Thou art dark but thy darkness hath light
More lovely than sun-brightened skies;
Thou hast gathered all glories of night
Of million-starred night in thine eyes."

It was this kind of sentimentality that filled the Captain's love letters, and after several months, in none of which did the couple fail to arrange at least one or two meetings, the Captain propounded his great scheme:

"Though I am descended from an old Saxon family," he said, "and reckon numerous noblemen amongst my ancestors, your mother despises me."
"No, no, that is not in my mother's character."
"At any rate", he went on, "My sword is my only patrimony". And he jangled that splendid possession which hung at his side.

Then he continued, "Whatever her reasons may be, I can see that she will never consent to my soul's longing. If only I were assured of thy love, then I would defy the world and all its powers. Say, Angel

whether thou can't love thy Walter?" The angel modestly whispered that she thought she could.

The end of it was that the innocent girl agreed to elope with the designing Captain. He was to procure a special license for their marriage from the Archbishop of Dublin, the city where they would live. A few days later he showed her a parchment with a mitre embossed on it, and from which hung a seal, though he carefully avoided letting her see the names that were written in it.

"This, my love is the license for our happiness."

"Perhaps", he continued, "You might bring a few of your mother's jewels with you."

"I, take my mother's jewels? What can you mean?" She asked with evident vexation.

"I meant, of course," he hastened to explain, "Only those which your parents have given you, and which you feel you have perfect right to. Not for all the wealth of Golconda." he added , "Would I take a pin's head that was not my own property."

And so the great adventure was arranged.

"And now," concluded the Captain, "let us seal our secret compact with a kiss."

"Not now", said the maiden in her wisdom, "but after we are married you shall have as many as you wish."

And with this answer he perforce had to be content.

So it came to pass that Captain Wilcan and Sarah Curle met one stormy evening, entered the inevitable post-chaise, and made their way to Liverpool. The same careful modesty still marked Sarah's behaviour, and though the tiger eyes would flash dangerously at the repulses met with during the journey, the Captain showed remarkable self-repression and self-control. When they reached Liverpool, he took the girl to an important Hotel. Dinner was served in a private room, and when the cloth had been removed, he said, "Look my love, as we are going to be married tomorrow, we might as well share the same bed tonight."

At this she flared into sudden anger, which made him full of apologies;

"I beg of you to be calm", he said, "I feel almost indignant that you should so utterly have mistaken my meaning."

Blushing at this, she wept.

"Do not make a scene, I beseech you. I will go at once and order another room for myself."

He presently returned, telling her that he had received a warning from the Proprietor that there were thieves about who get into large hotels and commit robbery.

"Would it not be better then" he suggested, "if we deposited our valuables with the hotel keeper?"

"Yes, let us do what you think best."

"Could you please give me something to wrap my watch in, and my two gold rings, and my purse."

She opened her small case to look for something, and he saw an exquisite lace handkerchief. The Captain drew it out saying, "This will do for the rings."

Which he presently handed to her with his watch and purse. She wrapped them up together with her own watch and the costly rings which she was wearing, and then handed him her jewel case.

He made a careful inventory of the articles, and this done he left the room. After a short while he returned carrying a paper which he handed to her.

"This is the hotel keeper's receipt."

"You had better keep it," she answered.

"But I am scrupulously particular in such matters, and as a favour to me I beg you to retain your own receipt."

She took it and put it on her table. He then wished her good night, and as she was closing her door, repenting of her petulance, she gave him her first and last kiss.

She stood for a time in reverie; she felt as though an illimitable ocean rolled between her and her home, her loved parents and her many friends, then weary after a long and tiring journey, she got into bed and eventually fell into a troubled sleep.

She woke next morning with a feeling of extraordinary depression, and a sense of foreboding. As she was dressing her eye chanced to rest on the receipt her Captain had given her the night before. She picked it up and read it almost mechanically, noticing that it was all in his scrawly writing, but signed 'James Johnson'. She finished dressing, and went down stairs to the coffee room. She looked round for the Captain, but did not see him. There were a few men in the room finishing their breakfasts. One nice looking young man allowed his eyes to rest upon her with admiration mingled with surprise. Her position, alone in the coffee room became unpleasant, so she returned to her room, waited for ten minutes, and again descended to the coffee room. The other gentlemen had finished and left, with the exception of the young man mentioned before, who remained reading a newspaper. At her re-entrance he looked up, gave her a sudden glance, and immediately buried himself in his paper. The waiter approached her, "Breakfast Miss? Coffee Miss?" "Wait a minute" she said, and went to the hotel office by the side of the Bar. There was a woman sitting there to whom she spoke. "Can you tell me please, where Captain Wilcan is?" "Captain Wilcan? Do you mean the gentleman who

came with you last night?"

"Yes", replied Sarah, her heart sinking as she saw the look of concern and pity in the kindly face.

"Why, Miss" was the reply, "He left last night taking his luggage with him. He said your parents are coming from Dublin to meet you this morning."

"Did he deposit a parcel of valuables with you? He gave me this receipt for it signed by Mr. Johnson,"

"Not with me, Miss, but I will go and ask the Proprietor."

She left Sarah, trembling and feeling sick. Very soon the proprietor of the hotel came accompanying the woman. He said, "Nothing was left with us, Miss, nor did we give any receipt."

Sarah handed him the paper saying, "Captain Wilcan gave me this as your receipt for my jewels and other valuables which he said he had put into your safe-keeping."

Glancing at the paper the hotel proprietor replied, "This is no receipt of ours. My name, as you will see on our bills, is Ezra Lightburn. There is no one by the name of James Johnson connected with this hotel. I fear it has been a robbery. Would you like me to call the Police?"

"Oh no, no, no - Please don't" she cried, and suddenly the agony of her position overwhelmed her - alone in a strange hotel, deserted by her lover and robbed by him, helpless and penniless. Never

would she dare to face her inexorable mother who, she knew, would prove herself colder than ice and harder than adamant. The idolised daughter had presumed to wound her at her sorest point in her princely pride. Sarah knew how deeply she had disgraced her parents. There was absolutely no hope in that direction.

"O God," she cried in bitterness of soul. "O God, what can I do? What can I do? Where can I go? O God, O God."

The young man who had taken an interest in her had watched the whole scene and heard what had been going on. He came forward and took the almost fainting girl's icy hand and led her back to the coffee room which was now empty. He put her in a chair by the fire. She made no resistance but sat there listlessly.

The young man called the waiter, "Bring some coffee and toast."

When it arrived, he turned to the girl and said, "You will drink this coffee and eat a little toast, and tell me what has happened; then we must see what is best to be done."

There was something in this new friend's honest face, and self-possessed bearing that reassured the unhappy girl who implicitly obeyed his orders.

Having finished her breakfast, she told him, punctuated with many tears and sobs, her sad story. When she had finished, her new friend said to her, "Can you not go back to your father and mother?" "I would die, and I will die, sooner than do that. You do not know them. They would never see me, because of the disgrace I have brought upon them. I hate myself for my folly. I deserve to die for being deceived by so base a thief, but what can I do?" "If you will allow me" he said, "I will take you straight to my mother. She will protect and advise you. Will you trust me?" Lifting her eyes to his, she said quite simply, "Yes, I will."

That look affected him as Dante describes his meeting with Beatrice. He now called the hotel keeper and told him what he proposed to do. Mr. Lightburn said to Sarah, "You are in the hands of an honourable gentleman; Mr. Walter Brown is a member of a well known family and the head of an important firm in Accrington."

Her new friend, Mr. Brown took Sarah to his mother. They lived in a fine house on the outskirts of the town. Mrs. Brown received the girl politely, and hardly able to conceal her astonishment, showed her up to the room she was to occupy. When she got back to the library, her son did his

best to explain the situation. Whether it was Walter's eloquence, or Sarah's helpless condition, the fact is that Mrs. Brown became thoroughly sympathetic with her son's action, and welcomed her into this Lancashire merchant's home. For Sarah it was a life entirely different from her former surroundings. Mrs. Brown said she would write to Mrs. Curle and explain exactly what had happened to their daughter.

"That is very kind of you, Mrs. Brown, but I am afraid it will do no good. I know my mother will never forgive me, because the disgrace will have hurt her pride. The most I can hope for is that she will be grateful to you for your hospitality, and perhaps offer to send something for my support." In due course Mrs. Brown received a reply, stating that Major and Mrs Curle disowned for ever, the daughter who had disgraced them, and that they would never wish to see her face again. The letter ended,

"We have instructed our lawyers to send you a sum of money periodically for her maintenance, on condition that she make no attempt to visit us, or make contact with us".

Mrs. Brown handed the letter to Walter who, after reading it turned to Sarah and said, "This is a cruel answer to my mother's letter. Your parents disown you for ever, but offer you a bare pittance on

condition that you make no effort either to visit or to see them".

"Do you wish to see the letter?"

"Alas, no," she said, "It is only what I expected."

He took the offending missive and thrust it into the fire.

Mrs. Brown became very fond of the girl, and Sarah settled down as part of the family. One evening some months later, Walter said,

"Sarah dear, you have lost your parents, but if this is worth anything to you, you have won the love of an honest man. I love you more than I ever knew I had the capacity of loving. Oh, Sarah, will you make this your home, and me the happiest of husbands?"

Sarah was astonished at this unexpected proposal. She had become part of the family. Because Walter called Mrs. Brown 'mother', she too had started calling her 'mother'. She looked upon Walter with sisterly affection, as the man who had rescued her and protected her. Now she had to make a decision about a completely different relationship. She said, "Oh Walter, you are so kind and generous, but will you give me some time before I give you an answer? I want to think and pray about it so that my answer will be from my heart."

"Of course dear, but at least now you know how I feel, and I will accept whatever you decide."

That night she spent time in thought and prayer, asking for God's guidance. She thought along these lines:

'Captain Wilcan had taught her a very valuable lesson, that you cannot trust that love which sweeps you off your feet in blind emotion. It is unreliable. On the other hand, she felt there is something solid about Friendship that can grow into a deep and loving relationship, one that is strengthened through the years. She realised that there was so much that she loved about Walter. He certainly had not the 'dash' of a handsome soldier in his scarlet and brass - but then she had had enough of that! Walter was honourable, gentle, kind and protective, and above all, he loved her.'

In the morning she met him at the bottom of the stairs. Without hesitation she put her arms round his neck and he held her close to him, and as they stood, locked in each other's arms, there began a long and loving relationship.

They were married, and Sarah became the mother of many children, and there grew in her a nobility of character worthy of a Princess of Jelland.

The Spider and the Fly

There used to be, many years ago, a very small pawn-broking establishment in an obscure street off Gray's Inn Road kept by a Mr. Cohen. It was there that Philip O'Meara, after having partaken of some slight alcoholic refreshment, slight, he considered it, yet it was as much as his somewhat slender means permitted. He was engaged in the business of endeavouring to hire, for an hour or so, a somewhat pretentious black suit, accompanied by a fairly clean collar and large silk tie. After some hard bargaining, and a good amount of wheedling, Mr. O'Meara succeeded in hiring the aforesaid garments. They were to make him look respectable for a certain interview which he hoped to have in answer to an advertisement which he had lately put in the Daily Telegraph.

The final amount given for the use of the clothes was two shillings and sixpence, but that included the use of a small back room where the interview was to take place. There he sat, a large, almost handsome old man, on whom a close observer might see that indulgence in hard liquors had left their fatal mark. He sat, like the spider in the rhyme, awaiting the fly. The fly in this case was a beautiful girl, with a touch of refinement, sitting on the top of

a 'bus'. Her presence there made her seem a little out of place.

Her story was a sad and peculiar one. Her father, Eldon Hollingshead had been a Judge in India and had retired some years ago a wealthy man, not indeed from his Indian savings, but as the possessor of a large fortune which he inherited. One of his nearest friends, Colonel Welland, had died, leaving him Guardian and Trustee for his only son William, generally known later among his friends as W.W. The boy was brought up by his mother's people and it was only during occasional school holidays that he visited the Hollingsheads, when he used to play with the tiny Eleanor, his Guardian's only child and heiress.

On one of his birthdays a wealthy relative had made W.W. a present of a one hundred pound share in the Glasgow Bank. When that great concern failed, the unfortunate shareholders were come down upon to make good the enormous losses which the Bank had incurred. (This was in the days before 'Limited Liability Companies' Ltd.). Great was the concern of the kind friend and Trustee of the boy W.W. when he found that all his ward's fortune was swallowed up by a call from the liquidators of the Bank.

But a still more terrible trouble was in store. Mr. Hollingshead found to his cost that as Trustee for a minor who was a shareholder of the Bank, he was to be held responsible for the Bank's losses to the extent of his whole fortune. Like so many other unhappy people,

Eldon Hollingshead died penniless and broken hearted, leaving a wife and daughter to earn a living as best they might. Mrs. Hollingshead and Eleanor found themselves in terrible straits. Eldon seemed to have no relations. His younger brother, Christopher, who had been something of a spendthrift, had run through a considerable fortune and then gone to Australia where he was lost sight of.

Eleanor's mother's people belonged to an ancient Roman Catholic Irish family who would never forgive her for her English marriage. Now in her trouble she felt she could not apply to them for help. Thus the two women were thrown upon their own resources. In a house in one of the streets near Pread Street Station they had a humble lodging where Eleanor answered various advertisements. She had tried for several positions offered, but nothing as yet had come of them. At last she read, "Wanted by a family of refinement, a young lady to take charge of a lad, and to help the gentlewoman of the house in various duties. Liberal salary, beautiful country house. Personal interviews between 9 to 11 at

No. 14/b Gentian Court, Grays Inn Rd.". That being the room behind the Pawnbrokers shop.

As a matter of fact one or two young ladies had got as far as Gentian Court, but not liking the look of the place, had not ventured to No, 14/b. So when Eleanor arrived, she did not find a rush of other applicants. Indeed, she herself had serious thoughts of giving up the quest, but her desperation imparted courage, and finally she gave a timid knock at a sort of side entrance.

The spider was awaiting the fly.

She was admitted to the back room to find a fine looking old man dressed in black clothes; a fairly clean collar and a black tie completed his costume. He advanced to meet her, made her a bow, took her hand, retained it for a fraction of a second, and then placed a chair for her.

"I have come", said Eleanor, "In answer to an advertisement in the Daily Telegraph. Can you kindly give me some particulars of your requirements?"

"My requirements," said he, making another bow, "are, I am sure, summed up in yourself."

"You will find us." he continued in a sort of soliloquy, "You will find us really delightful people - the kind of people you so seldom meet now-a-days

- people of the old school - open hearted, open handed, great, generous souls." Then, fixing her with his gaze. "You love the country, you love fresh air, fresh flowers, young people. Ah! the life of the country, that is life in deed! For my part," he continued, "I feel stifled in town. I feel I want to tear off the clinging cerements of an effete civilisation and throw myself into the open arms of nature. I love art, indeed, and music. I have the finest ear in Europe for the delicate discrimination of tones."

"But," ventured Eleanor, "Had we not better see if anything can be settled?"

"Settled? Of course - of course let us settle. Now what shall we settle?"

Then suddenly giving her a penetrating glance, he asked shortly, "When can you come?"

"When do you want me?" asked Eleanor.

"Now, immediately, tomorrow, whenever it suits you."

Eleanor said with some confusion, "How old is the child you want me to look after?"

"Now that is stupid of me, but I don't know to a day Caesarino's age." And then, abruptly changing the subject, "What shall we say of salary? What would you expect, now?"

Eleanor tried to collect her thoughts, but O'Meara continued, "£80, £100 per annum? Let us say £100. Washing, food, board, lodging accommodation, plain wholesome dietry, all found - all found. My wife is one of those delightful gentlewomen you read of in romances - so noble, so condescending; yea a lady every inch of her; of the old school - of the old school. Here, my dear is my name and address."

He presented her with a card on which was neatly printed:

Philip O'Meara
The Manor House
Nr. Dorkington.

"Our Station is Dorkington. I will meet you. Now, when will I meet you?"

"I had better come in the morning", said Eleanor.

"To be sure - to be sure; in the morning; that's it; that's the way now." Here he fumbled in his unaccustomed pocket, found not what he sought, left the room for a moment and returned with a very dog-eared time-table. He looked out the time, or attempted to. Again he tried those empty pockets to seek his glasses, muttering a word that sounded very like 'damn'.

Eleanor took the time-table, found the station and time of train, and said that she would consider the matter.

"Now won't you give me a sure word?" asked Mr. O'Meara. "I have ever so many applicants and I don't want to lose them; though to be quite honest there isn't one who can hold a candle to yourself."

"Before coming to an agreement I must consult my mother," replied Eleanor in a decided tone.

"That's right, yes; that's right, always stick to that; always consult your mother, and that decides me too. I'll give all of them, every soul of them the goby, sooner than lose a lass like yourself; a good girl - a good girl. Yes, yes, go away and consult your mother, and anyway I'll meet the 9.30 from Liverpool St. on Wednesday. I'll be there as sure as fate."

Eleanor then left Gentian Court. She could not help feeling that there was something nice about the old man, yet something that left a very doubtful impression on her mind. On reaching home she related the interview to her mother, who remarked, "Mr. O'Meara is Irish of course, and that may account for some of his eccentricity."

"Oh mother darling, you are Irish, and the least eccentric person in the world." said Eleanor. She then gave the best account she could of the old man,

and concluded by saying, "He looked as if he were a gentleman, he was polite, and his manner was good and respectful."

"Well, that is greatly in his favour," said her mother, "even if his gentility is a little decayed."

The end was, that though Prudence whispered, 'Pause!' Desperation cried, 'Drive on', and Eleanor, two days later left Liverpool Street Station for Dorkington. When she arrived, she looked around the platform for the tall figure arrayed in black. There was indeed the tall figure, but no longer arrayed in a black frock coat, but in very shabby garments - boots unlaced, face unshaven, and a fresh scar on his face which had been occasioned by a fall.

Mr. O'Meara saluted her with a low bow and asked where her effects were. She showed him her unpretentious trunk and small bag, which he proceeded to shoulder and carry to a most extraordinary looking vehicle drawn by a donkey, which was waiting outside the station, "I could give you a seat in the trap if you like, or maybe you would prefer to walk," he said.

Eleanor preferred to walk, and the journey to the Manor House began.

The harness of the donkey was mended in several places with string, and this bore a family

resemblance to Mr. O'Meara's braces which were held together in like manner. One of the wheels of the 'trap' went round in a very erratic fashion. To prevent it from coming off altogether, Mr. O'Meara had to give it a knock now and then with a large stone which he carried for this purpose as part of his permanent equipment.

The worst thing about Mr. O'Meara's appearance was that he looked, not like a shabbily dressed labourer, but a disreputable gentleman, which he was, and this made it very awkward when a splendid carriage came up to them, passed them, and then stopped.

Mrs. Wallingford one of Eleanor's mother's friends in more prosperous days was the owner of the carriage. To her astonishment she recognised the person walking by the donkey cart as Eleanor.

"Where in the world are you going, Eleanor?" she asked.

"To a situation", replied the girl.

"A situation. . . ?" But Mrs. Wallingford stopped herself as she saw Eleanor's confusion. She had some guests with her in the carriage so did not press her enquiries. She contented herself in getting Mrs. Hollingshead's address, but before driving off, she said. "Do you know who has turned up? W.W.! He has been doing splendidly in Australia. Well

goodbye, dear," she concluded, and drove off, while Mr. O'Meara and the donkey cart resumed their journey.

After two slow, weary miles they arrived at the Manor House. There is a fairy story book entitled "The Twins of Tumble-down-dreary", and that just about describes the Manor House. The gate was off its hinges; the windows were all of them dirty and many of them broken; weeds and grass grew on the pathways. The door of the House was open; it looked as if it were not used to being closed, and in the gaping entrance stood the Lady of the Manor. A tall woman, faded now but one who must have been handsome if not beautiful in her younger days, but she too bore the stamp of a devotee of Bacchus, shoes down at heel, stockings in need of darning, dirty dress, and yet in spite of every drawback, Mrs. O'Meara had about her the appearance at least of good breeding.

On seeing poor Eleanor, all she said to her husband was, "Pish! Have you brought me another lunatic?"

"Never mind her," said the Lord of the Manor to Eleanor, "Just go in while I take the donkey to the cowhouse".

Eleanor went inside from a desolate hall to a more desolate dining room, dirty, dismal, untidy,

unhomely. Presently Mr. O'Meara returned, his wife was busy hanging out some clothes.

"You must be hungry," observed Mr. O'Meara, "I wonder what our good cook has provided for us." He opened the cupboard of an old washstand, which appeared to be the substitute for a sideboard. But first he brought out of a drawer, a table cloth. But what a cloth! It had once been white, but the O'Meara's luncheon beverages seemed to be as favoured by the cloth as by themselves. At any rate, it seemed to have soaked them up in a considerable quantity. This, varied by coffee stains and rings of black, left by saucepans made a dismal dressing for the table. One or two horn handled forks, some of whose prongs had broken off, like the horn of a goat that could be seen outside standing on its hind legs browsing on the creepers that covered the front of the house. These, with some knives to match, and a few unwashed plates completed the furnishings of the table.

Mr. O'Meara brought out a stale half loaf of bread, some dry cheese and a jug of stout. He gave a wink, saying to Eleanor as he pointed to the jug, "I have something better than that up my sleeve."

Eleanor began to wonder what the 'good cook' had provided, and finding eventually that it was nothing, and that the provision of the good cook was as

mythical as that person's self, she was fain to appease her hunger with a small piece of bread and a minute bit of cheese. The old gentleman expressed a good deal of surprise and hospitable disappointment at her refusal of the stout, and her failure to appreciate the treat he had in reserve "up his sleeve", which turned out to be half a bottle of whisky.

Eleanor busied herself in putting things away and folding up the cloth which had come out of the drawer in a crumple and from which a shower of crumbs had fallen, and in trying to tidy up the disorders of the room. She was suddenly terrified by the door bursting open and a large figure precipitating itself into the room. The figure stopped suddenly in its career, apparently as much frightened as Eleanor herself had been. The newcomer was a tall, awkward lad, with lower lip hanging in a foolish way, and with a silly smile - evidently half-witted. He was dressed in what now might be called 'shorts' with thick socks, broken boots, a tattered and dirty shirt and a greasy and torn waistcoat.

Mrs. O'Meara followed him, and seeing Eleanor remarked, "This is your pupil, Caesarino, make what you can of him." Then, as she went out of the room she turned back and said, "Could you; Oh could you help me with the upstairs rooms?"

Eleanor followed her employer into one of the rooms. In a corner sat a strange little lady talking very fast to herself, making her hands revolve in front of her as if her life depended on the speed she could attain. She was clearly demented.

The work that Eleanor was asked to share was that of a chamber maid; but the squalor and dirt was such as to stagger the poor girl, and she saw that she had made a terrible mistake in coming to such an awful place and among, to say the least of it, such peculiar people.

In the evening they had tea. This was a great relief to Eleanor, though the stale loaf and strong cheese were again brought out. The tea revived her somewhat, and she was glad when she could at last go to bed.

It was a warm night. She had taken the precaution to remove from the bed the dirty sheets, only to find herself with the problem of the even dirtier blankets. How it was solved, I do not know. I expect it was not capable of solution. At any rate the night passed for Eleanor with troubled dreams, and at last the new day dawned. Mr. O'Meara went off early with the donkey 'trap' to meet the train and returned accompanied by the most repulsive person Eleanor had ever seen; a short, thick-set, bearded man with the most awful staring, glaring eyes.

Mrs. O'Meara cried out, "Oh, Lucius, who in the world have you brought?"

"Be calm and easy, Norah. Mr. Crane is a very nice, quiet gentleman."

What terrified Eleanor most in this new arrival, was the horrible, leering look that he gave her.

After an early luncheon of bread and cheese with a few boiled potatoes and a lettuce, Mr. O'Meara suggested to Eleanor, seeing how tired and ill she looked, that they had all better take an afternoon siesta.

Mr. O'Meara led Mr. Crane to his room.

Mrs. O'Meara took Ceasarino away with her. There was silence from the little old lady's room, so presumably she had gone off to sleep. Eleanor retired to her room in a state of nervous excitement and terror which she could scarcely control.

After a while she heard Mr. and Mrs. O'Meara holding a concert in their room. Mr. O'Meara had brought two suspicious looking bottles with him when he came back from the station. Soon the laughter became hilarious, and the Irish songs louder and louder. She heard them sing:

"I am her that makes the stir
From Cork along to Skibereena
For night and day, we drink strong tay

And whisky too, says Nora Creena."

Shreiks and yells, and then:

I, more blest than they

Spend each happy night and day

With my charming little Cruishkeen

Gra machree ma Cruishkeen, Laun, laun;" etc. etc.

More yells, more laughter, louder songs when

Eleanor exclaimed: "Oh, what's that!"

A deep breathing; something was bearing strongly against Eleanor's door. The door was creaking, groaning, bursting, giving way, and at last, with a crash it gave way to the chorus of:

"Machree ma cruishkeen, laun, laun."

There, standing in Eleanor's room was Mr. Crane, the horrible, leering madman. There happened to be a garden table in the room with a round iron top.

Eleanor got this between herself and Mr. Crane.

They stood one at each side of the table, glaring at one another, she in terror, he leering, with horrible staring gimlet eyes which seemed to pierce into her soul. They dodged, they danced, keeping the table between them. Suddenly Eleanor, edging round the table, rushed to the door. As she raced past the O'Meara's room making for the stairs, she screamed, and her cries attracted their attention. She dashed down the stairs; the front door that seemed never to

be shut, was happily open. Out she flew, fear lending wings to her feet, as madness lent speed to those of her pursuer.

She ran along the road. Meanwhile Mr. O'Meara had got downstairs and was following the chase, holding in his hand the large stone he used for repairing his wheel. It was a homeric race; Eleanor had youth, health and lightness of foot. Crane had the terrible strength and the awful force of a demon possessed being. Little by little he was gaining on her, leaving poor, panting O'Meara like Time, toiling after them in vain. The race was finished by a stone which tripped Eleanor's foot, and brought her down.

With a savage yell of triumphant delight, the leering devil Crane was upon her. To his surprise he received a blow between the eyes which sent him reeling back. Then, uttering a horrible oath, he sprang upon his assailant and a dreadful struggle now began. The madman, who seemed to be a skilled wrestler soon got a grip on his opponent's throat.

The poor girl had by this time regained her feet and saw the young man who had come to her rescue, on his back in the terrible clutch of the maniac. He was trying to hold the tightening fingers from throttling him. Eleanor seized the madman's hands, and her

strong young fingers for a time supplemented the young man's efforts, and kept the maniac's hands from choking the life out of his victim. But Eleanor's strength at last gave out, and to her anguish she saw the demon grip tightening. When all hope had gone, there was a dull crunch as O'Meara's stone came down on the madman's skull, knocking him into a senseless heap upon the road.

What a tableau they presented. Eleanor standing, wild eyed and panting, the young man scrambling to his feet, covered in dust, his garments torn, and his eyes swollen and bloodshot; and old O'Meara sitting near the madman, sobbing like a child.

Eleanor's preserver, for so he may be called, was the first to recover himself and exclaim.

"Oh Eleanor! What does all this mean? I was coming to try and find you."

Eleanor looked up, and recognised in her rescuer W.W., William Welland, her childhood friend. It was he then who was her God-sent helper.

"We had better go back to the station," he said, "and send some help."

"Is Mr. Crane dead?" asked Eleanor.

Welland went near and put his hand on Crane's chest.

"No", he said, "his heart is beating."

"Oh dear! Suppose he comes to, and begins all over again." said Eleanor in a terrified voice.

"I'll give him a second taste of this if he tries any more of his tricks" said O'Meara displaying his trusty weapon, his weeping fit now over.

"I think it will be all right to leave this gentleman with the stone in charge of our friend, while we go and find the police; unless you want to return to the house for your things."

"Oh no!", said Eleanor, and she clung to Welland's arm as he led her away from what had nearly been the scene of a ghastly tragedy.

On the way to the station Welland told Eleanor something that surprised and delighted her.

"You know," he said, "I have been in Australia, where I worked with one of the biggest sheep farmers in the Colony, and who should it turn out to be but your uncle Christopher! He is married but has no family. He charged me to find you when I reached England. I had to come about the Bank failure, and when I found out that it had involved your father and your mother and you, I sent your uncle full particulars. He has wired back placing a large credit to your accounts. I was most anxious to find you, but I could not discover your whereabouts, till Mrs. Welland saw you with O'Meara and got your mother's address. She told me your were

somewhere in this neighbourhood, and I had come to look for you. How fortunate that you took up that appointment with O'Meara, or I might never have found you."

The Police cleared up the O'Meara establishment, a 'Home for Lunatics' being Mr. O'Meara's last brilliant idea of making a fortune. Eventually he died as he had lived, a mighty believer in himself, a lover of 'the bottle', and an incurable optimist. In a moment, as he lay dying, he remarked to Mrs. O'Meara that she would be better off without him, but went on to outline a plan for acquiring a large tract of bogland in Ireland and supplementing the world's coal supply by exporting 'Irish Turf', an idea which was left to others to use and rake in a fortune. He died, as I think he must have been born, smiling.

Years afterwards an aged and very respectable widow named O'Meara, in relating some of her experiences, mentioned how she had been supported since her late husband's death, by the generosity of an old inmate of her house, an Australian lady, a Mrs. Eleanor Welland. A picture which she displayed with some pride, showed a sweet smiling lady with some very pretty children round her knee.

The Story of Daniel O' Rourke

Daniel O'Rourke was walking on the Village Green minding his own business, when he sat down on a bench to rest. Suddenly a great big Eagle swooped down and sat on the back of the bench. The Eagle said,

"Daniel O'Rourke, what are you doing here?"

"Sure, I'm doing nothin' at all." said Daniel.

"Well you can't do nothing at all here," said the Eagle firmly.

"I can," said Daniel.

"No you can' not" said the Eagle

"I'm going to stay sitting here doing nothing as long as I like."

"We'll see about that," the Eagle said, and he took him by the collar and lifted him right off his feet.

The Eagle flew up, up, up, up until Daniel could see his house and his garden, and the Village Green, all getting smaller and smaller. They went up, up, up, until he could see the moon below him. Then the Eagle dropped him, and he went down, down, until he landed on the moon.

The moon was very slippery, and it was all Daniel could do to stop himself sliding off.

He held on tight, wondering what to do, when a door opened in the side of the moon and a funny looking man with long silvery beard came out. He was the Man on the Moon. He said,

"What are you doing here, Daniel?"

"Och sure, I'm doing nothing at all." said Daniel.

"Well, you can't do nothing at all here," said the Man on the Moon.

"I can, and I will," said Daniel.

"We will see about that," said the Man on the Moon. And he went back through the door and gave it such a slam that the whole moon shook.

Daniel felt himself beginning to slip. He tried to stop himself, but he slid and slithered until he fell right off the moon, and started to fall down, down, down, down until he fell into the sea, and he went on going down, down, down, until he reached the bottom of the sea.

He walked on, and there, sitting outside his front door was a large fish. He kept opening and shutting his mouth, and fixed Daniel with his beady eye. He said,

"And what are you do'n here, Daniel?"

"Och, sure I'm doing nothing at all." said Daniel

"Well, ye can't do nothing at all here," said the fish.

"Oh yes I can," said Daniel

"We'll see about that." said the fish.

And with that the fish went into the house and called out a hundred little piranhas who began to nibble at Daniel until he ran to a rock that was sticking out of the sea, and climbed out.

He sat on the rock for a while until a very large sea bird flew up to him.

"What are you doing here, Daniel", said the bird.

"I'm doing nothin' at all." said Daniel.

"You can't do nothing at all here", said the bird.

"Here I am, and here I stay" said Daniel.

"We'll see about that," said the bird.

And he dug his claws into the shoulders of Daniel's jacket, and flew off with him. He flew through the window of Daniel's house, and dropped him onto his bed.

Daniel opened his eyes, and there was Biddy his wife standing over him with the rolling pin in her hand.

"What do you think you are doing here, you great lazy omothorn." said Biddy.

"Sure I'm doing nothing at all," said Daniel.

"Well you can't do nothing at all here," said Biddy.

And with that she began to belabour him with the rolling pin until he fell off the bed

"Now, off you get to work, ye lazy good-for-nothing, for there are all the spuds to plant, or else we will all go hungry."

Memories of an Irish story as told to Patrick Ashe by his Father; Robert P. Ashe



An Irish Tale

Once upon a time in Ould Ireland there lived a man called Paddy O'Raffity and Biddy his wife. They had five children, Molly, Liam, Conner, Saun and little Timmy. They all worked on their piece of land, and although not well off, they certainly did not starve. The children looked after the chickens and the ducks, Biddy looked after the cows and the pigs, and Paddy planted and dug the potatoes.

But then one year the potato crop failed. They sold the pigs, and managed that year with what they got for them. The next year the potatoes got a blight, and were not fit to eat - so they sold the ducks and the chickens and one of the cows; and managed. But when for the third year the potato crop failed, one by one they sold the cows, until they had just one cow left.

Biddy said to Paddy, "Paddy", she said, "We're going to have to sell the cow."

The children cried, "No, no, no, we can't sell the cow; we love her."

But there was nothing for it. They had no food, and no money to buy any.

So they brushed the cow, and kissed the cow, and waved goodbye as Paddy drove the cow to go to Market.

Now just as he came to the River Brandon (or was it the River Lea?), there walking along by his side was a little old man in a long grey coat coming down to his heels.

"The top of the mornin' to ye Paddy O'Raffity," said the little old man with the long grey coat coming down to his heels. Paddy wondered how he knew his name, as he had never seen him before.

"Top of the mornin'." replied Paddy.

"Will ye be taking the cow to Market?" asked the little old man in the long grey coat coming down to his heels.

"Yes" said Paddy.

"Paddy", said the little old man in the long grey coat coming down to his heels, "Paddy", he says, "I'll buy yor cow!"

"You will?" said Paddy, "And how much will you give for her?"

And the little old man in the long grey coat coming down to his heels put his hand in the pocket of the long grey coat coming down to his heels, and he

pulled out - what do you think? - he pulled out a bottle!

"Do ye really think I would sell my cow for a bottle?"

"Yes" said the little old man in the long grey coat coming down to his heels, "For this is a magic bottle and you will never regret the price."

"Now will I tell you what to do? When you get home get Bidy your wife to wash the children, and scrub the table, and all sit round, and you put the bottle in the middle of the table, and you say,

"Bottle, do yor duty."

"And you'll see what you'll see".

So Paddy was persuaded, and he took the bottle, and turned towards home. As he looked back, he saw the little old man with the long grey coat going down to his heels driving the cow down to the River Brandon (or was it the River Lea?).

When he got home Bidy his wife and the children were waiting by the door

"Did ye sell the cow?"

"I did."

'And how much did you get for her?"

And Paddy put his hand in his pocket and pulled out the bottle.

"I got this bottle".

At first Biddy thought he was joking, but when she found he really had sold the cow for a bottle she was stunned, and then enraged.

"Come here you blithering idiot and let me break that bottle over yor head."

"Now, now, Biddy, you wait till I tell you. This is not an ordinary bottle. It is a very special one. I got it from a little old man in a long grey coat going down to his heels. He bought the cow off me and told me what to do with the bottle."

After Biddy had calmed down, he told her to wash the children, and scrub the table, and all sit round. Then Paddy put the bottle in the middle of the table and said,

"Bottle, do your duty."

At that, four great strappin' men jumped out of the bottle, and they carried in their hands silver trays with roast turkey, and roast lamb, and roast potatoes and cabbage and ice cream and fresh fruit in silver bowls; and they put down silver plates and silver knives and forks and spoons in front of Paddy and Biddy and the children, and they all had as much as they could eat. They had never seen so much silver

nor tasted such delicious food. When they had finished Paddy stood up and said, in a loud voice, "You may go back to your bottle."
And the four great strapping men jumped back in the bottle, but they left all the silver behind.

So Paddy sold the silver, and when they needed money Paddy put the bottle on the table, and said, "Bottle, do your duty".
And they had all the food they wanted and another lot of silver to sell, and with the money they bought some more cows, and they bought some pigs, and they bought some ducks, and they bought some chickens, and they bought shoes for the children. So they prospered.

One day the Landlord came to see Paddy.
"Paddy," he said, "I want to know where you get your money from. These three times I've raised the rent on you, and you've not complained."
"Och, 't'is nothing," said Paddy, "The potato crop has been better these last years."
But the Landlord kept on asking, until finally Paddy said,
"I've got a bottle."
"You've got a bottle?"
"Yes," said Paddy.
"And what do you do with your bottle?"

"I'll show you," said Paddy.
And he put the bottle on the table, and said,
"Bottle, do your duty."

And immediately out jumped four great strapping men with the silver trays of food in their hands, and they served the Landlord, and Biddy and Paddy and the children. And when they had finished, Paddy said, "You may go back to your bottle."
And the four great strapping men jumped back in the bottle leaving the silver trays behind.

"Paddy," said the Landlord, "I want that bottle. How much will you sell it for?"
"Oh no," said Paddy, "It's not for sale."

But the following month, when the Landlord came to get the rent, he walked in with a great big leather sack on his shoulder,
"Will ye just clear the table, Paddy," he said.
So Biddy cleared the table and gave it a wipe.
Then the Landlord tipped the sack onto the table, and there came out piles and piles of golden sovereigns.
"Oh!" said Biddy, "Oh, I've nivver seen so much gold in mi life - Oh Paddy", she said, "Let's sell the bottle."

Paddy shook his head, but in the end, the Landlord persuaded him and took the bottle. But the strange thing was that it would only work for Paddy.

Whenever the Landlord wanted to have a party, he had to ask Paddy to come and say the magic words, 'Bottle, do your duty,' and "You may go back to your bottle'.

Paddy and Bidy put the sovereigns into a great big box.

Soon after, the Landlord arranged a big Party, and invited the Lord Lieutenant, the Archbishop of Armagh, and all the Lords and Ladies of the County.

And at the dinner they all sat round the table in the Great Hall, and in the middle the Landlord put the Bottle.

The Archbishop said, "Mr. Landlord, we have all sat down, but there seems to be nothing to eat."

"No, my Lord, but wait, and you will see what you'll see."

Paddy stood behind the Landlord, and said, "Bottle, do your duty."

And out jumped the four great strapping men with the silver trays and they served the most wonderful food. When they finished eating, all the guests

wanted to touch the bottle. They picked it up and passed it round. It toppled over, and rolled along the table.

Paddy shouted,

"You may go back to yor bottle,"

The four great strapping men had just time to jump back into the bottle when it rolled off the table and broke.

Paddy and Biddy had the box full of gold, so when the Landlord came for the rent, they went to the box and took out a sovereign. And whenever they wanted to buy another cow, or seed potatoes, they went to the box and took out a sovereign. And whenever they needed anything, they went to the box and took out a sovereign. When a beggar came to the door, they went to the box and took out a sovereign.

But then one day, they went to take out a sovereign, and they could see the bottom of the box.

One by one they took out the rest of the sovereigns until there were none left.

And that year the potato crop failed.

They sold the pigs; and managed. The next year the potatoes got a blight, and were not fit to eat - so they sold the ducks and the chickens and one of the cows; and managed.

But when for the third year the potato crop failed, one by one they sold the cows, until they had just one cow left. Biddy said to Paddy, "Paddy", said she, "We're going to have to sell the cow." The children cried, "No, no, no, we can't sell the cow; we love her."

But there was nothing for it. They had no food, and no silver and no money to buy any.

"Maybe," said Biddy, "Maybe you might meet the little old man with the long grey coat coming down to his heels."

"Maybe," said Paddy.

"Perhaps he may have another bottle," said Biddy.

"Perhaps." said Paddy

So they brushed the cow, and kissed the cow, and waved goodbye as Paddy drove the cow to go to Market.

And as they were going along by the River Brandon (or was it the River Lea?), they did not meet him, but no, there, walking by his side was the little old

man with the long grey coat coming down to his heels.

"The top of the mornin' to ye", said Paddy, "Sure, glad I am to see you."

"Top of the morning," said the little old man with the long grey coat coming down to his heels.

'Do you have another bottle?" asked Paddy.

"I do", said the little old man with the long grey coat coming down to his heels.

"Will ye take the cow for it?" asked Paddy.

"I will," said the little old man with the long grey coat coming down to his heels.

So he put his hand into the long grey coat coming down to his heels and pulled out a bottle.

So Paddy took the bottle, and set off for home. He looked back and saw the little old man in the long grey coat coming down to his heels driving the cow down to the River Brandon (or was it the River Lea?).

Biddy and the children were waiting at the door.

They saw Paddy running towards them waving the bottle.

"I've got it," he shouted, "I've got another bottle!"

Biddy had washed the children, and scrubbed the table in case Paddy brought back another bottle.

They sat round, and Paddy put the bottle on the table, and said, "Bottle, do your duty".

At once four great strapping men jumped out of the bottle, and each one had a great shillelagh in his hand, and they started to belabour Paddy and Biddy his wife, and they beat up the children, and smacked little Timmy, and they were all running and screaming and yelling, until Paddy was able to shout,

"Get back to yor bottle."

And the four great strapping men jumped back in the bottle.

Paddy put on his cap and coat and went up to see the Landlord. "I've got another bottle," said Paddy. "You've got another bottle? Will you sell it to me?" "I will," said Paddy. "Same price as last time."

The deal was agreed, and some days later the Landlord arrived with a great big sack on his back, and he poured out piles and piles of golden sovereigns. Paddy brought out the bottle, and gave it to the Landlord. They put the money in the box, but decided they would be very careful how they spent it.

The Landlord was pleased.

"Paddy," he said, "I want to have another party, and I want you to be there to make the bottle do its duty."

So the day was fixed, and the Landlord invited the Lord Lieutenant, and the Archbishop of Armagh, and all the Lords and ladies of the County. And they remembered the last Party, and wrote letters of thanks to the Landlord for his kind invitation and said they looked forward to coming.

The day came, and all the people who were invited went and sat round the table. A few who had not been to the last Party did not know what to expect. Paddy knew what was going happen, and was frightened, so he got under the table. When the Landlord was ready, Paddy shouted, "Bottle, do your duty."

And immediately four great strapping men jumped out of the bottle, and they had shillelaghs in their hands, and they set about the Lord Lieutenant, and they beat him up, and they belaboured the Archbishop of Armagh, and they beat the Lords and Ladies of the County, and they were all yelling and screaming. And one of the men found Paddy and dragged him from under the table, and started to beat him. At last he was able to shout, "Get back to your Bottle."

Immediately the four great strapping men began jumping back into the bottle, but in carrying their shillelaghs, the bottle got knocked over, and rolled off the table, and it broke.

So ended the story of the little old man with the long grey coat coming down to his heels, and his two magic bottles.

As told to Patrick by his father R.P. Ashe c. 1918



Born 29 November 1857 in Witton, Blackburn where his father, George Alexander Hamilton Ashe was Vicar, **Robert Pickering Ashe** was educated at Clitheroe Grammar School, and at Rossall School. In 1874 he went to St. John's College Cambridge. He was ordained Deacon by Bishop Ryle in Liverpool Cathedral in 1880, and served his title at St. Michael's Liverpool. He was then appointed to a Curacy at St. James' Clarkenwell. In 1882 he joined a group of CMS missionaries, and went to Uganda to join Alexander Mackay. In 1886 Robert Ashe returned to England to tell the story of the Mission and to ask for reinforcements. In 1887, he went back to Uganda, and for a time was alone with Mackay. In 1888 he returned once again to England and arrived on 25 December. During 1889 he wrote a book on his experiences titled 'Two Kings of Uganda'. In 1890 came news of Mackay's death, which he took as a summons to return to Uganda. In May 1891 CMS sent him again and reached Uganda on 13 January 1892. On his return to England he lived in Portishead, and wrote 'Chronicles of Uganda'. He married Emma Lena Jackson and they had one son, Robert Henry Nicholas Ashe, before her death in 1895. R.P. Ashe then took the Chaplaincy at all Saints Church in Boudja, Smyrna, Turkey. In 1899 he married Edith Blackler and they had five children: Oliver (1900), Mary (1902), William (1903), Ellen (1905), and Francis Patrick Bellesme (1915). During the First World War (1914 to 1918) they were interned, and although suffering great privations, they were well treated by the Turks. In 1922, they were driven out by the Turkish uprising under Kemal Ataturk, and were evacuated to Malta, where they were refugees for many months in the Lazaretto, before returning briefly to Smyrna. He was then made Chaplain to the British Community in Cartagena, Spain. In 1924, R.P. Ashe retired to Croydon, Surrey. He died 29 May 1944, and is buried in Warlingham Church yard in the Blackler - Ashe grave.