STAND FAST, CRAIG-ROYSTON!

BY WILLIAM BLACK.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ALARM.

On a certain still, clear, moonlight night a dog cart containing two young men was being driven away from the little town of Mendover out into the wide, white, silent country. The driver was Lord Musselburgh, and he seemed in high spirits, talking to his companion almost continuously, while he kept the stout little cob going at a rattling pace.

"I am more pleased than I can tell you," he was saying. "Quite a triumph! Why, you took to it as a duck takes to water. Of course there's something in having a responsive audience; and you can always get a noble band of patriots to cheer your proposal for a progressive income tax when not one in ten of them has any income tax to pay. I'm afraid they weren't quite so enthusiastic about your scheme of compulsory insurance; indeed, they seemed a little disappointed and offended; the Champion of the Proletariat was playing it a little low down on them; but a heavily increasing income tax—oh, yes, that was splendid!—they saw the Rothschilds caught at last, and had visions of a land in which there shall be no more poor rates or police rates, perhaps not even water rates or gas rates. But it was your confounded coolness that surprised me—no beating about the bush—walking straight into it—and without preparation, too——"

"I knew what I had to say," Vincent interposed, with a becoming modesty, "and it seemed simple enough to say it."

"Yes, and so it is—when you have acquired the knack of forgetting yourself," said the young nobleman, oracularly. "And that appears to have come naturally to you, my boy. However, this is why I am so particularly pleased with your successful first appearance." Lord Musselburgh proceeded, as the dog cart went bowling along the silent, white highway, between the black hedges. "I am about to unfold to you a great idea, Vin—perhaps prematurely, but you will be discreet. The project is mine; but I want help to carry it through; you and I must work together; and years and years hence we shall be recognized as the Great Twin Brethren, who saved the falling fortunes of England."

Was he in jest or earnest? Master Vin, knowing his friend's sub-cynical habit of speech, listened without interposing a word.

"We shall earn for ourselves a deathless renown at very little cost—to us; it's the other people who will have to pay, and we shall have all the glory. Now what I propose is briefly this: I propose to give all those good folk who profess a warm regard for their native country a chance of showing what their patriotism is worth. I don't want them to fight; there isn't any fighting going on at present to speak of; and in any case the rich old merchants and maiden ladies and portly Bishops and ponderous Judges—well, they'd make an awkward squad to drill; but I mean to give them an opportunity of testifying to their affection for the land of their birth; and you, my blazing young Tory Democrat, if you can speak as freely as you spoke to-night, you must carry the fiery torch north, south, east, and west—till twenty-two second Westminster Abbeys for both of us, or at least a tablet in St. Paul's. Then look what a subject for your eloquence you have—the guarding of England from any possible combination of her foes—the island citadel made impregnable—compass'd by the invulnerable sea—indeed, not defiance—you know the kind of thing. But really, Vin, you know, there is going to be an awful stramash, as my old nurse used to say, in Europe before the century is out; and England's safety will lie in her being strong enough to remain aloof. And how? Why, by trebling her present navy."

"Trebling her present navy?" Vincent repeated, in a vague sort of way.

"Yes." Musselburgh went on, coolly. "And it can easily be done, without involving a single farthing of taxation. I want the people of this country to show what they can do voluntarily; I want to see them in a tremendous effort to render Great Britain secure from attack for a century at least; and the manner of doing it is to form a National Patriotic Fund, to which everybody, man and woman, merchant and apprentice, millionaire and club waiter, can subscribe, according to their means, the measure of their earnestness of their patriotism. Here is a chance for everybody; here is a test of all those professions of love of country. Why, it would become a point of honor, with the very meanest, if the nation were thoroughly aroused, and if a splendid example were set in high places. The Queen, now—who is more directly interested in the safety of the country than she is?—why should she not head the list with £100,000? I would call the fund the Queen's Fund, and I should not wonder if we were to get two or three maniacs—very useful maniacs—patriots they would have been called in other days—to cut their possessions in half, and hand the one-half bodily over to her Majesty. That would be something like an example!"

"But is it a wild speculation, Musselburgh?" asked Vincent, who was puzzled. "Do you mean it seriously?"

"Ha and hum," said the young peer, significantly. "That depends. I should want to sound some of the dukes about it. And first of all I must have some sort of scheme ready to get rid of obvious objections. They might say 'Oh, you want to trebble the navy?' Then in twenty years you'll find yourself with a crowd of obsolete ships, and all your money gone.' That is not what I mean at all. I mean the formation of an immense voluntary national fund, which will keep the navy at double or treble its present strength, but by a sudden multiplication of ships, but by gradually adding to the vessels of the newest construction, as improvements are invented. An immense fund, doubtless; for of course there would be maintenance; out what couldn't a rich country like England do if she chose? And that's what I'm coming to, with regard to you, my young Democrat—that we should be infinitely better—it would be safer—it would be building on securer foundations—if the demand for such a movement came from the country itself. If the Queen, and the dukes, and the millionaires were to subscribe as it in answer to an appeal from the people the enthusiasm would be tremendous; it would be such a thing as never happened before in the history of England; talk about noble ladies flinging their jewels into the public treasury!—why, every school girl would bring out her hoarded pocket money with her lips white with patriotic fervor. England can subscribe on all possible occasions for the benefit of other countries; the one let her subscribe on her own behalf!" Lord Musselburgh went on, though it might have been hard to say what half-mocking bravado intermingled with his apparent enthusiasm. "And that's where you would come in. You would be the emissary, the apostle, the bearer of the holy torch. You've done very well with the grocers' assistants of Mendover; but fancy having to wake up England, Canada, Australia, and the Cape to the necessity for making the Mother Country once for all invulnerable, in the interests of peace and universal freedom. Why, you could become eloquent about itself. They cheered your graduated income tax; but what would they say to this? Fancy what could be done if every man in this country were to pledge himself to give a year's income! We don't ask him to go out and have his legs or his arms amputated, or his head shot off; we only ask for a year's income to secure peace and prosperity for himself and his children and his children's children. If there is any patriotism in the country at all, who would say no? And then when there is an iron belt round England, and when there is a floating mass of iron that could be seen in a moment to form a wall round any of her dependencies, then, I suppose, there might be a splendid assemblage in Westminster Hall; and you and I—as the instigators of this great national movement—but my imagination stops short; I don't know what they will make of us."

He himself had to stop short, for he was passing through a wide gateway into the grounds surrounding the Bungalow, and the carriage drive was almost invisible under the overshadowing trees. Presently they had drawn up in front of the long, low, rambling house; and here were lit windows, and an open door, and servants. The two young men descended and entered and went into the billiard room, where cigars and soda water and similar things had been set out in readiness for them; and here Lord Musselburgh, lying back in a cane-bottomed chair, proceeded to talk in a less random fashion about this project of his, until he had almost persuaded his companion that there was something reasonable and practicable in it, if only it could be properly initiated.

"Anyhow," said he to his guest, as they were both retiring for the night, "it is some sig movement like that, Vin, my lad, that you want to get identified with, if your aim is to make a position in English public life. You have advantages. You can speak well. You will have plenty of money. You are beginning with the proletariat—that is laying a foundation of popularity. You have youth and heaps of strength on your side. Then Grandison is known to be your friend. What more?"

What more, indeed? The future seemed to smile on this young man; and if his dreams, waking or sleeping, had been of brilliant achievements and public triumphs, who could have wondered? But, curiously enough, just at this time the forecasts that came to him in moments of quiet were not to be sombre. He dreaded he hardly knew what. And these vague forebodings of the day took a more definite shape in the far-reaching shadows of the night; for again and again there recurred to him that phantasmal picture that had suddenly startled him when old George Bethune was talking of the possibilities that might be lying in store for his granddaughter, Vin Harris had never seen Balloray—did not know where it was, in fact; but night after night he beheld with a strange distinctness the big baronial building, and the black firs, and the gate with the otter's head in stone. Had that been all? But regularly there came forth the tall young girl with the long, flowing hair; and he was a poor wanderer, cowering away from recognition; and again she would ride by, along the white road, until she was lost in the dappled sun and shadow under the beeches. Then there was a song somewhere—perhaps it was the trembling leaves that whispered the refrain—but it was all about separation, and loneliness, and the sadness of remembrance and of loss. *Chanis, rossignol, chanis, toi qui as le cœur gai*—this was what he heard, or seemed to hear, away in that distant land, where he had been left alone. * * * *J'ai perdu ma maîtresse, sans l'avoir merité.* * * It was strange that no birds sang in these woods, that no lark hung quivering in those skies: all was silence—save for that continuous murmur of farewell. * * * *Ami, je t'oublierai, mais je t'aime, jamais je ne t'oublierai*, and sometimes the murmur rose into a larger monotone; the big gray building, and the black firs, and the highway, and the beeches, disappeared; and behold in their stead was a great dreadth of sea, desolate, and rain-swept, and void of all sign of life. And was this the barrier now between him and her? Not merely that she was the heiress of Balloray, under the guardianship of her implacably proud old grandfather, but that she was away in some far land, beyond those never-ending myriad voices of the deep? * * * *Pour un, bonjour de vous, que je lui refusai.* * * What wrong had he done her? What had he denied her, in the time when they were as boy and girl together—when there was no thought of her being the heiress of Balloray—when she used to walk down through Hyde Park in her simple dress and sit on the bench, while her grandfather read his newspaper? Then the gray dawn would come; and he would awake to the knowledge that he had been tortured by mere phantasies; and yet these left something in his mind, even during the actual and practical daylight hours. He began to wish that there was some bond—of what nature he had not determined—for it was all a vague longing and wistful desire—that could so bind Maisrie and him together that that great width of sea should not intervene. For it was a sorrowful kind of thing—even when the white hours of the daylight told him he had only seen it in a dream.

But apart from all these dim anxieties and this haunting unrest, came the strictly matter-of-fact consideration that within an appreciable time old George Bethune and his granddaughter would be returning to the United States. That was no spectral ocean that would then lie between Maisrie and him, but 3,000 miles of the Atlantic; and who could tell when the two wanderers might ever see England again? Nay, had not he himself been implored to help in bringing about this separation? Maisrie had begged of him to urge upon her grandfather the necessity of getting the American book done first, before setting out on the poetic pilgrimage through Scotland, which was to yield fruit of another kind; and, of course, if the old man consented, the first step to be taken was a voyage to New York. Vincent had drawn many a fancy picture of a little group of three, wandering away through the richtinted autumn days, by "lone St. Mary's silent lake," or by the banks of the silver Tweed; but now all that was to be sacrificed, and he himself was to do what he could toward sending the old man back to America, and Maisrie with him. Then there would be no more of the long, quiet days of study, made happy by anticipations of the evening; no more of the pleasant little dinners in this or that restaurant; no more of those wonderful twilights in the little parlor, with their enchantments of music and happy converse. London, with Maisrie Bethune 3,000 miles away; that would be a strange thing—that he could even now hardly imagine to himself.

Nay, it was a thing that he looked forward to with such an unreasoning dread and dismay that he began to construct all sorts of mad schemes for defeating any such possibility; and at last he hit upon one that seemed more or less practicable, while it would in the mean time virtually absolve him from his promise to Maisrie. On the morning after the meeting of the Mendover Liberal Association the two young men were returning to town by train, and Vincent said to his companion:

"You were telling me the other night of the Scotch poems that your uncle gave you got to know in New York; what did you say his name was?"

"Oh, you mean Hugh Anstruther? I hope I spoke no ill of him; for an enthusiastic patriotism such as his is really something to admire in these days. Capital fellow, Hugh; until I fell across him in New York I did not know that I had one virtue transcending all the other virtues, and that was simply my being a brother Scot."

"What did you say was the name of the paper that he edits?"

"The *Western Scotsman*."

"And it was he who gave Mr. Bethune a letter of introduction to you?"

"But here Musselburgh's manner instantly changed; he had been answering these questions in a careless way, looking out of the carriage window most of the time; now he turned to his companion and regarded him with some scrutiny.

"Why do you ask, Vin?" he said. "Don'tou want to find out something further about the old man?"

Vincent's forehead flushed, and his eyes glocomed darkly.

"I do not," he made answer in distinct tones. "I thank goodness my nature is not so suspicious. It seems to me extraordinary that two human beings who have done nothing in the world to deserve it should be regarded by a constant mistrust and doubt. Why? Do you suspect everybody alike in the same way?"

"Oh, don't say that I suspect them," Musselburgh exclaimed at once—for he was an exceedingly good-natured young man and had no wish to offend. "I don't know them well enough—don't know anything at all about them, I believe."

"You told me yourself that my aunt and you had been talking them over; and I gathered enough from what you said," was the younger man's retort.

"Mrs. Ellison is naturally anxious about anything that concerns your future, Vin—or seems likely to concern it," Lord Musselburgh said.

"And you should be the last to object."

"But I do object," he said, stiffly. "I object altogether to her canvassing the character of any friends of mine; and to her putting her doubts and suspicions and hints about them into my mind—perhaps into my imagination. Oh, yes, I could make out quite clearly what she had been saying. That night at Henly she came on a visit of inspection; it was perfectly obvious. And what is more, she came with the hope of having her suspicions confirmed; and I suppose she was horribly disappointed that Maisrie Bethune was not drunk or insane, and that Mr. Bethune did not beg the loan of a sovereign from her!"

"Why so passionate, Vin—why so indignant?" said his companion, glancing at him curiously.

"Because I say it is a shame—a monstrous shame," the young man said with flaming eyes, "that any one should be insulted so! Is it their fault that they have no friends, that they are unknown, that they are poor? To be wealthy is to be virtuous, of course: if you have a long balance at your bankers', you are above suspicion; then; if you have house boats, and four-in-hands, and gold plate, you're all right. I suppose Maisrie, sitting beside me, felt it was on that very evening—the evening of her inspection—that my aunt was kind enough to talk over those two friends of mine with you, and tell you of all the portentous things she suspected of them. But I presume she did not repeat to you the very last words she used to me as she said good night?"

"About what?"

"About Miss Bethune," said Vincent—though it cost him an indescribable effort to pronounce her name.

"Well, I believe she did," Lord Musselburgh said. "For she had just come away from hearing Miss Bethune sing some Canadian song or another; and she was very much struck; and she said she had admitted as much to you. Oh, more than that—but I don't precisely remember the words. Anyhow, she was immensely impressed by the sincerity and simplicity of the girl's voice; at the moment she was ready to give up all her prejudices and doubts—as far as Miss Bethune was concerned. But really, Vin, when you come to think of it, you must confess that there is not much guidance as to character, or to antecedents, or anything else, to be gathered from a young, Mrs. Ellison, who is always posing as a callous woman of the world, is really very sympathetic and generous, and warm-hearted; and she was quite taken captive by the charm and simplicity of this *Claire Fontaine*—is that the name of it?—but at the same time I should not place too great a value——"

"I quite agree with you," the younger man said, interrupting without apology. "I place no more value on my aunt's acquittal and commendation than on her previous suspicions. And—and—if you don't mind, Musselburgh, I would rather not have the question discussed further, nor Miss Bethune's name mentioned in any way whatsoever."

"Oh, but remember, I said nothing against her," Lord Musselburgh finally added, in perfect good humor. "How could I? I hope your new friends are all you think them; and as for the young lady, it is difficult to believe any harm of so refined and sweet a face. But I hope you won't concern yourself too much with them, Vin; you have other, and perhaps more serious interests in life, and it seems to me that everything promises well for you. Why, at this moment, man, don't you know what you ought to be occupying all your attention?"

"What?" his companion asked—perhaps glad enough to get away from that delicate topic.

"At least I know what I should be thinking of if I were in your shoes," Musselburgh said. "I should be wondering how much space the editor of the *Mendover Weekly Guardian* was going to give me on Saturday morning next."

It was another editor whom Vincent had in his mind at that moment. As soon as he got back to London he wrote and despatched the following letter, which was addressed to "Hugh Anstruther, Esq., *Western Scotsman* office, New York, U. S. A."

DEAR SIR: I hope you will be so kind as to consider the contents of this note a strictly private and confidential. In a recent conversation with Lord Musselburgh he informed me that it was you who had given a letter of introduction to him to Mr George Bethune; and I have the honor to inform you that Mr. Bethune, is about to bring out a volume on the Scottish poets in America, as soon as he can conveniently get the materials together. But to this end it would appear that he must revisit the United States and Canada, to obtain particulars of the lives of the various poets and verse writers, and perhaps also, examples of their work. Now I wish to ask you, as a friend of Mr. Bethune's, whether all this fatigue and trouble might not be spared him, supposing there were some person or persons in this country willing to defray the cost of having these materials collected for him. To speak plainly, do you, sir, know of any writer, connected with the press or otherwise, who would undertake, for a sufficient consideration, to bring together biographical memoirs of the authors in question, along with specimens of their work, which could be sent over here to Mr. Bethune, for him to put into shape and issue in book form. Mr. Bethune, as you know, is an old man, who must surely have had enough of travelling; moreover, he has in mind a leisurely ramble through Scotland which, while also leading to literary results, would involve much less fatigue than a voyage to the United States and Canada. I should be greatly obliged if you would tell me whether you consider it practicable to collect those materials by deputy; and if you know of any one capable of undertaking the task, and what remuneration he would probably require. I fear that the idea of collaboration would not be welcome to Mr. Bethune; so it might be better (if possible) at all that the materials for the book should be got together by some one with no literary pretensions whatever, leaving the real authorship of the volume exclusively in Mr. Bethune's hands. I presume that mechanical work of that kind could be done by a clerk, especially if he had your authority to write to the various gentlemen and ask them for copies of such things as they happened to have published; but, of course, you must be a better judge of such a question than I and I shall be entirely guided by your advice, if you will be good enough to grant it me. I beg you to forgive me, a stranger, for thus appealing to you; but I know you will not grudge a little trouble for the sake of a friend and a fellow Scotchman. Yours faithfully and obediently,

VINCENT HARRIS.

After sending off that letter the young man's spirits lightened considerably; he saw there was still a chance that Maisrie Bethune, her grandfather, and himself should together set out on that coveted perambulation of the legend-haunted districts of the North. And now he and Maisrie returned to their ordinary mode of life—which perhaps pleased him better than the ostentatious festivities of Henley. Here was no staring crowd, here were no suspicious friends, to break in upon their close and constant companionship. He rejoiced in this isolation; he wished for no fourth person at the quiet little dinners in the restaurants; he had no desire that anyone should share the privacy of the hushed small parlor where old George Bethune loftily discoursed of poetry and philosphy, of ancient customs and modern manners, and where Maisrie sheet pathetic Scotch airs on the violin, or sang in her low, clear voice of *le pont d'Avignon* or perhaps of *Marianson, dame jolie*. Moreover, he could not fail to perceive, and that with an ever-increasing delight, that her old expression of sad and wistful resignation was gradually being banished from her eyes; and he could say that, but a little fresh color was come into her cheeks, so that the pale sun tinge was less perceptible. Perhaps it was the companionship of one nearer to her own age that had made a difference in her life; at all events much of her former shyness was gone; she met his look frankly, sometimes with a touch of gratitude, sometimes with simple gladness, as if his mere presence was something that pleased her. When she was watering the flowers in the little balcony, and caught sight of him over the way, she nodded and smiled; he wondered whether it was that faint sun tinge of the complexion that made her teeth seem so clearly white. He began to forget those dreams of a wide intervening sea; this present existence was so peaceful, so contented, and happy, and in spite of Maisrie's injunction, those dreams of Scotland would recur; he saw three newly arrived strangers walking along Princess street, Edinburgh, in the silver glare of the morning; and the middle one of the three—looking away up to the dusky shadows of the Castle rock—was no other than Maisrie Bethune herself, with light and glad shining in her eyes.

And what had old George Bethune to say to this constant association and this fast friendship between the two young people? Well, old George Bethune had an admirable capacity for enjoying the present moment; and so long as the dinner was fairly cooked and the claret to his taste, so long as he had a small and faithful audience to listen to his rhapsodies about Scottish song and Scottish heroism, and so long as Maisrie's violin was in tune and her voice in sympathetic accordance on the trembling strings, he did not seem to pay much heed to the future. Perhaps it was but natural that one who had wandered so far and wide should welcome a little peace at last; and perhaps he intentionally blinded his eyes; at all events the young people were allowed the utmost freedom of companionship; it was as if these three formed but one family.

One night as Vincent was about to leave, the old gentleman said to him:

"About to-morrow evening; I presume we dine at Mentavisti's?"

"Oh, yes, certainly; we've tried a good many places, and we can't do better than Mentavisti's," the young man answered—as if it mattered one brass farthing to him what sort of dinner there was, or where he got it, so long as Maisrie was at the same table.

"Ah, very well. For this is how I am situated," said Mr. Bethune, gravely and grandly as befitted the seriousness of the theme. "I have an appointment in Jermyn street at 6 o'clock. I may be detained. Now I can undertake to be at Mentavisti's restaurant at 7—and when the dinner hour is once fixed, to play fully-shally with it seems to me abominable—but I should not be sure that I shall be time to return home first. It would be better, therefore, and every way safer for Maisrie to come down by herself in a cab——"

"But mayn't I call for her?" the young man suggested at once. "You know she would much rather walk down than drive."

"Oh, very well, very well, if you don't mind," said Mr. Bethune with a lofty condescension—or indifference; while Maisrie, instead of being in the least confused by this proposal, looked up with perfectly frank and pleased eyes, apparently giving him a little message of thanks.

Nothing else happened to embarrass him the following evening when he was ushered up stairs by the landady's daughter. Maisrie was alone in the little parlor, ready dressed except as regarded her gloves, and she was putting a final touch to the few flowers with which she had adorned the table.

"Good evening," said she, quite placidly. "I will be with you in a moment, as soon as I have dried my fingers."

She disappeared for a second, and returned. He hesitated before accompanying her to the door.

"Won't you give me one of those flowers?" he said, rather breathlessly.

She seemed a little surprised.

"Now that I think of it," she said, "I have never seen you wear a flower in your coat, as other gentlemen do. And I'm afraid there isn't one here nearly fine enough."

"If you were to give me a flower, I should not destroy it by wearing it in my coat!" said he.

"Oh, merely a flower?" she asked. She went to the table. "Will this one do?"

It was a white geranium that she handed him, large enough, and with its pocket-book and carefully placed it between the leaves. For the briefest instant she regarded him as if in wonder that he should seek to preserve so worthless a thing, but she made no remark, and then unconcernedly and cheerfully she led the way down stairs, and together they passed out into the open air.

It was a marvellous and bewildering thing to think that he should be in sole and complete charge of her, here, in the midst of the great and busy world of London. Did these hurrying people guess at his proud elation, his new-found sense of guardianship and responsibility, his anxiety that all things should be pleasant, that not a moment of their hardly time even should be lost? Did they regard contemptuously her step light as a fawn, fresh color in her fair cheeks, happiness radiant in her eyes? Perhaps they heeded her and the tall and handsome youth by her side as little as she heeded them; for, indeed, she seemed to be entirely engrossed in her companion, talking, laughing, replying to him without a shadow of self-consciousness or restraint. To him this new relationship was an amazing kind of thing; she did not seem even to perceive it. To him it was an epoch in his life, to be forever remembered; and yet there was nearly every evening he walked out in similar fashion with her grandfather, and she did not appear to notice any difference; at least she showed no sign.

But all at once Maisrie altered her manner; and that was when he in the lightness of his heart informed her that there was still a chance of their setting out on that long contemplated pilgrimage to the various poetic shrines of Scotland.

"Mr. Harris," she said, proudly, "you made me a promise——"

"Yes, I know I did," he said; "but things have indeed, and I'm going to explain to you; and I think you'll find everything satisfactory. But first of all, before I begin, I wish you wouldn't call me 'Mr. Harris.' It sounds detestable. You who are so natural and straightforward in all your ways—why don't you call me 'Vincent?'"

"Don't you think that Mr. Vincent might be a fair compromise?" she asked, gently, and with her eyes lowered.

"I've called you Maisrie once or twice, by accident, and you didn't seem to mind," he pouted out.

"I am sure I did not notice," she made answer at once. "How should I? I am used to nothing else."

"Then I am to be allowed to call you Maisrie," said he, clutching eagerly at this new-found privilege. "And you will call me Vincent—when you find Mr. Vincent become too formal; is it a compact?"

"Yes, it is—Mr. Vincent—if you like," said she, with a smile. "But why do you make it so very serious?"

"Because," said he, gravely, "when any solemn bargain is completed, people shake hands to make it secure."

"Not in the middle of Oxford street," she said.

"We will postpone the ceremony, if you prefer it; and now I will begin and tell you how it is still possible we may have that long ramble through Scotland together. You were anxious that before anything of the kind were attempted your grandfather should go back to the United States to get material for his book on the Scottish poets in America. Well, now, it seems a pity to make such a long voyage if it can be done without; and so I have taken the liberty of sending over to New York to see if there isn't some handy young fellow there—some clerk or reporter—who would undertake to collect all necessary materials, and send them over here for your grandfather to work up. Then we could go to Scotland all the same—that is, if you will let me accompany you."

"Some one to collect the materials and send them over," she repeated; and then she said: "But would that be fair, Mr. Harris—Mr. Vincent?—would that be honest? Surely not! The book would not be my grandfather's book at all; properly it would belong to the young man in New York."

"I beg your pardon," said he, with decision. "He only supplies the bricks; he does not build the house. When a Chancellor of the Exchequer produces his budget, of course he claims it as his own; but he has got his facts from the heads of departments, and most likely his quotations have been hunted out for him by his private secretary. It would be your grandfather's book, solely and wholly."

"But the cost?" she said, after a second.

"Supposing it were practicable, the expense——

"Oh, never mind about that," said he, lightly. "It will be next to nothing—you needn't mind about that. Our deputy in New York will find very little difficulty in getting the memoranda that he wants. There is no sort of unnecessary modesty about minor poets; they will be glad enough to give him specimens of their work, as soon as it is known what he aims at. And in Scotland," he continued (grown suddenly bold), "don't you see how it would work? Your grandfather must have an occasional morning to give to his MSS.; then you and I could leave him in absolute peace and quiet; and we might go away for a stroll up to Arthur's seat, or round the ramparts of Stirling Castle, and return to him by lunch time. Wouldn't that be an excellent arrangement?"

"Yes, that would be very nice indeed," said she, with a pleased look; she seemed to look forward to this close and constant companionship as the most natural thing in the world.

And in fact so sanguine was the young man about the success of his new scheme that, when the three of them were seated at a quiet table in Mentavisti's restaurant, he ventured to hint to old George Bethune his fond hope that he might be allowed to join in that prolonged excursion through Scotland; and the old man at once acquiesced.

"Yes, yes, why not?" he said; and then he went on, absently: "Yet my nerve is not what it was. Sometimes I hesitate. It would grieve me more than I can say if Maisrie here were to be disappointed. It is a long time since I was in the country; perhaps I remember only the beautiful things; and it is only of these she has heard me talk. When Sturrock thinks of the old home, the dappled hills shine for him—you remember, Maisrie?

Oh native land! Oh cherished home
I've sailed across the sea,
And though my wandering footsteps roam
My heart still turns to thee.
My thoughts and dreams are sweet and bright
With dew which love distils,
While sweet as stars at golden light
Falls on the English hills.

He forgets the mists and the rain and the darkened days. And you, Maisrie, you have been brought up under fair blue skies; you have never learnt how sombre days and wild and driving clouds stir the imagination; perhaps, if you stood in the very street where the 'bonnie Earl o' Moray came sounding through the town,' you would see only the wet pavements and the dull windows; and you might turn to me and say: 'Is this what you have talked about to me, grandfather?' Then all of a sudden he seemed to throw off this despondent fit as by a violent effort. "No, no!" said he in quite a different tone. "I will not believe but that there are still yellow cornfields and silver lakes in bonnie Scotland, and that the lark flings as high in the heavens as when Tannahill, or Hogg, or Motherwell paused to listen. I will show you the red rowans hanging from the mountain crag, and the golden bracken down by the side of the burn; and if we go still further away—to the lonely islands of the western seas—then you must hear the Celtic boatmen chanting to the sunnier south, and to let the mysterious charm of isolation hold you, and the majesty of the dark mountains, and the pathetic beauty of the wandering veils of rain. I would sooner forget the mother that bore me," he said, with a proud fling of the head, "than believe that bonnie Scotland had lost her glamour and wonder and fascination. And you would be no holiday tourist, Maisrie; you belong by blood to the 'land of wild weather,' and imagination is part of the dowry of youth. No, no; I do not fear. I—I made a mistake when I said I was afraid of you—you have the true sympathy, the intelligence, the quick imagination that I can trust—I am not afraid of you, Maisrie——"

"You need not be afraid, grandfather," the girl said, gently—for she saw that he was somewhat disturbed. "Why should you be afraid, grandfather? I shall be looking with your eyes."

But the curious thing was that, despite all this talking about the projected pilgrimage, it never seemed to come any nearer. No mention of a date, or even of any approximate time, was ever made. In like manner, their return to America, though the midsummer sun spoke of it now and again as a fixed and definite and necessary thing, kept receding backward and backward into a perfectly nebulous future. The present moment was everything to old George Bethune, whether he was engaged with a rare dish in Mentavisti's restaurant in Regent street, or lighting his pipe and mixing his toddy on his return home, while he was descanting on Barbour and Drummond and Sir David Lindesay, or Ramsay and Ferguson and Burns. People were beginning to leave town; Vincent Harris had received, and declined, an invitation to a Scotch house party in the far wilds of Ross, notwithstanding that it was to the same house that Mrs. Ellison and Lord Musselburgh were going; but old George Bethune and his granddaughter appeared to pay no heed to the changing times and seasons; their placid uneventful life seemed quite enough for them. And was it not enough for this young man also, who had been admitted to be their constant associate and friend? Why should he vex himself about literary schemes that were none of his devising? Day by day he waved a good morning to Maisrie as she came down to breakfast; and an answer came from her smiling eyes; sometimes he walked out into the parks in the afternoon with her grandfather and herself, and even he rejoiced to see that the fine peach-bloom on her cheek was surmounting the suntinge that had been left there by travel; then in the evening time he had all London to choose from as to where they should dine, with a quiet stroll homeward thereafter, to music, and gominoes, and careless talk. What more? The great outer world might go on its way and welcome.

But Master Vin was about to be startled out of this dreamful ease. At last there came an answer to the communication he had sent to the editor of the *Western Scotsman*, with many apologies for unavoidable delay; Mr. Anstruther, it appeared, had been in Canada taking his annual holiday among his kinsmen and countrymen there:

"I must say your letter has astonished me beyond measure, and I would fain believe that there is some great mistake somewhere, which is capable of explanation. It is quite true that when I spoke to my friend, Mr. Bethune, a note of introduction to Lord Musselburgh I was aware that he had in view various literary projects—in fact, he frankly confessed to me that a young man of five and twenty—the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum* in his case has taken hold of his imagination; but I cannot understand how he could have included in these the publication of a volume of poems in America, for the simple reason that he must have known that such a work was not only in progress here, but that it was near completion. Yet I myself showed Mr. Bethune proofs of the early sheets of this volume; for the author is a particular friend of mine; and as it was being set up he used to send me the sheets as they were printed; and Mr. Bethune being in the habit of calling at my office, I not only showed them to him but I fancy I let him take some of them away, that he might read them at his leisure. How he should now propose to bring out a similar work—and bespeak Lord Musselburgh's assistance in it, as I presume he did—passes my comprehension, except on the ground that, being an old man, he may have suffered from some temporary aberration of mind, or forgetfulness. I would rather believe this than that a man whom I had taken for a thorough Scot loyal and true to the backbone and proud of his own country as of his own name and lineage, should be endeavoring to supplant another worker who is already in possession of the field. However, no actual harm can be done; for the volume I speak of is on the eve of publication, and no doubt it will be issued simultaneously in England. That is all I have to say, on a subject which at present seems to me to have something of a painful aspect—though I hope a satisfactory explanation may be forthcoming. In conclusion may I beg of you to keep this letter private? The facts are as I have stated; but I would rather Mr. Bethune did not know you had them from me. Yours faithfully, HUGH ANSTRUTHER.

For some time Vincent Harris sat with this letter in his hand, in a sort of stupefaction. Curiously enough his first question to himself was, What if Mrs. Ellison should get to know? would she not triumphantly declare that her worst suspicions had been confirmed? That was but a first thought. There must be some explanation! He had not associated so continually with old George Bethune—he had not heard his voice thrill with proud emotion as he spoke of Scotland's hills and dales—he had not seen his eyes fill with unbidden tears as he talked of his grandfather and the loneliness that might be in store for her—all for nothing; not at once could he be convinced that this old man was a mere charlatan, a thief, a begging-letter imposter. But he had been startled; and when he reached his lodging in that small thoroughfare, he hardly dared look across the way; he knew not what to think.

To be Continued.

Eloped with a Preacher whom Cannibals Wouldn't Eat.

From the St. Louis Republic.

ST. PAUL, Aug. 18.—A tragedy was narrowly averted at the Union Depot this morning. Lee Fahrland of Clam Falls, Wis., jumped from the Omaha train, just in from Shell Lake, and inquired from an officer if he had seen a man and woman whom he hastily described. The officer had seen them, but they had left ten minutes before for Whitetown, 5 miles. The couple were the Rev. D. A. Smith, a Methodist minister, and Mr. Fahrland's wife, a beautiful woman of 22, who were eloping. Mr. Fahrland was greatly excited, and said he would "shoot the holy scoundrel in a holy minute."

The preacher is 40 years of age, and went to Clam Falls last March. He rented a house next to that of Fahrland, and the families became quite intimate.

In spite of his age Mrs. Fahrland became enamored of the reverend reprobate, and the pair ran away. Mrs. Fahrland drove to Shell Lake on Wednesday, where she was met by Smith, and the pair took the train together. They stopped at some small station until next morning, when they came to St. Paul and immediately left for the West.

Irate Mr. Fahrland got the proper clue from the ticket agent and took the afternoon train for Watertown with the avowed intention of "boring the preacher full of holes." Smith took with him $35 and a lot of handbills announcing a lecture in the following words:

Around the world, by D. A. Smith, a castaway, who escaped from one of the islands in the South Pacific Ocean after being a captive among the cannibals for fourteen months.

THE WORLD'S DESIRE

By H. Rider Haggard and Andrew Lang.

Hinnam vero immortalem futse tadiosi tempus.—SERVIUS ÆNIS II. 501.

BOOK II.—CHAPTER 1.

THE PROPHETS OF THE APURA.

"These things are not without the Gods," said the Wanderer, who was called Eperitus, when he had heard all the tale of Rei the Priest, son of Pames, the Head Architect, the Commander of the Legion of Amen. Then he sat silent for a while, and at last raised his eyes and looked upon the old man.

"Thou hast told a strange tale, Rei. Over many a sea have I wandered, and in many a land I have sojourned. I have seen the ways of many peoples, and have heard the voices of the immortal Gods. Dreams have come to me and marvels have compassed me about. It has been laid upon me to go down into Hades, that land which thou namest Amenti, and to look on the tribes of the Dead; but never till now have I known so strange a thing. For, mark thou, when first I saw the face of this fair Queen of thine, I thought she looked upon me strangely as one who knew my face. And now, Rei, if thou speakest truth, she deems that she has met me in the ways of night and magic. Say, then, who was the man of the vision of the Queen, the man with dark and curling locks, clad in golden armor after the fashion of the Achiwans whom ye name the Aquaiusha, wearing on his head a golden helm, wherein was fixed a broken spear?"

"Before me sits such a man," said Rei, "or perchance it is a God that my eyes behold."

"No God am I," quoth the Wanderer, smiling, "though the Sidonians deemed me no less when the black bow twanged and the swift shafts flew. Read me the riddle, thou that art instructed."

Now the aged Priest looked upon the ground, then turned his eyes upward, and with muttering lips prayed to Thoth, the God of Wisdom. And when he had made an end of prayer he spoke.

"Thou art the man," he said. "Out of the sea thou hast come to bring the doom of love on the Lady Meriamun and on thyself the doom of death. This I know, but of the rest I know nothing. Now, I pray thee, oh thou who comest in the armor of the North, thou whose face is clothed in beauty, and who art of all men the mightiest and hast of all men the sweetest and most guileful tongue, go back, go back into the sea whence thou camest and the lands whence thou hast wandered."

"Not thus easily may men escape their doom," quoth the Wanderer. "My death may come, as come it must; but know this, Rei. I do not seek the love of Meriamun."

"Then it well may chance that thou shalt find it, for ever those who seek love lose, and those who seek not find."

"I am come to seek another love," said the Wanderer, "and I seek her till I die."

"Then I pray the Gods that thou mayest find her, and that Khem may thus be saved from sorrow. But here in Egypt there is no woman so fair as Meriamun, and thou must seek further as quickly as may be. And now, Eperitus, behold I must away to do service in the temple of the Holy Amen, for I am his High Priest. But I am commanded by Pharaoh first to bring thee to the feast at the Palace."

Then he led the Wanderer from his chamber and brought him by a side entrance to the great Palace of Pharaoh at Tanis, near the Temple of Ptah. And first he took him to a chamber that had been made ready for him in the Palace, a beautiful chamber, richly painted with beast-headed Gods and furnished with ivory chairs and couches of ebony and silver, and with a gilded bed.

Then the Wanderer went into the shining baths, and girls bathed him and anointed him with fragrant oil, and crowned him with lotus flowers. When they had bathed him they bade him lay aside his golden armor and his bow, and the quiver full of arrows, but this the Wanderer would not do, for as he laid the black bow down it thrilled with a thin sound of war. So Rei led him, armed as he was, to a certain antechamber, and there he left him, saying that he would return again when the feast was done. Trumpets blared as the Wanderer waited, drums rolled, and, through the wide thrown curtains, swept the lovely Meriamun and the divine Pharaoh Meneptah, with many lords and ladies of the court, all crowned with roses and with lotus blooms.

The Queen was decked in royal attire, her shining limbs were veiled in broidered silk; about her shoulders was a purple robe, and round her neck and arms were rings of well-wrought gold. She was stately and splendid to see, with pale brows and beautiful disdainful eyes, where dreams seemed to sleep beneath the shadow of her eyelashes. On she swept in all her pride of beauty, and behind her came the Pharaoh. He was a tall man, but ill-made and heavy browed, and to the Wanderer it seemed that he was heavy hearted too, and that care and terror of evil to come were always in his mind.

Meriamun looked up swiftly:

"Greeting, Stranger," she said. "Thou comest in a splendid guise to grace our feast?"

"Methought, Royal Lady," he made answer, "that anon when I would have laid it by, this bow of mine sang to me of present war