STAND FAST, CRAIG-ROYSTON!

BY WILLIAM BLACK.

CHAPTER XI.

"HOLY PALMER'S KISS."

This was a bright and cheerful afternoon in November, and old George Bethune and his granddaughter were walking down Regent street. A brilliant afternoon, indeed; and the scene around them was quite gay and animated, for the wintry sunlight was shining on the big shop fronts, and on the busy pavements, and on the open carriages that rolled by with their occupants gorgeous in velvet and silk and fur. Nor was George Bethune moved to any spirit of envy by all this display of luxury and wealth; no more than he was oppressed by any sense of solitariness amid this slow-moving, murmuring crowd. He walked with head erect; he paid but little heed to the passers-by; he was singing aloud, and that in a careless and florid fashion:

> The boat rocks at the pier o' Leith,
> Fu' loud the wind blaws fae the ferry,
> The ship rides by the Berwick Law,
> And I maun leave my bonnie Mary.

But suddenly he stopped; his attention had been caught by a window, or rather a series of windows, containing all sorts of Scotch articles and stuffs.

"Maisrie," said he, as his eye ran over these varied wares and fabrics, "couldn't you—couldn't you buy some little bit of a thing?"

"Why, grandfather?" she asked.

"Oh, well," he answered, with an air of lofty indifference, "it is but a trifle—but a trifle; only I may have told you that my friend Carmichael was a good Scot—good friend and good Scot are synonymous terms, to my thinking—and—and as you are going to call on him for the first time, you might show him you are not ashamed of your country. Isn't there something there, Maisrie?" he continued, still regarding the articles in the window. "Some little bit of tartan ribbon—something you could put round your neck—whatever you like—merely to show that you fly your country's colors, and are not ashamed of them——"

"But why should I pretend to be Scotch, grandfather, when I am not Scotch?" she said.

He was not angry; he was amused.

"You—not Scotch? You, of all people in the world, not Scotch? What are you, then? A Bethune of Balloray—ay, and if justice were done, the owner and mistress of Balloray, Ballingean, and Cadzow—and yet you are not Scotch? Where got you your name? What is your lineage—your blood—your right and title to the lands of Balloray and Ballingean? And I may see you there yet, Maisrie; I may see you there yet. Stranger things have happened. But come away now—we need not quarrel about a bit of ribbon—and I know Mr. Carmichael will receive you as his countrywoman even if you have not a shred of tartan about you."

Indeed, he had taken no offence; once more he was marching along, with fearless eye and undaunted front, while he had resumed his gallant singing:

> But it's not the roar o' sea or shore
> Wad mak' me langer wish to tarry,
> Nor shouts o' war that's heard afar—
> It's leaving thee, my bonnie Mary!

They went down to one of the big hotels in Northumberland avenue, asked at the office for Mr. Carmichael, and after an immeasurable length of waiting were conducted to his room. Here Maisrie was introduced to a tall, fresh-colored, angular-boned man, who had shrewd gray eyes that were also good-humored. Much too good-humored they were in Maisrie's estimation, when they chanced to regard her grandfather; they seemed to convey a sort of easy patronage, almost a kind of good-natured pity, that she was quick to resent. But how could she interfere? These were business matters that were being talked of, and she sat somewhat apart, forced to listen, but not taking any share in the conversation.

Presently, however, she heard something that startled her out of this apathetic concurrence, and set all her pulses flying. The tall, raw-boned newspaper proprietor, eyeing this proud-featured girl with a quiet but unkindly scrutiny, was referring to the volume on the Scottish Poets in America, which George Bethune had failed to bring out in time, and his speech was considerate.

"It is not the first case of forestalling I have known," said he; "and it must just be looked on as a bit of bad luck. My writer forgot; next time, in any case, our countrymen ever there have found their voice at last; they have been brought together to sing in chorus; perhaps they will be heard further that way. I do not know what place the book may ultimately take in Scottish literature; but at all events it is pleasant reading." "Pleasant—pleasant—pleasant to see how his countrymen across the water have not forgotten their native land. And so, Mr. Bethune, if you care to notice the book for us, you may say pretty well what you like—on the sympathetic side, of course——"

"Most assuredly—most assuredly," the old man said; "I cannot grumble about being forestalled; that was my own fault; and I am not going to give a less hearty welcome to those old friends of mine because they have benefited out by another hand. And where should they have a hearty welcome if not in their own country? *Non corpus sine pectore;* they will know where speak."

"I dare say—I dare say," said Mr. Carmichael, with a tolerant smile. "By the way, there is another little circumstance connected with that book—perhaps I should not mention it—but I will be discreet. No names; and yet you may like to hear that you have got another friend somewhere—somewhere in the background."

It was at this point that Maisrie began to listen, rather breathlessly.

"Oh, yes, your friend—your unknown friend—wanted to be generous enough," Mr. Carmichael continued. "He wrote to me saying he understood that I had advanced a certain sum towards the publication of the work; and he went on to explain that as certain things had happened to prevent your bringing it out, he wished to be allowed to refund the money. Oh, yes, a very generous offer; for all was to be done in the profoundest secrecy; you were not to know anything about it, lest you should be offended. And yet it seemed to me you should be glad to learn that there was someone interesting himself in your affairs."

The two men were not looking at the girl; they could not see the pride and joy and gratitude that were in her eyes. And Vincent never told me a word;" she was saying to herself, with her heart beating warm and free. But that was not the mood in which old George Bethune took this matter. A dark frown was on his shaggy eyebrows.

"I do not see what right any one has to intermeddle," said he, in tones that fell cruelly on Maisrie's ear, "still less to pay money for me on the assumption that I had forgotten, or was unwilling to discharge, a just debt."

"Come, come, come, Mr. Bethune," said the newspaper proprietor, with a sort of condescending good nature, "you must not take it that way. To begin with, he did not pay any money at all. I did not allow him," said he. "Thank you; but this is a private arrangement between Mr. Bethune and myself; and if he considers there is any indebtedness—I don't, goodness knows!—then he can wipe that off by contributions to the *Chronicle*. So you see, you have only to thank him for the intention——"

"Oh, very well," said the old man, changing his tone at once. "No harm in that. No harm whatever. Misplaced intention, but—but creditable. And now," he continued, in a still lighter strain, "since you mention the *Chronicle*, Mr. Carmichael, I must tell you of a scheme I have had for some time in mind. It is a series of papers on the old ballads of Scotland—or rather the chief of them—taking one for each weekly article, giving the different versions, with historical and philological notes. What do you think of that, now? Look at the material—the finest in the world!—the elemental passions, the tragic situations that are far removed from any literary form or fashion, that go straight to the heart and the imagination, even now as they did in the days when the 'King sate in Dunfermline town, drinking the blude-red wine.' Each of them a splendid text!" he proceeded, with an ever-increasing enthusiasm. "Think of Edom o' Gordon, and the Wife of Usher's Well, and the Baron o' Brackla; Annie of Lochryan, Hynde Etin, the piteous cry of Helen of Kirkconnell, and the Rose of Yarrow seeking her slain lover by bank and brae. You may have treasures in your house that are unregarded; they are put away in cabinets and half forgotten; but when some one asks you to bring them out into the light you recognize their beauty and invest them with a new value. And what could be more interesting than the collation of the various versions of those old ballads, showing how they have been altered here and there as they were said or sung, and how even important variations may have been dropped out in course of time and transmission. Look, for example, at 'Barbara Allan.' The version in Percy's Reliques is as bad and stupid as it can be; but it is worse than that; it is incomprehensible. Who can believe that the maiden came to the bedside of her dying lover only to flout and jeer, and that for no reason whatever? And when she sees his corpse

> 'With scornful eye she looked down,
> Her cheek with laughter swelling.'

Well, I say that is not true," he went on vehemently; "it never was true; it contradicts human nature; it is false, and bad, and impossible. But turn to our Scotch version! When Sir John Graeme o' the West Country, lying sore sick, sends for his sweetheart, she makes no concealment of the cause of the feud that has been between them—of the wrong that is rankling at her heart:

> "'O dinna ye mind, young man,' said she,
> 'When the red wine ye were filling,
> That ye made the bells the hallie gae round and round,
> And slighted Barbara Allan?'

And proud and indignant she turns away. There is no sham laughter here; no impossible cruelty; but a quarrel between two fond lovers that becomes suddenly tragic, when death steps in to prevent the possibility of any reconciliation.

> 'He turned his face unto the wa',
> And death was with him dealing:
> "Adieu, adieu, my dear friends a',
> Be kind to Barbara Allan!"'

Can anything be more simple and natural and inexpressibly sad as well?

> 'She hadna gang a mile but twa,
> When she heard the dead-bell knelling,
> And every tow that the dead-bell gave
> It cried, "Woe to Barbara Allan!"'

> '"O mother, mother, mak' my bed,
> O mak' it fast and narrow,
> Since my love died for me to-day,
> I'll die for him to-morrow."'

It is the story of the tragic quarrel between two true lovers; it is not the impossible and preposterous story of a giggling hoyden grinning at a corpse!"

And here it was probable that old George Bethune, having warmed to his subject, and being, as usual, wildly enamored of his latest scheme, would have gone on to give further instances of the value of collation and comparison, but that Mr. Carmichael was forced to interrupt. The proprietor of the *Edinburgh Chronicle* was a busy man during his brief visits to town.

"Very well, Mr. Bethune," said he. "I think your idea a very good one—an excellent one, in fact, for the weekly edition of a Scotch paper; and I will give you *carte blanche* as to the number of articles. Who knows," he added with a condescending smile, "but that they may grow to a book—to take the place of the one that was snatched out of your hands?"

And again, as his visitors were leaving, he said in the same good-humored way:

"I presume it is not necessary for us to discuss the question of terms, especially before a young lady. If you have been satisfied with us so far——"

"I am quite content to leave that with you, quite," interposed the old man, with some little dignity.

"I was only going to say," Mr. Carmichael resumed, "that a series of articles such as you suggest may require a good deal of research and trouble; so that, while the reckoning comes, I will see you are put on the most favored nation scale. And not a word more about the American book; we were disappointed—that is all."

This latter admonition was wholly unnecessary. When George Bethune got out into the street again, with Maisrie as his sole companion, he was confident; he was not of that lost opportunity he was talking, it was all of this new project that had seized his imagination. They had to make one or two calls, in the now gathering dusk; but ever, as they came out again into the crowded thoroughfares, he returned to the old ballads and the opportunities their treasures offered for a series of discursive papers. And Maisrie was about as eager in anticipation as himself.

"Oh, yes, grandfather," she said, "you could not have thought of a happier subject. And you will begin at once, grandfather, won't you? Do you think I shall be able to help you in the very least way?—it would please me so much if I could search out things for you, or copy, or help you in the smallest way. And I know it will be a labor of love for you; it will be a constant delight; and all the more that the days are getting short now, and we shall have to be indoors. And then you heard what Mr. Carmichael said, grandfather? And if he is going to pay you well for these articles, you will soon be able to give him back the money he advanced to you about that unfortunate book——"

"Oh, don't you bother about such things!" he said, with an impatient frown. "When I am planning out an important work I don't want to be reminded that it will result in merely so many guineas. That is not the spirit in which I enter upon such an undertaking. When I write, it is not with an eye to the kitchen. Unless some nobler impulse propels, then let there be no result; it will be useless. I, however, I suppose women are like that; always the *res angusta domi;* when you are thinking of the literature of your native land—of perhaps adding some little tributary wreath—they are looking toward grocers' bills. The kitchen—the kitchen is before them—not the daise and vales of Scotland, where lovers loved, and where a broken hearted. The kitchen——"

But Maisrie was not disconcerted by this rebuke.

"And you will begin at once, grandfather," she said, cheerfully. "Oh, I know it will be so delightful an occupation for you. And I don't wonder that Mr. Carmichael was glad to have such a service. The work won't involve any expense of travelling, like the other book you thought of, about the Scotland of Scotch songs. The winter evenings won't be so dull, grandfather, when you have this to occupy you; you will forget it is winter altogether, when you are busy with those beautiful scenes and stories. And I will be your Saturday morning's watch for the post—and I hope you will make the articles long, grandfather—for who can do them as well as you can? And will you tell Vincent this evening, grandfather; he will be so interested; it will be something to talk of at dinner."

But Vin Harris was to hear of this great undertaking before then. When Maisrie and her grandfather reached the door of their lodgings he said to her:

"You can go in now, Maisrie, and have the gases lit. I must walk along to the library and see what books they have; but I'm afraid I shall have to say good-afternoon and Pinkerton and Allan Cunningham and the rest of them from Scotland. Aytoun they are sure to have, I suppose." So they parted for the moment; and Maisrie went up stairs and lit the gas in the little parlor. Then, without taking off her bonnet, she sat down and fell into a reverie—not a very happy one, as it seemed. She was sitting thus absorbed in silent fancies, when a familiar sound outside startled her into attention. She sprang to her feet. The next instant the door was opened, the next again she was advancing to the tall and handsome young stranger, who stood uncovered in the doorway, and her both her hands were outstretched, and a light of joy and gratitude was shining in her eyes.

"Oh, Vincent, I am so glad you have come over!" she said, in a way that was far from usual with her, and she held both his hands for more than a second or two, and her grateful eyes were fixed on his without any thought of embarrassment. "I was thinking of you. You have been so kind—so generous. I wanted to thank you, and I am so glad to have the chance——"

"But what is it, Maisrie?—I'm sure there is nothing you have to thank me for!" said he, as he shut the door behind him, and came forward, with a look in his eyes that was very far from her. He was a little bewildered. In her sudden access of gratitude, when she took both his hands in hers, she had come quite close to him; and the scent of a sandal wood necklace that she wore seemed to touch him as with a touch of herself. He knew those fragrant beads; more than once he had perceived the slight and subtle odor, as she passed him, or as he helped her on with her cloak; and he had come to associate it with her, as if it were part of her, some breathing thing, that could touch, and thrill. And this time it had come so near.

But that bewilderment of the senses lasted only for a moment. Maisrie Bethune was not near to him at all; she was worlds and worlds away. It was not a mere whiff of perfume that could bring her near to him. Always to him she appeared to be strangely unapproachable and remote. Perhaps it was the loneliness of her position, perhaps it was the uncertainty of her future, and those vague possibilities of which her grandfather had spoken, or perhaps it was the reverence of undivided and unselfish love on his part; but at all events she seemed to live in a sort of sacred and mysterious isolation—to be surrounded by a spell which he dared not seek to break by any rude contact. And yet surely her eyes were regarding his with sufficient frankness and friendliness, and more than friendliness, now, as she spoke.

"This afternoon we called on Mr. Carmichael," said Maisrie. "Mr. Carmichael of the *Edinburgh Chronicle.* He told us some one had offered to repay the money he had advanced for my grandfather on account of that American book; and, though he did not mention any name, do you think I did not know who it was, Vincent? Be sure I knew—in a moment! And you never said a word about it! I might never have known but for this accident—I might never have had the chance of thanking you—as—I should like to do now—only—only it isn't quite easy to say everything one feels——"

"Oh, but that is nothing at all, Maisrie!" said he, coming quickly to her rescue. "You have nothing to thank me for—nothing! It is true I made the offer, but it was not accepted, and why should I say anything about it?"

"Ah, but the intention is enough," said she (for she knew nothing about his having paid Lord Musselburgh the £500). "And you cannot prevent my being very, very grateful to you for such thoughtfulness and kindness. To save my grandfather's self-respect—to prevent him being misunderstood by—by strangers—because—because he is so forgetful; do you think, Vincent, I cannot see your motive and be very, very grateful? And never saying a word, too! You should have told me, Vincent! But I suppose that was still further kindness—you thought I might be embarrassed—and not able to thank you—which is just the case."

"Oh, Maisrie, don't make a fuss about nothing," he protested.

"I know whether it is nothing or not," said she, proudly. "And—and perhaps if you had lived as we have lived—wandering from place to place—you would set more store by an act of friendship. Friends are little to you—you have too many of them——"

"Oh, Maisrie, don't talk like that!" he said. "You make me ashamed. What have I done? Nothing. I wish there was some real thing I could do to prove my friendship for your grandfather and yourself—then you might see——"

"Haven't you proved it every day, every hour almost, since ever we have known you?" she said, in rather a low voice.

"Ah, well, perhaps there may come a chance," said he; and then he stopped short; for here was old George Bethune, with half a dozen volumes under his arm, and himself all eagerness and garrulity about his new undertaking.

At the little dinner that evening in the restaurant there was quite an unusual animation, and that not solely because this was the 9th of November, and they were proposing to go out later on and look at the illuminations in the principal thoroughfares. Vincent thought he had never seen Maisrie Bethune appear so light hearted and happy; and she was particularly kind to him; when she regarded him, there still seemed to be a mild gratitude shining in the clear and eloquent deeps of her eyes. Gratitude for what? he asked himself, with a touch of scorn. It was but an ordinary act of acquaintanceship; why should this beautiful, sensitive, proud-spirited creature have to debase herself to thank him for such a trifle? He felt ashamed of himself. It was earning gratitude by false pretences. The very kindness shining there in her eyes was a sort of reproach. What had he done to deserve it? Ah, if she only knew what he was ready to do, when occasion offered!

And never before had he seen Maisrie so bravely confident about any of her grandfather's literary projects.

"You see, Vincent," she said, as if he needed any convincing, when she was satisfied, "in the end it will make a far more interesting book than the Scotch-American one; and in the mean time there will be the series of articles appearing from week to week, to attract attention to the subject. And then, although grandfather says I take a low and mercenary view of literature, all the same I am glad he is to be well paid for the articles; and there are to be as many as he likes; and when they are completed, then comes the publication of the book, which should be quite interesting to Mr. Carmichael or Lord Musselburgh or any one as the Scotch-American volume. And grandfather is going to begin at once; and I am asking him whether I cannot be of any use to him in the humblest way. A glossary, grandfather; you must have a glossary of the Scotch words. Couldn't I compile that for you?"

"I have been wondering," the old man said, absently, and without answering her question, "since I came into this room, whether it would be possible to classify them into ballads of action and ballads of the supernatural. I imagine the former belong more to the south country and that most of the latter had their origin in the north. And yet even in the battle of Otterburn the Douglas says:

> "'But I have dreamed a dreary dream,
> Ayont the isle o' Skye—
> I saw a dead man win a fight,
> And I think that man was I.'"

Well, that may have been an interpolation; at all events, it is a Highland touch; the strong, brisk, matter-of-fact border ballad has seldom anything of that kind in it. The bold Buccleuch and Kinmont Willie were too much in the saddle to have time for wraiths. You remember, Maisrie, when they brought word to 'the bauld keeper' that Kinmont Willie was a captive in Carlisle Castle?

> "'He has ta'en the table wi' his hand,
> He garred the red wine spring on hie—
> "Now a curse upon my head,' he cried,
> 'But avenged on Lord Scroop I'll be!

> "'O is my basnet a widow's curch,
> Or my lance a wand of the willow tree,
> Or my arm a lady's lily hand,
> That an English lord should lightly me?'"

That is more like the ballad of the south; sharp and vivid, full of action and spirit, and the audacious delight of life; when you want mystery and imagination and supernatural terrors you must turn to the brooding and darkened regions of the north. The Demon Lover is clearly of northern origin; its hell is the Scandinavian hell; not the fiery furnace of the eastern mind, but a desolation of cold and wet.

> "'O what's a mountain's you,' she said,
> 'Bas dreary wi' frost and snow?'
> 'O yon is the mountain o' hell,' he cried,
> 'Where you and I maun go!'"

"The Demon Lover?" said Maisrie, inquiringly; and Vincent could not but notice how skilfully and sedulously she fanned the old man's interest in this new scheme by herself pretending to be deeply interested.

"Don't you know it, Maisrie?" said he. "It is the story of two lovers who were parted; and he returns after seven years to claim the fulfilment of her vows, and finds that in his absence she has taken someone else for her husband. It is a dangerous position—if he wishes her to go away with him; for a woman never forgets her first lover; what is more, she attributes all the natural and inevitable disillusionment of marriage to her husband, while the romance attaching to her first love remains undimmed. Take it, then, say, let Auld Robin Gray beware! The wife is not always so loyal to the disillusionizer as was the Jeannie of the modern song. Well, in this case, she who has been a false sweetheart proves a false wife:

> "'If I was to leave my husband dear,
> And my twa babes also,
> O where is it you would mak' me to,
> If I with thee should go?'

And the lover becomes the avenger; together they sail away on a strange ship, until they descry the mountains of hell; and the lover turned demon warns her of her doom.

> "And aye when she turned her round about,
> Aye taller he seemed for to be,
> Until that the tope o' that gallant ship
> Nae taller were than he.

> "He struck the topmast wi' his hand,
> The foremast wi' his knee;
> And he brak that gallant ship in twain,
> And sank her in the sea."

"Will there be illustrations, sir?" asked Vincent (in humble imitation of Maisrie). "And an *édition de luxe?* For that, I imagine, is where my coöperation might come in. Maisrie seems so anxious to help, and I should like to take my part too."

It is a fair cry to the completion of such an undertaking as that," said the old man, rather wistfully.

But Maisrie would not have him lapse into any despondent mood.

"You must not look so far ahead, grandfather," she said, cheerfully. "You must think of your own pride and satisfaction in beginning it; and I know you will be delighted; for who can do it as well as you? And if I am so very mercenary, well, I can't help it; only I shall be all the better pleased to remember that you are being well paid for your work. Supposing the kitchen is my department? Oh, very well! Somebody must look to that. It will be a labor of love for you, grandfather, the way through; and then, when the book is nearing completion, just think of the pride you will have in choosing some one, some distinguished person, for the dedication. It will be far more your own work than merely giving specimens of the Scottish-American poets; indeed, it will be all your own work, for the ballads are only facts, as you say. And I think we should go home now, and you will look over some of the books. I don't care about the illuminations—not I. What is the Lord Mayor's Day to Vincent or me—when you might be telling us about Katharine Janfarie and May Collean?"

"No, no, Maisrie," said he, as he rose from the table. "Give me a little time for preparation. And we promised to show you the streets lit up. And mind you wrap yourself well, Maisrie, for the evenings are getting cold now."

But little did Vincent Harris, as he helped her on with her cloak and made ready to go out into the dusky and glaring world of London, foresee what was going to befall him that night. He knew that Maisrie was well intentioned and kind toward him, and that especially at this moment she was disposed to be grateful to him in a measure that was out of all reason. But she was still and always the strangely unapproachable maiden; a kind of reserve for her seemed to isolation chilled, or at least rebuked, the very affection he felt for her; he was conscious that to-morrow, the next day, the day after, he might be separated from her by something more palpable and impassable than the wide, sad sea of his waking dreams. He was glad to find on this evening that Maisrie was light-hearted and gay and hopeful; but somehow he did not share this unwonted confidence of hers. She seemed happy in looking toward the future; he, in looking thither also, was touched with a dull sense of foreboding; he did not see himself and her as one.

And yet this was what happened. When they issued forth into Regent street there was as yet no very dense crowd, though here and there the front of a great building flamed in yellow fire; but nevertheless Maisrie said:

"Mind we don't get separated, grandfather. Let me go between you two, and I will take your arm on the side and Vincent's on the other; and if we have occasionally to go sideways, we can always keep together."

"Oh, I shan't let you be dragged away, Maisrie," the younger man said, with a bit of a laugh. "And if you don't mind, I think this will be a better way of holding on to you," and therewith he made bold to take her hand underneath the hanging sleeve of her cloak, and there he took hold of her arm from the inside—rather timidly, perhaps, but then his grasp could be tightened, if needs were.

"Yes," said she, placidly, and she made a little movement as though she would draw both her companions closer to her. "This is very comfortable. Which way, grandfather?"

And so the little group of friends, knit together by many intimate interests and much association, adventured out into the great world of London that was all astir now with a warm and half-subdued excitement. There was no need for them to talk; they had both to look at the blazing stars and feathers and initial letters, and to make their way through the murmuring throng. There was no jostling; the crowd was entirely good natured; and if these three could not always go abreast, they then went diagonally for a second or so, and were not separated. Of courses, Vincent had to hold Maisrie a little more firmly now; his arm was parallel with hers, and his hand had hold of her wrist; and there was an intoxicating sense of warmth as well as of close companionship in this mutual clinging. And so they slowly and idly passed away down Regent street, well content with their own leisure and the brilliant sights around them.

Then a little incident occurred. A vehicle was coming along one of the smaller thoroughfares they had to cross; there was a brief bit of a scrimmage; and Maisrie, the better to keep hold of her companion, slipped her hand from the muff that was slung around her neck, and seized his hand, that was ready enough, be sure, to respond. They got over without further trouble; they mixed once more in this vast, slow-moving assemblage—only he retained the hand she had given him, and that with no unseemly grasp.

It was a mysterious, mysterious secret thing to be happening in the midst of all this great, careless, dusky throng. Her hand, that was hardened, was soft and warm after coming out of the cooey rusting place; and it was not likely to get cold, when it was held so tight, under the concealment of the hanging sleeve. And then—well, probably the girl did not know what she was doing; she was affected by all this excitement around her; it was "Look, grandfather, look!" from time to time; most likely she thought no more of her hand being held than if she were crossing a meadow in the springtime with some careless girl companion—but however that may be, what must she do but open her fingers, so that his should interlace with hers! Nay, she opened them again, and shut them again, the better to adjust that gentle clasp; and every touch thrilled through him, so that he walked as one in a dream. He dared hardly breathe, he durst not speak, lest some stray word of his might startle her into consciousness and shatter this miracle. Yet she did not seem to be aware; it was, "Which way, grandfather?" or "Take care, grandfather!" and her eyes were turned to the brilliant and parti-colored devices in front of the Pall Mall clubs, and not at all to the handsome lad who walked so close to her that now and again he could detect some faint trace of the odor of sandalwood that seemed to hover around her neck and her hair. What did he see or hear of the crowd now, or of the garish lights along the houses? He walked in an enchanted land; there were only two people in it, and they were bound together in subtle intercommunion by this magic grasp. There was wonder as well as joy in his mind; the sensation was so new and strange. Did he remember that "palm to palm" was "holy palmer's kiss?" No, he remembered nothing; he only knew that he held Maisrie's hand interlocked with his in this secret fashion, and that all the wild phantasmagoria around them was something unreal and visionary, with which neither he nor she had any concern.

And even now his cup of bliss and bewilderment was not yet full, on this marvellous night. When at last they drew away from the crowded streets and found themselves in quieter thoroughfares on their way home, the old man drew a breath of relief.

"This is better, Maisrie," he said. "It seems as if we had been out on a roaring sea, and had drifted into stillness and peace."

"And we were not separated once, grandfather," said she, cheerfully. "Not once all the time."

And then it was Vincent who spoke.

"I don't see why we should ever separate," said he. "Friends are few enough in this world."

"Yes, indeed, good friends are few," Maisrie said; and therewithal—ere he could tell what was happening—she had taken his hand that she held in hers and raised it, and for one brief moment pressed it against her heart. The little impulsive movement—of gratitude perhaps; perhaps of affection; perhaps of both combined—could not have been perceived by any passer-by; and yet the young man seemed to be struck by a sudden shock of fear; he could not speak; his own heart was beating too much for speech was impossible. For it appeared to him in that swift second as if the scales had fallen from his eyes. To him she was no longer an elusive phantom—a mirage—a vision—pensive and mysterious, and remote; now he saw her a beautiful young creature of flesh and blood, whose hands and heart were warm, who could cry for help and companionship and sympathy, who was not afraid to speak and act when love or gratitude prompted her. No longer the strangely isolated maiden; the unapproachable had all at once come near—so near that the scent of sandal wood touched him from time to time, so near that her soft fingers were interclasped with his, pulsating there, nestling there, not relaxing their hold, nor inclined to do that. This was no piece of statuary, to be worshipped from afar; this was Maisrie Bethune, whose arm lay close and caressing against his, under the friendly shelter of that hanging sleeve, whose step went with his step as they walked together, whose breathing he could almost overhear, in the silence of this gracious night. And what had she not confessed, in that artless way?

And then amid all his bewilderment and breathless exultation a horrid fancy shot through his brain. Perhaps that was no confession at all; but a quite simple, unpremeditated, perhaps even unconscious, act of mere friendliness and sympathy? Did she know that she had done it? Would she repeat it? Would she give him further assurance? Perhaps she herself might wish to be certain that he had understood—that he had received a message that was to change all his life.

Well, he had hold of her hand. Gently and with trembling and eager touch he tried to raise it—he would have her replace his own hand where that had been for one delirious moment; perhaps to ask if her heart beat the same; and for ever and ever, the same message to send. Alas! she did not yield to the mute invitation. Perhaps she did not comprehend it. For here they were at the corner of the little street in which they lived; and she unclasped her fingers, so that his also might be released from their too happy imprisonment; and she was talking to her grandfather when he took the door of the house was reached. Nor did her eyes say anything as he bade her good-by (or the night). Perhaps it was all a mistake, then?—some little involuntary act of kindness and nothing more?

(To be continued.)

WHERE "SARDINES" ARE CAUGHT.

Scooping Up Thousands of Herring from Quoddy Bay for the Eastport Factories.

From the Washington Star.

All over and around Quoddy bay and the inlets and rivers tributary are hundreds of weirs where are captured the young herring which the Eastport factories cure and pack into boxes for sardines. These weirs are really traps of a rude sort where these midgets are imprisoned at high tide and released (into boats) at low tide. Seen from a steamboat thes appear mere bits of the bay—a few acres in a place fenced in with bean poles that rise considerably out of water when the tide is out. The fence is made of three sides of this enclosure, the upright stakes being horizontally wattled with willows and other lithe saplings and then filled in with brush so closely as to furnish an obstruction to the herring infants which thoughtlessly drift into the open gate with the falling tide. Then, at the right time, boats go in armed with dipnets and take captive the bewildered shiners. A boat load will sometimes sell for $20 or $30.

The eight-hour law is not enforced in Eastport because a sardine factory is liable to start up at any hour of the day or night and must keep going as long as there is anything to do, lest the tender catch should spoil. The girls are apt to work more by the job than by day, because the piscatorial small fry can be best taken at the daylight high tide. When the catch is washed and dressed, baked, oiled, and boxed, then the hands go to bed and catch their forty winks, more or less, before they are summoned again to the loud smelling factory.

When the boat comes back from its little cruise the skipper signals to the lookout at the factory the measure of his success and the hands are called from all parts of the town. To this end bells are rung, and each factory has a different code, so that its employees know who is calling and what is expected of them.

This dwarf herring is first cousin to the clupe which forms the sardine of France. It is not quite so hard and the cottonseed oil in which it is embalmed is not quite so savory as is the olive oil in which its aristocratic cousin of Concarneau lies entombed. But he is as gumerous and he is easier caught. When the French skipper of Concarneau desires to get a boatload of clupes he must first purchase a most seductive bait—the roe of cod—which costs about $20 a barrel. This expensive luxury he must spread upon his net before he dips it in the sea and scatter it upon the waves afterward to entice the wary and insignificant fishing. But the Eastport skipper uses no bait and no auxiliary save first mightyr tide, which leads the diminutive wanderer within the sound and leaves him helpless there. The whole of the French coast, according to Henry Haynie, produces annually about 60,000,000 boxes of sardines, and Eastport, Me., produces about a third as many.

Stopped Dying to Rebuke the Audience.

From the Punxsutawney Spirit.

During the death scene in the play of "Camille" at the opera house Miss Irene Taylor, who had the role of *Camille*, treated the audience to a real exhibition of feeling not on the programme. The heroine was dying of consumption. Death was just about to lay its skeleton fingers upon her tired heart. Her eyes began to assume that fixed, glassy expression which immediately precedes dissolution, and she gasped painfully for breath. The scene was well studied, realistic, and pathetic, and she was just about to drop into the arms of her agonized lover—dead—when several women in the audience laughed at the ludicrous face of the dying woman assumed a stern and angry expression. She stood defiantly erect, and, pointing her finger at the offenders, said in withering tones: "Any woman who would laugh during such a scene as this is utterly void of any sense of delicacy or refinement or feeling. She is totally lacking in the sentiments of common humanity, and could not appreciate anything higher than the *Topsy* or the donkey in "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

When she had delivered herself of this ebullition of indignation she calmly and deliberately proceeded to die in the most approved style—consistent because she is with wonderful accuracy, and there was no more tittering, either.

Killed by Lightning in an Open Field.

From the Springfield Republican.

William S. Smith of Ashleyville was killed by lightning on Prospect Hill in the north part of West Springfield some time Saturday afternoon. He left his home in the afternoon to mend the fence of a pasture about a mile from the house and carried an axe. He also had a dish of salt for a colt in the pasture. As he did not return the family became anxious and sent to all the neighbors to learn if he had been seen. A party was made up and the roads and the fence lines of the pasture were searched as late as 2 o'clock yesterday morning, but without success. Another party started out early yesterday morning, and the body was found between 8 and 9 o'clock in an open pasture adjoining the Smith lot. A deep wound on his head showed where the bolt of electricity struck him, and passing down his body, burned it badly. His hat and one shoe were torn to pieces. There was a small hole several feet deep in the ground at his feet.

THE WORLD'S DESIRE

By H. Rider Haggard and Andrew Lang.

Relinquam vera immortalem futuse tradicat tempus.—SERVIUS.
ÆNEID II., 501.

BOOK II.—CHAPTER IV.

THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER.

At midday on the morrow Pharaoh and the host of Pharaoh marched in pomp from Tanis, taking the road that runs across the desert country toward the Sea of Weeds, the way that the Apura had gone. The Wanderer went with the army for an hour's journey and more, in a chariot driven by Rei, the Priest, for Rei did not march with the host. The number of the soldiers of Pharaoh amazed the Achman, accustomed to the levies of barren isles and scattered tribes. But he said nothing of his wonder to Rei or any man, lest it should be thought that he came from among a little people. He even made as if he held the army lightly, and asked the priest if this was all the strength of Pharaoh! Then Rei told him that it was but a fourth part, for none of the mercenaries, and none of the soldiers from the Upper Land marched with the King in pursuit of the Apura.

Then the Wanderer knew that he was come among a greater people than he had ever encountered yet on land or sea. So he went with them till the roads divided, and there he drove his chariot to the chariot of Pharaoh and bade him farewell. Pharaoh called to him to mount his own chariot, and spake thus to him:

"Swear to me, thou Wanderer, who namest thyself Eperitus, though of what country thou art and what was thy father's house none know, swear to me that thou wilt guard Meriamun the Queen faithfully, and wilt work no woe upon me nor upon my house while I am afar. Great thou art and beautiful to look on, ay, and strong beyond the strength of men, yet my heart misdoubts me of thee. For methinks thou art a crafty man, and that evil will come upon me through thee."

"If this be thy mind, Pharaoh," said the Wanderer, "leave me not in guard of the Queen. And yet methinks I did not befriend thee so ill two nights gone, when the rabble would have put thee and all thy house to the sword because of the death of the firstborn."

Now Pharaoh looked on him long and doubtfully, then stretched out his hand. The Wanderer took it, and swore by his own gods, by Zeus, by Aphrodite, and Athene, and Apollo, that he would be true to the trust.

"I believe thee, Wanderer," said the Pharoah. "Know this, if thou keepest thine oath thou shalt have great rewards, and thou shalt be second to none in the land of Khem, but if thou failest then shalt thou die miserably."

"I ask no fee," answered the Wanderer, "and I fear no death, for in one way only shall I die, and that is known to me. Yet I will keep my oath." And he bowed before Pharaoh, and leaping from his chariot, entered again into the chariot of Rei.

Now, as he drove back through the host, the soldiers called to him, saying:

"Leave us not, thou Wanderer." For he looked so glorious in his golden armor that it seemed to them as though a god departed from their ranks.

His heart was with them, for he loved war, and he did not love the Apura. But he drove on, as so it must be, and came to the Palace at sundown.

That night he sat at the feast by the side of Meriamun the Queen. And when the feast was done she bade him follow her into her chamber, where she sat when she would be alone. It was a fragrant chamber, dimly lighted with sweet-scented lamps, furnished with couches of ivory and gold, while all the walls told painted stories of strange gods and kings, and of their loves and wars. The Queen sank back upon the broidered cushions of a couch and bade the wise Odysseus sit over against her, so near that her robes swept his golden greaves. This he did somewhat against his will, though he was no hater of fair women. But his heart misdoubted the dark-eyed Queen, and he looked upon her guardedly, for she was strangely fair to see, the fairest of all mortal women whom he had known, save the Golden Helen.

"Wanderer, we owe thee great thanks, and I would gladly know to whom we are in debt for the prices of our lives," she said. "Tell me of thy birth, of thy father's house, and of the lands that thou hast seen and the wars wherein thou hast fought. Tell me also of the sack of Ilios, and how thou camest by thy golden mail. The unhappy Paris wore such arms as these, if the minstrel of the North sang the truth."

Now, the Wanderer would gladly have cursed this minstrel from the North and his songs.

"Minstrels will be lying, lady," he said, "and they gather old tales wherever they go. Paris may have worn my arms, or another man. I bought them from a chapman in Crete and asked nothing of their first master. As for Ilios, I fought there in my youth, and served the Cretan Idomeneus, but I got little booty. To the Kings, the wealth and the women, to us the sword strokes. Such is the appearance of war."

Meriamun listened to his tale, which he set forth roughly, as if he were some blunt, grumbling swordsman, and darkly she looked on him while she harkened, and darkly she smiled as she looked.

"A strange story, Eperitus, a strange story, truly. Now tell me this. How camest thou by yonder great bow, the bow of the swallow string? If my minstrel spoke truly, it was once the Bow of Eurytus Echalia."

Now the Wanderer glanced round him like a man taken in ambush, who sees on every hand the sword of foes shine up into the sunlight.

"The bow, Lady?" he answered readily enough. "I got it strangely. I was cruising with a cargo of iron on the western coast and landed on an isle, methinks the pilot called it Ithaca. There we found nothing but death; a pestilence had been in the land, but in a ruined hall this bow was lying, and I made prize of it. A good bow!"

"A strange story, truly—a very strange story," quoth Meriamun the Queen. "By chance thou didst buy the armor of Paris, by chance thou didst find the bow of Eurytus, that bow, methinks, with which the Godlike Odysseus slew the wooers in his halls. Knowest thou, Eperitus, that when thou stoodest yonder on the board in the Place of Banquets, when the great bow twanged and the long shafts hailed down the hall and loosened the knees of many, not a little was I minded of the song of the slaying of the wooers at the hands of Odysseus. The fame of Odysseus has wandered far away, even to