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For the National Era.

HERMAN;

OR

YOUNG KNIGHTHOOD.

BY E. FOXTON,

Author of "Premiers."

CHAPTER XV—Continued.

"Certainly, I should like to hear what you would say; and so would he, if he were here; but oh, Herman, Herman, you are not going to answer respectfully! There is the very saucicest possible twinkle in your eyes at this moment; and there is no use in your trying to draw your lips in, to hide under your *moustache!*" And both of them, looking in each other's faces, went back to boyhood and girlhood, and laughed heartily together for sheer happiness and affection. "Your very ringing old laugh!" continued Constance. "How like the dear old days it sounds! How unfortunately unromantic I used to think it! How glad it makes me to hear it now so full of health and happiness! You must have kept it put away for me all these years. If you had brought it out often, it would have changed and grown older and less mirthful with yourself."

"Yes; there must be some 'secret sympathy' between us. I could not often laugh while you were sighing."

"But you must not laugh now, either, at the first friend, who was able to give me any comfort, after I drove you away; or I shall sigh again."

"Don't; or I shall never even smile again; but neither shall I laugh or sneer at that poor patient female genius of his. The picture is drawn from life, evidently; but not, I think, quite *to* the life. Some of the outlines, however, are so true, that from them we can, I hope, correct the others. I should like to know that woman, Constance; though perhaps, as the *Anonymous* in the newspapers say, when they mean to be especially withering, 'I should not want such a woman as that for my wife,' even supposing—as they always forget to add—I could have her if I did, and though I can even conceive it to be possible that, being wedded to Apollo, she might not care to marry me. Helpmeets do not grow on every bush, nor even upon every estimable and admirable bush. I never in my life saw but one woman whom I did wish to marry; [Constance's blush was as soft and bright as sunshine strained through a crimson curtain upon polished ivory; her long curled eye-lashes lay basking upon it; and she looked most demurely nun-like, most supremely happy;] though I have seen many whom I liked, esteemed, and wished well, very heartily; and I fancy that this lady of masculine genius might be of the number. It seems to me that it is somewhat arrogant in us mighty men to claim as masculine, not feminine, everything that is vigorous, true, artistic, and, in short, worth claiming. If she has a lyre, she probably got it where we got ours—those of us who are lucky enough to have any, from the gods—such as they chose to give her. She has as much right to charge ours with being effeminate when they sound sweet, as we hers with being masculine when it sounds strong. If she thunders, we need not accuse her of having stolen our thunder. I, for one, will deny her possession neither of a head nor a heart, even if she chooses to keep the latter to herself and Apollo; nay, I think that she must have one, and a great one, though calm, and

'As I assure (from myself,
To soothe and sympathize;'

else how should she be let into the secret of those shrinking sorrows and struggles of her own sex, which she rises above in her individual life, yet makes her own in order to bespeak for others the sympathy and compassion which for herself she does not need—strifes and sorrows which she describes so vividly and so eloquently, that they seem, to those too selfish to understand her self-forgetfulness, to be her own, while the real sufferers remain sheltered and unexposed. She shows her real *retenue* and freedom from egotism by never caring to come forward *in propria persona* to explain herself. She minds her own business; and if other people will not mind theirs, I would rather that she should laugh than cry. Because, though a woman, she is human, and ambition belongs to—not manly merely, but—essential human nature, she is ambitious. Her sisters, not daring to be 'strong-minded' enough to look higher, are ambitious of fine houses, clothes, and equipages; she of fine poems, pictures, or statues. Their triumphs are over the rest of her sex; hers *for* the rest of her sex. A few more women like her, in the study and the *studio*, and the world will find out and acknowledge that there is a kind of power and heavenly fire that is feminine, or confined to neither sex, and that women, without being in the slightest degree unwomanly, may and do have noble brains, and put them to noble uses. I like her better far than her predecessor in review the 'writing medium,' because, in being an artist, she does not forget to be a woman. If her only hope was set on artistic success, she could hardly bear so cheerfully to be so often balked in her efforts. If she can lay her ineffectual pen or pallette aside, so good-humoredly, when her vacant time expires, it must be, I am pretty sure, to go away and perform the good offices of a good daughter, sister, friend, or neighbor. Thus she can say, If this hope is lost, all is not lost. She must have a brave and great heart to bear such disappointments so courageously, and never sicken with hope deferred. In order to do so, it would seem as if it should be a good heart, too, and lean on God, though being in partnership with a strong head, early and duly stocked with ecclesiastical history, perhaps it is a sealed, and appears a heretical, heart to the bishop and his church. I ask your pardon. Am I getting on forbidden ground?"

"Oh, no, I am not bigoted; and I fear he may be a little so. Go on. I like to hear about her. If there is such a woman, I wish I could know her."

"I wish you could; for without friendship she might be lonely in the midst of her struggles and her triumphs. She is most probably unmarried; for if she had a husband and children, they would interfere with those regular *tête-à-têtes* with Apollo. A woman must usually choose between art and wedlock. Either is enough to engross her, to the exclusion of the other. She has chosen art, and is more than content when it smiles upon her, and uncomplaining when it frowns. I find no coldness, but rather a fine ardor, in her calm, grand perseverance. I do not see how the teasing god to whom she is so faithful can have the heart to keep her waiting, so patiently and amiably, day after day, with the golden apples that she hungers and thirsts for, and sees but just beyond her reach, in his stingy hand. No wonder she brings him down with a jerk at last, whenever and wherever she can catch hold of him; I wish I could help her.

"I don't quite believe in her absence of inward prompting; and as to that urging gad-fly, I don't know. If it stings her, she probably will not think it worth mentioning, but will say, with Mr. Toots, 'Oh, it's of no consequence, thank you.' She is strong enough to bear it by herself, with the help of the wholesome food, sleep, and recreation, which she has sense enough to take. She wants her readers to think not about her, but the heroes and heroines whom she talks to them about. She does not mean to have them prying into that heart of hers, at which she looks herself just often enough to set it right towards God and her neighbor, and no oftener. She is not *introspective*. She sees many things without her in the world, in heaven, and in hell, which she thinks much better worth her attention and mine, than anything within her. I like her better than her predecessor, because, while self-forgetful, she is still self-governed. I think I should even like her looks better than those of that possessed victim of glory. They might, they would be, less demoniac, less maddened and maddening, but they would be truer, juster, sunnier; one would be not unlikely to find in them, here and there, amid all their imperfections, reflected glimpses of the greatest of all minds, the mind of God. If any of those books fell in my way, I would take them thankfully, and use them just as she desired, as magnifying glasses to look through at life, and help me to see it more clearly; I would not invert them, and use them to peer back impertinently at her through the wrong end. If I could, I would write reviews of them, such as should do good to that good heart of hers—as free from paltry flattery as she from vanity, and letting her individuality as utterly alone as she does—bestowing upon them hearty praise and no less honest criticism, such as should show her how for the future to polish away all of the blemishes, of which she would gladly be told, for the sake of getting rid of them."

"Oh, Herman," cried Constance, "let me thank you, for her! Herman—*Herman*—you deserve your name! A brother to all man and woman kind! How much better than a brother to me?"

"Yes; you thank me, and from your heart. You have been taught to disbelieve your own possession of genius; and yet you receive a tribute to its possession and worthy exercise by any of your sisters, as a tribute to you. Thus generous noble women think and feel! Nor do they think and feel so of genius only, but of learning also. It is true, as the Bishop said, that scholarship in women is not rewarded so abundantly as in men, by academical distinctions and Mutual Admiration Societies. I am afraid that it may be also true that there is a very general and very narrow prejudice against it; because good sense and good feeling are apt to be in the minority on any question newly presented to this prejudiced old world. But all those just and judicious persons whose opinion is really worth regarding, like a woman none the less for being liberally educated, provided she is none the less conscientious, practical, gentle, and genial; and such of your own sex, particularly, as you would choose for companions and friends, sweet friend, have quite a remarkable habit of glorying and delighting in the acquirements and achievements of other worthy specimens of womankind, quite as if they were their own. It is as much as a man's life is worth, among the former, to detract from the latter."

"I may study or write, then, sometimes, if I will choose you for my director?"

"On one or two conditions."

"What ones?"

"You are not to become a writing medium, nor to drown your bloom and spirits in printer's ink; and your learned labors are to be pursued at my elbow, so that I may have the honor of lending my aid to smooth away any possible difficulties, before they have had time to chronicle themselves in wrinkles."

"No, I will never be an author or a scholar. The conditions are too hard; and so is the work."

"What! Not ambitious, after all?"

"What! Do not you purpose to allow me a share henceforth in all your triumphs?"

"Certainly; all that I have."

"Then I shall want no others," murmured she. "But now I must tell you the rest of 'Ye Nunne's Tale.' The Bishop asked me, further, whether I had ever published anything. I had, at Uncle Henry's entreaty, a few times allowed him to have a few of my verses printed in a magazine."

"'How were they received?' inquired Bishop Devereux.

"'They were praised by some of our acquaintances, because Uncle Henry told who wrote them.'

"'But were they noticed by strangers, analyzed, criticised.'

"'Not at all.'

"'That which does not excite criticism is usually below criticism. I fear that literary fame is not for you; and literary flattery will not fill or satisfy your mind. You are inordinately proud, Miss Aspenwall, since you have given me leave to say so; but you are not vain. Spontaneous inspiration you have not. A masculine nature you have not, and you cannot whip yourself up daily to long toil by the hope of the even well-earned praise of those who do not love you, and whom you do not love. To you, the world has nothing to offer.'

"'Nothing!' I exclaimed, and stopped. The word seemed to me to come out of my heart, sounding like an echo out of an empty tomb.

"'Oh, yes,' said he, 'I forgot. There is one thing. You can wear the finest dresses and drive the finest horses in Baltimore.' I burst into tears. 'Daughter, daughter!' said he, 'Do not weep so. The world has, indeed, nothing to offer; but I have something, or I could never have steeled myself to inflict upon you all this cruel, this necessary, pain. I can—I will—help and comfort you out of this deluge of tears. You shall be saved, poor dove! warmed, and sheltered, and taken into the ark. The world is cruel to you and such as you. Come out of it. Come into the only true church; and you shall find full scope for your fine full nature, rest for your soul here—and hereafter, bliss unspeakable. Set your ambition on a heavenly diadem, and you shall wear it in the train of Mary, for heaven has a Queen; and her hands are full of honors for her faithful servants, among whom is neither male nor female, bond nor free. Her canonized maidens like herself are called blessed by all after generations; and unless I deceive myself very greatly, there is still an empty place among them reserved for you. Hear what dignities she has conferred upon her faithful handmaids, even on earth and before the eyes of men, to confound their overweening arrogance!' and then he broke forth into one of his wonderful improvisations, Herman; until the very walls around us seemed to vanish from my eyes, while in an eternal temple not made with hands, and in a pageant of awful grandeur and beauty, the holy saints, Teresa, Agnes, Catherine, and the rest, seemed to pass before us in procession, wearing crowns on their heads, and beckoning to me. I wished to follow them. I could not bear to have the vision fade.

"When he ceased I told him how it had seemed to me. He answered that I had seen more than he was conscious of describing, but that it was a glimpse of the true reality; and that among such visions I might pass my earthly life, into such realities I should be born when my earthly life was over, if I would but walk in the footsteps of those saints here below, and come out of a world which had nothing but emptiness and vanity to offer me. 'Out of the world!' thought I. Oh,

'Anywhere, anywhere, out of the world!'

Many and many a time I had repeated that line to myself in those days; and his words appeared to me strangely like an answer to it.

"But I said nothing. He arose to go. 'Stay,' I said. 'My daughter,' he answered, tenderly, 'it pains me too much to look on, a useless spectator merely of pain which I am not suffered to relieve—the pain of one whose suffering is sharper to me than my own. The wounded has permitted the probe, but now repels the balm. What can the surgeon do, but depart to the succor of others, who have felt already and learned to welcome the touch of his healing hand? I must not urge you. Wait if you will, and take time to make up your mind; but do not wait too long. Life is short. The judge stands at the door. At any moment, if my time is prolonged to that blessed moment when you are ready to receive peace, I will hasten to you, ease your aching heart with absolution, and welcome you into the sheltering arms of the only true church. In the mean time, if I send you some books, will you read them on your knees at night and alone?'

"I did so. I liked his books. I liked his conversation. But neither his books nor his conversation made me a Catholic. I did not believe that I should ever be a candidate for canonization. I did not see why I could not be quite as good as a Protestant, as I could as a Catholic. Besides, being good was not precisely what I cared about so much at first. I wanted to do something great. I know it was very wrong," said Constance, blushing beautifully.

"Do you, dearest? Not caring to be good would be indefensible, to be sure; but how can you know that it was wrong in you to wish to do something great?"

"Why—because—I supposed it must be—because the bishop told me so afterwards, when I confessed to him that I was not contented with doing some dull work, which the Sisters had given me. You must ask him why it was so, if you do not see."

"I do not, I must own. It seems to me a doctrine whose tendency is forever to tie down great powers to small performances. Do not you remember the parable of the talents? From those to whom much is given, much will be required. This desire to do something great, like all other desires implanted in us by our Maker, requires to be hallowed, and kept within its due bounds. It must not be suffered to degenerate into a desire to do something greater than our neighbors, for then it would lead us to grudge and envy them their successes, and to wish that their works might be the less, that ours might be greater; but as long as we can restrain our desire of greatness to a desire to do our utmost to outdo our past selves, and to glorify our Heavenly Father by the glorious deeds of His children, and, above all, so long as we keep it, with all our other tastes and wishes, down under a paramount desire to do His will, whether in great things or little, it seems to me that it may tend to His service, and to the coming of His kingdom on earth."

"Well, I cannot tell. You must talk with Bishop. I shall be very glad if you do not find it wrong; for I long to see you great, to have the rest of the world see you as great as I do, I mean. However; what I wanted was happiness, or at least forgetfulness, the absorption of all the powers of my vacant mind, that were preying upon me, in some grand career. Don't you remember Michael Scott's demon? I had one like his. I knew that it would tear me unless I could find work for it; but, if I could, I thought that it might do great things. I believed that it was strong; for else how could it have rent and convulsed me so? I did not wish to confess nor care about absolution. Remorse was not my trouble; nor was fear. I did not imagine that eternity had in store for me any torment worse than the restlessness, aimlessness, and hopelessness, that gnawed away my spirit day by day. A sister infirmarian told me afterwards of a state of trance in which the sufferer may lie, incapable of speech or motion, for hours or days, and even permit himself to be put into the coffin and the tomb in breathless life and conscious death. Such a state, it seemed to me, was mine, combined with a mental cramp, which made movement a necessity, and immobility an added torture. My Destiny had taken the form of a nightmare, and sat upon my breast, whispering, 'Hush!' when I would have cried out, and 'Be still!' when I would have struggled. Do you think many women lead such lives, Herman? Do you think one could lead a long life so? Oh, how merciful my God has been to me!

"I said something like that to the Bishop, one day; for, slow as I was in putting myself under his direction, he was very patient with me, and came often to see me, watching over me with a solicitude and sympathy which he could not conceal, though he never forced it upon me. He had often desired me to visit some of the convents; and now he asked Aunt Cora to take me to see the Orphan Asylum of St. Barbara. She was delighted with the suggestion; for she had already taken me to see all the secular sights in the city, and was almost in despair of finding anything new in which she could hope to interest me.

"Beautiful, majestic Sister Corona came to meet us, with a lovely rosy child of eighteen months asleep upon her shoulder, with its dimpled hands clasped round her neck—such a living picture of Innocence reared by Holiness! She always seemed to me the likeness of some mediæval saint, come by miracle out of the canvas. She welcomed us with a smile that was like a benediction, and took us to see the other little children at their play. 'Isn't it enough to do your heart good, my dear?' said she, seeing me smile at one of them.

"'Heart!' cried I, turning almost sharply upon her; 'I have no heart; or it is ossified.'

"'Oh, no, dear daughter,' said she, with a sort of cheerful, hopeful tenderness, which she always had in her voice; 'Don't think so. It may have been paralyzed by some rude shock; but it will be sure to soften and grow warm again, if you do but press a little child to it often enough. If you have none at home, come to me when it aches; and I will lend you my best and sweetest.'

"'I was ashamed to look at Aunt Cora; for I had seldom taken much notice of my good-humored, noisy little cousins, except as an interruption. When we went home, I called them all about me upon this sofa and on my knee, told them stories, and felt better. I had received the first of many good lessons; and week by week, and soon day by day, I went to the sisters for more, and seldom failed to find what I sought, while my heart, and mind, and imagination, were all fired by what I saw and heard among them. Here at last, I thought, I had found a mode of life offered to a young and lonely woman, neither listless, aimless, useless, solitary, nor unguided. Among the sisterhood, I found ardor and enthusiasm; nor yet enthusiasm only, but organization, power, obedience, action, and beneficent daring. Their order connected them with past ages and far countries. Their individual histories were sometimes full of romantic interest and adventure. They never knew, when they rose in the morning, where they were to sleep at night, nor where the sun was next to rise upon them. Where they were sent, they went at a moment's notice, without a word, sigh, or tear, rejoicing if they were found worthy to suffer in their Master's cause—even into plague-stricken cities, where to go was death, and there most joyfully, because through them lay the shortest roads into His presence. They rushed upon the field of battle, into the thunder and lightning, and the hail-storm of shot, with hearts as strong and more fearless than those of their brethren who went there to wound and to slay; for to them, to die was but gain. Here was a career which angels might well watch and call glorious. I longed to share it."

"And well you might, my storm-queen!"

"But in order to do so, Herman, you perceive that it was necessary for me to become a Catholic, if I could. One might say, indeed, that I might have learned to lead as useful, religious, and active a life, as a Protestant; and theoretically, I suppose I might; but practically, I don't think I should. I had yet to learn the very alphabet of self-sacrifice, obedience, and humility. I had no habits of regular industry. I was indolent and inexperienced, and absolutely needed, before I attempted to work by myself, to serve an apprenticeship to some person or persons who had a right to set me to work, every day, show me how to work, and see that I did my work. Left to myself, I should but have exerted myself for the poor or sick in a very ignorant and inefficient manner for a morning now and then, and then idled a week or a month. I should not have wished to enlist myself in the immediate service of any clergyman; and *clergywomen* I did not know where to find out of the church of Rome. It is all very well for Miss Dix to go about the world alone doing good, at her age; but, at mine, I could not; and, long before I was as old as she, I knew that my bodily and mental powers would have rusted out in idleness and repining. I don't by any means say that they ought, you understand, but that they would. I know it is the theory, that if a nice young lady sits down through all her youth in a nice parlor, nicely dressed, and attends to her domestic duties, (whether she has any, or enough to occupy her, or not; that does not make the slightest difference,) by and by some other duties will come to her; but, Herman, don't you think there is a little cant about that? Do you think that young women are quite the exceptions in human nature that they are taught to consider themselves? Do you *not* think that they, like other persons, need to make some preparation in their youth for what they are to do, and to do well, in their middle age and old age? Am I altogether *strong-minded* and wrong in thinking so?" pleaded she, timidly, looking into his face.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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For the National Era.

JASPER: A ROMANCE.

BY EDWARD SPENCER.

VII.

How Mrs. Fleming Played the Queen.

[CHAPTER SEVENTH CONCLUDED.]

"Woman's spite! You wear steel-mail;
A woman takes a housewife from her breast,
And plucks the delicatest needle out
As 'twere a rose, and pricks you carefully,
'Neath nails, 'neath eyelids, in your nos rils,—say,
A beast would roar, so tortured,—but a man,
A human creature, must not, shall not flinch,
No, not for shame!"

And Mrs. Morninglory found a poison as sharp as the *woorali*, in which to dip her needles.

The other leader of the opposition, Mr. Clinquant, was a much more formidable opponent than even Mrs. Morninglory. The embodiment of selfishness, he was equally the embodiment of success. Tact, experience, pretension, and unscrupulousness, had seated him upon an undisputed pinnacle, where he managed to retain his position by the same means that had helped him into it. Society did not possess a more attractive, nor, let me add, a more dangerous member than Aulicus Clinquant, Esq. Under an assumption of frippery, *insouciance*, and that innocence of character said to be peculiar to the sons of genius, he concealed the far-seeing mind of a skeptical, practiced, secretive schemer. Ever working for himself and for his own emolument, he affected the simplicity of the wittol, the earnestness of the deep thinker, the levity of the *bel esprit*, as he listed, effectually making himself all things to all men. Even if any one managed to solve his character, and acquaint himself with the falseness that lay at the base, he could not easily refuse this singular man a kind of admiration. For Aulicus Clinquant had made himself, and solely by his own efforts had achieved, that success which gave him prominence. And it was a wonder to every one how a man of his antecedents should have been able so completely to assimilate himself with the society to which he had climbed up. Born ignobly, in the widest sense of the word, he had conquered difficulties that would have totally disheartened an ordinary man. He had begun as the errand-boy of a third-rate theatre—the nameless child of a wretched ballet-dancer, who had left him, and gone off reckless, to die in we care not to tell what lowest depth of degradation. It argued no little innate power in the man, that now, at the age of forty, he was a distinguished author, and an acknowledged leader of ton. Most persons, dazzled at his eminence, forgot to inquire the means he had resorted to in arriving at it. He himself scarce dared look back at his past, though he affected to make a virtue of it in his flippant way, in conversation. He had picked up, here and there, some little education, and, beginning upon this basis, had gotten into college, as the protegé of a religious institution, which he threw overboard as soon as it was of no further use to him. His proclivities were artistic, and, by a dexterous use of that tact in which he was unrivalled, he had gone to Italy, to become a painter, under the auspices of gentlemen who promised themselves the credit of having fostered one of the most deserving of geniuses. In Florence he ingratiated himself with the artist fraternity, and painted some creditable pictures. But here he began to see something of society, that material upon which his plastic fingers most delighted to work. This was his field, and he was not long without successes. Handsome, fluent, brilliant, he found no difficulty in marrying an heiress. Returning home, he had written a book that made him famous at once, and got rid of his wife, whose money was all he wanted, and whose idolatry of him bored him. How? Didst never see a poor soul sneered to death? Didst never hear of those worst of fiends, *straus-engel, hausteufel?* Thenceforward his progress was ever onward. One of the most wonderful conversationists, one of the closest readers of character, one of the most skillful performers upon the organ of human passion, he had made but a single mistake, and had never once failed to help himself to the best. No man was more in request everywhere; and, unlike most popular fellows, he never forfeited the respect of those who sought him. Some, perhaps, were afraid of him, but more believed in him. At forty, he was one of the handsomest of men. Tall, well-formed, graceful, no one could gaze for the first time at his eloquent speaking features, his flashing eye, so expressive, so capable of emotion, his quick mobile lip, his breezy rippling curls, his white, small hand, without involuntarily envying him. And to hear him talk, whether he affected wit or seriousness, one could not help believe, here is a glorious man. Thank God! there are not many such glorious ones in this world of ours.

Not the least among those whom he had deceived was Mrs. Fleming. When he entered society as the self-made man, and the author of a genuine earnest book that plead eloquently for noble principles, she had been pleased with him, attracted towards him as an honest deserving man. She had helped him forward, as he meant she should do, and had given him credit for all that genuineness of character which he so well knew how to affect. She had patronized and introduced him, so long as she thought he needed such assistance, and he had long been one of those favored ones who were admitted into her select coterie. This was because she really and truly liked him for what he pretended to be—the self-made son of genius. Slightly frivolous perhaps she thought him at times, but 'twas merely the exuberance of an o'erflowing fancy. She was proud of him, for he seemed to her one of those rare examples in which the earnest striving of a self-helper had shown itself adequate to conquer and obliterate the innate snobbery of the *parvenu*.

Why, then, did Aulicus Clinquant hate Mrs. Fleming, and why was he at the head of the opposition to her sovereignty? She herself could not have guessed; only the malice-whetted acuteness of Mrs. Morninglory had been able to solve his secret, and so far she held the reins on him. It was this: the one sole mistake he had ever made, as a man of the world, since he entered society, was in regard to Mrs. Fleming, and he hated her because of that mistake. Mrs. Fleming had received him, had treated him well, had evidently taken delight in his company. He was not a Malvolio, by any means; self-esteem never clouded his other faculties to his disadvantage. It was his pride to believe himself capable of finding out behind the conventional mask what people really thought of him. But in the case of Mrs. Fleming he deceived himself, or was deceived by his vanity, for once. He knew his own attractive qualities, he saw how much Mrs. Fleming made of him, he had studied and mastered the heart of woman, and—he fancied this queenly woman in love with him! What then? What indeed but to win her and wear her, like a regal gem as she was. Terrible indeed then was the revulsion when he found that here was a woman's heart he had not rightly studied; and that this Queen, to whom he had planned to become Prince Consort, looked upon him simply as a protegé, a man of good parts, who deserved the kindly smile of patronage! True, she had not guessed his purposes—had not imagined him an aspirant for her hand—he was too shrewd to commit himself in any such matters—but why had she not? Oh, 'twas a bitter thought! Because—it was evident to him, as a conclusion he could not escape, however he might desire to do so—because she had never perhaps contemplated the possibility even of his daring to presume so much, to aspire so high! Howsoever much she may have deemed him "*audax omnia perpeti*," he felt that this was a hyperbole of audacity that she had never dreamed of. From the day that this conviction forced itself upon his mind, he hated her, and resolved, if by any means he could, to humble her to the dust. His hatred of Mrs. Morninglory was only second to his hatred of Mrs. Fleming—for the former had guessed his secret, and was not remiss in taunting him about it—but it *was* second, and he determined to employ her as his instrument. Together, in quiet but profound alliance, they laid their plans for the undermining of the fair citadel that stood so calm, so apparently impregnable, in the broad sunshine, o'erlooking and o'ertopping all, as bright Alhambra o'erlooked and o'ertopped the Moorish *Vega*.

Such were the elements of the opposition, when Mrs. Fleming resumed her place as leader in society. Such they were, strengthened somewhat, but still *perdus* and altogether undemonstrative, when, at the end of a year, Jasper fled from home, and left no index as to where he was to be sought. The reader, perhaps, may think that this circumstance would have had a tendency to banish her from the world; but far otherwise. After that event, she rather seemed to enjoy society, began to acquire a real fondness for company; for while in company, thought was, if not driven off, at least deadened and robbed of its intensity. What that tender proud mother suffered, no one may say. Whatever agonies racked her in private, and however much she gave way to grief and despair in the solitude of her own chamber, she preserved an unbroken front for society. Her eye may have insensibly acquired an anxiety of look not previously there; her cheek may have grown slightly paler, and less perfectly full in its outline; her step may have become a little less springy and elastic; her hair may have concealed here and there a newly-intruding silver strand, but her smile, her gesture, her words, her gaiety, were still the same, still Mrs. Fleming's, still incomparable. Her son, she said, like most young men, had gone on his travels—it was the nature of youth to grow impatient of one place; the very birds, you know, irk of their nests, and, even half-fledged, seek to fly away. She believed he had gone to California, a fine field for adventure and the study of character. She was not certain exactly when to look for his return. *Eh bien!* She knew he was doing well, and was used to his being away from her; so it did not matter much. She did not believe in bringing up children with an apron-string tether. They can best take care of themselves who learn to do so unassisted. And all this she would say in the quietest smiling manner, interluding it with gay remark and pleasant inquiry. But this mode of disposing the question did not satisfy the astute Clinquant. He suspected some mystery, and gradually he found out that his suspicions were just. He could make Mrs. Fleming wince when Jasper was his theme, and he failed not to do so frequently. By assiduous study, he and Mrs. Morninglory partially solved the mystery, and gradually laid their toils.

Meantime, the Queen reigned on in her own regal fashion. With company in the cities, having company at the Hall, she lived over again the days of her early triumphs. Suitors numerous enough kneeled at her feet, stout Congressmen, who wanted female influence to help their political schemes; dry old millionaires, who wanted to enjoy life and keep "an establishment," now that the palsy of age was already shaking them; earnest men, who found a kindred soul in her; and mad infatuated youths, kneeling, full of Byronic frenzy; and she put them all away, disdainfully, kindly, or laughingly, as it pleased her fancy. She chaperoned young girls into successful matches, as of old; crushed snobbery, as of old; patronized worth, as of old; and society was prouder of nobody than of Mrs. Fleming.

And so, a year passed on. Jasper had been away a year, and no news of him, save that letter to the gardener; and that enclosed pawn-ticket, being redeemed, had given her his little watch, to be kept locked up in casket, and cherished as only mothers know how to cherish such things. No other news of him. Good God! could she contemplate the thought! Upon what wide waste of waters, on what desert shore, in what vile company, was now that cherished son? Or, perhaps he now languishes, poverty-stricken and diseased, in some hospital; or is lying, bleeding out his dear life, in some forlorn forest; or those bones, bleaching upon yon reef—whose are they? not *his*—ah, death, sooner than such a thought! yet it will come. Or, that wicked-eyed shark, darkly flashing under the green waters, what dear life has perished into his maw? And thou art dancing, and feasting, and being called merry, the while! And for what? Why will he languish, or bleed, or blench—or, at best, why does he wander hopeless, forlorn, penniless? Why, indeed, but to satisfy the urgings of thy pride—*thy* pride, which even he himself styled accursed, and fled from, as men flee from the Church's anathema, or the sorceress's malison! Away the thought! 'tis madness! On with the dance! Let us think not, but live!

Ah, but there are griefs the stoutest soul dares not even try "to live down."

And so, Jasper had been away a year, and Mr. Classic had become a fixture at the Hall, and there was to be a grand ball in the city in two weeks' time—the last of the season—to prepare for which, Mrs. Fleming had resumed the usual apartments at her hotel in the city.

VIII.

How Jasper Cruised in the Flirt.

The good ship Flirt, of Nantucket, John Hussey, master, was "going out" after sperm-whale. She was an old tub of a ship, at some former period of her existence painted white with blue lines, but now all streaked and stained with tar, and rust, and slush, and peeled off blister-fashion as to her paint, and patched as to her sails; for, though only four months from port, she had come "round the Horn," and the irate old Storm-King had dealt her a shrewd buffet. She had put into one of the inlets on the western coast of Patagonia, and, by way of variety, her crew had exercised themselves for a week in killing seal. She was now sailing on a due northwest course, and twenty-four hours from land. Her mast-heads were manned, as the whaler's always are, and the Captain was pacing the deck, just before high-noon, longing for the inspiring shout of "There she blows!" Suddenly the look-out forward stretched his neck, and gazed with eager intentness towards a single spot in the ocean.

"Sing out!" shouted the Captain, "What do you see? sing out!"

"Can't make her out, sir," said the seaman; then, as if confirmed, he shouted, "Yes—it's a boat."

"Where away?"

"About two points on the starboard bow—she's drifting, but it seems to me there's a man in her."

"No harm to ascertain," said the Captain.

The ship's course was altered, so as to run down the boat, which, as they neared it, was seen to be idly floating along, lifted gently over the long Pacific swell, and yawing lazily to the lazy breeze. There were two human figures in it, they saw, as they drew nearer, but they seemed dead—at least, they took no notice of the approaching ship, nor of the hail to catch a line. A boat was lowered from the ship, and a few strokes of the oar brought them alongside the estray. It was a stout whale-boat, and the human figures were what had been men, but were now more like sun-dried mummies, than aught else that could be imagined. One figure, the mummied frame of a large old man, was seated in the stern sheets, his bare gray head bent down, and his bloodless hands clenched and powerless by his sides. Lying upon his back in the bottom of the boat was the other mummy, with his head supported in the old man's lap—a young man, scarce so brown as the other—his mouth agape, as if the muscles of the jaw had not strength to do their office, and his eyes closed. In the boat were also to be seen the feathers and bones of a penguin and the putrid skeleton of a seal, all of which had been eaten, save a portion of the head and the distended viscera; a broken calabash, also, and a sun-shrivelled bladder. Cut, in great, straggling, unskilled letters, on one of the benches, the rescuers read these few words:

"*Perished, off the coast of Patagonia, Jaspar Fleming and B.*"——

The open jack-knife, which still lay beside the unfinished inscription, seemed to indicate that the inscribing hand had refused to do further duty.

Tenderly those rough sailors raised up the cadaverous famine-victims, and with simultaneous impulse placed their hands over the gaunt ribs, in search of a throb from the sluggish hearts.

"This one is alive!" was shouted.

"And this one, too!"

The motion seemed somewhat to revive the elderly one, his dry lips opened a little, and he whispered:

"Jasp., boy, raise the signal; I hear blocks a-creaking."

But the other gave no sign of life beyond that faintest fluttering at the heart.

"Give way, my hearties," shouted Captain Hussey, as they were taken aboard his boat, the other towing astern. "Give way, now, like good fellows, and we'll save them yet. Caboose ahoy!" hailed he, "kill that old hen, and make some soup. Lively, now; lively, lads."

Soon they were alongside, aboard, and the Captain and mates, with tenderest care, ministering to the starvelings, dropping rum between their dry, cracked lips, moistening their inane eyelids and their shrivelled palates with water, feeding chicken-soup to them out of a spoon, until, by night, Brawny Brook was able to clasp the Captain's hand in his feeble, bony fist, and murmured:

"All right, Cap'n; I'm coming round once more; only fetch Jasper up, and God Almighty bless ye."

And Jasper himself had opened his mouth for the careful dole of water, had opened his languish eyes, and motioned unceasingly for more, more of the God-given drink.

We have no need to tell of the long struggle of those starved men with death, and how at last they conquered—feebly, slowly, but finally conquered—and, in a month, when the plodding old Flirt was well out in the pleasant latitudes, and had taken, "tryed out," and stowed away, some two hundred barrels of oil, the two were once more able to walk the deck and tell their story. Save the seal and the penguin, they had had nothing to eat for a month—during which whole time they had rowed northward from Fuego, hoping to catch some vessel—and the seal had become so putrid towards the last, B. B. said, funnily, that they could only swallow it by holding tight upon their nostrils with thumb and finger, and sitting to windward during the buzzard's meal. They had battled through it, however, and though still fine specimens of the Calvin Edson type of mortality, were ready for work. Would they join the ship's company, out for a three years' whaling voyage? An oarsman and a harpooner had been lost off Assumpcion. Nothing would suit them better. B. B. was bred to the harpoon, could strike a biscuit at thirty yards; and Jasper, thanks to his boyish training, could pull as good an oar as any, slim and white though he was. The young man had the sinews of an Indian under that aristocratic thin skin. So they signed the ship's articles, and were assigned for wages: to B. B. the one-hundredth, and to Jasper the three-hundred-and-twentieth "lay," or share in the proceeds of the cruise.

"This is not the golden land, is it, B. B.?" said Jasper, ruefully, to his comrade, "not to touch land for six months, perhaps a year, and cruising all the time after whale in this old grease-pot. Phew! what an 'ancient and fish-like smell' the old Coquette has. She's as greasy a flirt as the fat favorite of the King of Dahomey is reported to be, who weighs two hundred and forty, and lubricates herself daily with a pint of palm oil! What would my lady-mother say, were she to see me in these tarred ducks and this check-shirt, my only wardrobe? Perhaps 'twould please her to see the prodigal among his husks;" and his brow grew dark.

"Nay, Jasp., my hearty, that's not the way to look at it. Think if we had gone down with yon poor Captain, or stayed by you poor fool of a mate, or had been anywhere else in our boat except in the path of an empty whaler with sharp lookouts. You and I would have been scraping acquaintance with Davy Jones, eh? stray shots in his old locker, would we not? As for thy mother, I doubt not but she'd think thee a better man than she knew thee before, lad, for thou wert very cream-faced and afraid of tar when thou first came aboard the Clipper."

"And now?" said Jasper, looking at his rather horny palms.

B. B. chuckled at the youth's vanity, as he slyly winked and said:

"'Tis a thing to be proud of, eh, lad, that hard hand. Why, look ye, Jasper, I take it that when a man works this kind o' work who has no need to do it, he is sorter spoiling God's pattern, whereby he was meant for something else, and is not really working, but playing."

"Do I not earn my bread?" asked Jasper, indignantly.

"Aye, and thy meat too, for that matter; but thou doth it spitefully, like the shark snaps at the caboose leavings. Such grub don't sit easy on a man's stomach. Thou hast sense enough, lad, to do thy work as the rest do, but at heart thou art every inch as finicy as when thou used to sport white gloves and run after the gals ashore. The sea is for the likes of me, Jasper, not for such as thee."

"The sea is for me too," began Jasper, fiercely, "and I shall never"——

"There she blows! There she blows—blows—ows! *There*, she blows!" Sang out the mast-head, and Jasper did not stop to finish his sentence as he hurried to his place in the boat, and rowed after the whale, losing it, however, spite the oaths and persuasions of Captain and mates, vociferously yelling from their steering posts.

So the old Flirt went on with her cruise, bowing to the long Pacific swell with the quaint, stately clumsiness of an antique minuet dancer. And, as she went on, strength grew into the sinews and flesh upon the bones of Brawny Back and Jasper, and they revelled in the wild though toilsome life of the s