



# SIR GEORGE TRESSADY

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## III.

DURING this same space of time, which for Miss Sewell's maid ended so disagreeably, Sir George Tressady was engaged in a curious conversation.

He had excused himself from smoking, on the ground of fatigue, immediately after his parting from Letty; but he had only nominally gone to bed. He, too, found it difficult to tear himself from thinking and the fire, and had not begun to undress when he heard a knock at his door. On his reply Lord Fontenoy entered.

«May I come in, Tressady?»

«By all means.»

George, however, stared at his invader in some astonishment. His relations with Fontenoy were not personally intimate.

«Well, I'm glad to find you still up, for I had a few words on my mind to say to you before I go off to-morrow. Can you spare me ten minutes?»

«Certainly; do sit down. Only—well, I'm afraid I'm pretty well done. If it's anything important, I can't promise to take it in.»

Lord Fontenoy for a moment made no reply. He stood by the fire, looking at the cigarette he still held, in silence. George watched him with repressed annoyance.

«It's been a very hot fight, this,» said Fontenoy at last, slowly, «and you've won it well. All our band have prospered in the matter of elections. But this contest of yours has been, I think, the most conspicuous that any of us have fought. Your speeches have made a mark—one can see that from the way in which the press has begun to take them, political beginner though you are. In the House you will be, I think, our best speaker

—of course with time and experience. As for me, if you give me a fortnight to prepare in, I can make out something. Otherwise I am no use. You will take a good debating place from the beginning. Well, it is only what I expected.»

The speaker stopped. George, fidgeting in his chair, said nothing, and presently Fontenoy resumed:

«I trust you will not think what I am going to say an intrusion, but—you remember my letters to you in India?»

George nodded.

«They put the case strongly, I think,» Fontenoy went on, «but, in my opinion, not strongly enough. This wretched government is in power by the help of a tyranny—a tyranny of labor. They call themselves Conservatives—they are really State Socialists, and the mere cat's-paws of the revolutionary Socialists. You and I are in Parliament to break down that tyranny, if we can. This year and next will be all-important. If we can hold Maxwell and his friends in check for a time, if we can put some backbone into the party of freedom, if we can rally and call up the forces we have in the country, the thing will be done. We shall have established the counterpoise—we shall very likely turn the next election; and liberty—or what still remains of it!—will be saved for a generation. But to succeed, the effort, the sacrifice, from each one of us will have to be enormous.»

Fontenoy paused and looked at his companion. George was lying back in an arm-chair with his eyes shut. Why on earth—so he was thinking—should Fontenoy have chosen this particular hour and this particular night to *débiter* these very stale things, that he had already served up in innumerable

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speeches and almost every letter that George had received from him?

"I don't suppose it will be child's play," he said, stifling a yawn—"hope I shall feel keener after a night's rest!" He looked up with a smile.

Fontenoy dropped his cigarette into the fender and stood silent a moment, his hands clasped behind his back.

"Look here, Tressady," he said at last, turning to his companion; "you remember how affairs stood with me when you left England? I did n't know much of you, but I believe, like many of my juniors, you knew a great deal about me?"

George made the sign of assent expected of him.

"I knew something about you, certainly," he said, smiling; "it was not difficult."

Fontenoy smiled too, though without geniality. Geniality had become impossible to a man always overworked and on edge.

"I was a fool," he said quickly—"an open and notorious fool. But I enjoyed my life. I don't suppose any one ever enjoyed life more. Every day of my former existence gave the lie to the good people who tell you that to be happy you must be virtuous. I was idle, extravagant, and vicious, and I was one of the happiest of men. As to my racing and my horses, they were a constant delight to me. I can't think now of those mornings on the Heath—the gallops of my colts, the change and excitement of it all—without longing for it to come back again. Yet I have never owned a horse, or seen a race, or made a bet, for the last three years. I never go into society, except for political purposes; and I scarcely ever touch wine. In fact, I have thrown overboard everything that once gave me pleasure and amusement so completely that I have, perhaps, some right to press upon the party that follows me my conviction that unless each and all of us give up private ease and comfort as I have done—unless we are contented, as the Parnellites were, to be bores in the House and nuisances to ourselves—to peg away in season and out of season—to give up everything for the cause—we may just as well not go into the fight at all, for we shall do nothing with it."

George clasped his hands round his knee and stared stubbornly into the fire. Sermonizing was all very well, but Fontenoy did too much of it; nobody need suppose that he would have done what he had done unless, on the whole, it had given him more pleasure to do it than not to do it.

"Well," he said, looking up at last with a

laugh, "I wonder what you mean, really. Do you mean, for instance, that I ought n't to get myself married?"

His offhand manner covered a good deal of irritation. He made a shrewd guess at the idea in Fontenoy's mind, and meant to show that he would not be dictated to.

Fontenoy also laughed, with as little geniality as before. Then he applied himself to a deliberate answer:

"This is what I mean. If you, just elected, —at the beginning of this critical session,—were to give your best mind to anything else in the world than the fight before us, I should regard you as, for the time, at any rate, lost to us—as, so far, betraying us."

The color rushed into George's cheeks.

"Upon my word!" he said, springing up—"upon my word—you are a taskmaster!"

Fontenoy hastened to reply, in a different tone, "I only want to keep the machine in order."

George paced up and down for a few moments without speaking. Presently he paused.

"Look here, Fontenoy! I cannot look at the matter as you do, and we may as well understand each other. To me this election of mine is, after all, an ordinary affair. I take it, and what is to come after it, just as other men do. I have accepted your party and your program, and I mean to stick to them. I see that the political situation is difficult and exciting, and I don't intend to shirk. But I am no more going to slay my private life and interests at the altar of politics than my father did when he was in Parliament. If the revolution is coming, it will come in spite of you and me. And, moreover, —if you will let me say so,—I am convinced that your modes of procedure are not even profitable to the cause in the long run. No man can work as you do, without rest and without distraction. You will break down, and then where will the (cause) be?"

Lord Fontenoy surveyed the speaker with a curious, calculating look. It was as though, with as much rapidity as his mind was capable of, he balanced a number of pros and cons against each other, and finally decided to let the matter drop, perhaps not without some regret for having raised it.

"Ah, well," he said, "I have no doubt that what I have said appears to you mere meddlingness. If so, you will change your view; and you will forgive me. I must trust the compulsion of the situation. You will realize it, as I have done, when you get well into the fight. There is something in this Labor tyranny which rouses all a man's passions,

bad and good. If it does not rouse yours, I have been much mistaken in my estimate of you. As for me, don't waste your concern. There are few stronger men than I. You forget, too—"

There was a pause. Of late years—since his transformation, in fact—Lord Fontenoy's stiff reserve about himself had been rarely broken through. At this moment, however, George, looking up, saw that his companion was in some way moved by a kind of somber and personal emotion.

"You forget," the speaker resumed, "that I learned nothing either at school or college, and that a man who wants to lead a party must, some time or other, pay for that precious privilege. When you left England the only financial statement I could understand was a betting-book. I knew no history except what one gets from living among people who have been making it, and even that I was too lazy to profit by. I could n't understand the simplest economical argument, and I *hated* trouble of all kinds. Nothing but the toil of a galley-slave could have enabled me to do what I have done. You would be astonished sometimes if you could look in upon me at night and see what I am doing—what I am obliged to do to keep up the most elementary appearances."

George was touched. The tone of the speaker had passed suddenly into one of plain dignity, in spite of, perhaps because of, the half-bitter humility that mingled with it.

"I know you make one ashamed," he said sincerely, though awkwardly. "Well, don't distrust me; I'll do my best."

"Good night," said Lord Fontenoy, and held out his hand. He had gained no promises, and George had shown and felt annoyance. Yet the friendship between the two men had sensibly advanced.

GEORGE shut the door upon him, and came back to the fire to ponder this odd quarter of an hour. His experience certainly contained no more extraordinary fact than this conversion of a gambler and a spendthrift into the passionate leader of an arduous cause. Only one quality linked the man he remembered with the politician he had now pledged himself to follow—the quality of intensity. Dicky Fontenoy in his follies had been neither gay nor lovable, but his fierce will, his extravagant and reckless force, had given him the command of men softer than himself. That will and that force were still there, steeled and concentrated. But George Tressady was sometimes restlessly doubtful as to how far he himself was prepared to submit to them.

His personal acquaintance with Fontenoy

was of comparatively recent date. He himself had been for some four years away from England, to which he had returned only about three months before the Market Malford election. A letter from Fontenoy had been the immediate cause of his return; but before it arrived the two men had been in no direct communication.

The circumstances of Tressady's long absence concern his later story, and were on this wise. His father, Sir William, the owner of Ferth Place, in West Mercia, died in the year that George, his only surviving child and the son of his old age, left college. The son, finding his father's debts considerable, and his own distaste for the law, to which he had been destined, amazingly increased by his newly acquired freedom to do what he liked with himself, turned his mind at once toward traveling. Travel he must if he was ever to take up public and parliamentary life, and for no other profession—so he announced—did he feel the smallest vocation. Moreover, economy was absolutely necessary. During his absence the London house could be let, and Lady Tressady could live quietly at Ferth upon an allowance, while his uncles looked after the colliery property.

Lady Tressady made no difficulty, except as to the figure first named for the proposed allowance, which she declared was absurd. The uncles, elderly business men, could not understand why the younger generation should not go into harness at once without indulgences, as they themselves had done; but George got his way, and had much reason to show for it. He had not been idle at college, though perhaps at no time industrious enough. Influenced by natural ambition and an able tutor, he had won some distinction, and he was now a man full of odds and ends of ideas, of nascent interests, curiosities, and opinions, strongly influenced, moreover, already, though he said less about it than about other things, by the desire for political distinction. While still at college he had been especially attracted—owing mainly to the chances of an undergraduate friendship—by a group of Eastern problems bearing upon England's future in Asia; and he was no sooner free to govern himself and his moderate income than there flamed up in him the Englishman's passion to see, to touch, to handle, coupled with the young man's natural desire to go where it was dangerous to go, and where other men were not going. His friend—the son of an eminent geographer, possessed by inheritance of the explorer's instincts—was just leaving England for Asia Minor, Armenia, and Per-

sia. George made up his mind, hastily but firmly, to go with him, and his family had to put up with it.

The year, however, for which the young fellow had stipulated went by; two others were added to it, and a fourth began to run its course—still George showed but faint signs of returning. According to his letters home, he had wandered through Persia, India, and Ceylon; had found friends and amusement everywhere; and in the latter colony had even served eight months as private secretary to the governor, who had taken a fancy to him, and had been suddenly bereft by a boating accident of the indispensable young man who was accustomed to direct the hospitalities of Government House before Tressady's advent. Thence he went to China and Japan, made a trip from Peking into Mongolia, landed on Formosa, fell in with some French naval officers at Saigon, spending with them some of the gayest and maddest weeks of his life; explored Siam, and finally returned by way of Burma to Calcutta, with the dim intention this time of some day, before long, taking ship for home.

Meanwhile, during the last months of his stay in Ceylon, he had written some signed articles for an important English newspaper, which, together with the natural liking felt by the many important persons he had come to know in the East for an intelligent and promising young fellow, endowed with brains, family, and good manners, served to bring him considerably into notice. The tone of the articles was strongly English and Imperialist. The first of them came out immediately before his visit to Saigon, and Tressady thanked his lucky stars that the foreign reading of his French friends was, perhaps, not so extensive as their practical acquaintance with life. He was, however, proud of his first literary achievement, and it served to crystallize in him a number of ideas and sentiments which had previously represented rather the prejudices of a traveler accustomed to find his race in the ascendant, and to be well received by its official class, than any reasoned political theory. As he went on writing, conviction grew with statement, became a faith, ultimately a passion—till, as he turned homeward, he seemed to himself to have attained a philosophy sufficient to steer the rest of life by. It was the common philosophy of the educated and fastidious observer, and it rested on ideas of the greatness of England and the infinity of England's mission, on the rights of ability to govern as contrasted with the squalid possibilities of democracy, on the

natural kingship of the higher races, and on a profound personal admiration for the virtues of the administrator and the soldier.

Now, no man in whom these perceptions take strong root early need expect to love popular government. Tressady read his English newspapers with increasing disgust. On that little England in those far seas all depended, and England meant the English workman with his flatterers of either party. He blundered and blustered at home, while the Empire, its services and its defenses, by which alone all this pullulating «street folk» existed for a day, were in danger of starvation and hindrance abroad, to meet the unreasonable fancies of a degenerate race. A deep hatred of mob rule rooted itself in Tressady, passing gradually, during his last three months in India, into a growing inclination to return and take his place in the fight—to have his say. «Government to the competent—not to the many,» might have been the summary of his three years' experience.

Nor were private influences wanting. He was a West Mercian landowner in a coal-mining district, and owned a group of pits on the borders of his estate. His uncles, who had shares in the property, reported to him periodically during his absence. With every quarter it seemed to Tressady that the reports grew worse and the dividends less. His uncles' letters, indeed, were full of anxieties and complaints. After a long period of peace in the coal-trade, it looked as though a time of hot war between masters and men was approaching. «We have to thrash them every fifteen years,» wrote one of the uncles, «and the time is nearly up.»

The unreason, brutality, and extravagance of the men, the tyranny of the Union, the growing insolence of the Union officials—Tressady's letters from home after a time spoke of little else. And Tressady's bank-book, meanwhile, formed a disagreeable comment on the correspondence. The pits were almost running at a loss; yet neither party had made up their minds to the trial of strength.

Tressady was still lingering in Bombay—though supposed to be on his way home—when Lord Fontenoy's letter reached him.

The writer referred slightly to their previous acquaintance, and to a remote family connection between himself and Tressady; dwelt in flattering terms on the reports which had reached him from many quarters of Tressady's opinions and abilities; described the genesis and aims of the new parliamentary party, of which the writer was the founder and head; and finally urged him to come home



at once, and to stand for Parliament as a candidate for the Market Malford division, where the influence of Fontenoy's family was considerable. Since the general election, which had taken place in June, and had returned a moderate Conservative government to power, the member for Market Malford had become incurably ill. The seat might be vacant at any moment. Fontenoy asked for a telegram and urged the next steamer.

Tressady had already—partly from private talk, partly from the newspapers—learned the main outlines of Lord Fontenoy's later story. The first political speech of Fontenoy's he had ever read made a half-farcical impression on him—let Dicky stick to his two-year-olds! The second he read twice over, and alike in it, in certain party manifestos from the same hand printed in the newspapers, and in the letter he had now received, there spoke something for which it seemed to him he had been waiting. The style was rough and halting, but Tressady felt in it the note and power of a leader.

He took an hour's walk through the streets of Bombay to think it over, then sent his telegram, and booked his passage on his way home to luncheon.

Such, in brief outline, had been the origin of the two men's acquaintance. Since George's return they had been constantly together. Fontenoy had thrown his whole colossal power of work into the struggle for the Market Malford seat, and George owed him much.

AFTER he was left to himself on this particular night Tressady was for long restless and wakeful. In spite of resistance, Fontenoy's talk and Fontenoy's personality had nevertheless restored for the moment an earlier balance of mind. The interests of ambition and the intellect returned in force. Letty Sewell had, no doubt, made life very agreeable to him during the past three weeks; but, after all—was it worth while?

Her little figure danced before the inward eye as his fire sank into darkness; fragments of her chatter ran through his mind. He began to be rather ashamed of himself. Fontenoy was right. It was not the moment. No doubt he must marry some day; he had come home, indeed, with the vague intention of marrying; but the world was wide and women many. That he had very little romance in his temperament was probably due to his mother. His childish experiences of her character, and of her relations to his father, had left him no room, alas! for the natural childish opinion that all grown-ups, and especially all mothers,

are saints. In India he had amused himself a good deal; but his adventures had, on the whole, confirmed his boyish bias. If he had been forced to put his inmost opinions about women into words, the result would have been crude, perhaps brutal, which did not prevent him from holding a very strong and vivid conviction of the pleasure to be got from their society.

Accordingly he woke up next morning precisely in the mood that Letty, for her own reasons, had foreseen. It worried him to think that for two or three days more he and Letty Sewell must still be thrown together in close relations. He and his mother were waiting on at Malford for a day or two till some workmen should be out of his own house, which lay twenty miles away, at the farther edge of the Market Malford division. Meanwhile a couple of shooting-parties had been arranged, mainly for his entertainment. Still, was there no urgent business that required him in town?

He sauntered in to breakfast a little before ten. Only Evelyn Watton and her mother were visible, most of the men having already gone off to a distant meet.

«Now sit down and entertain us, Sir George,» said Mrs. Watton, holding out her hand to him with an odd expression. «We're as dull as ditch-water—the men have all gone, Florrie's in bed with a chill, and Letty departed by the 9:30 train.»

George's start, as he took his coffee from her, did not escape her.

«Miss Sewell gone? But why this suddenness?» he inquired. «I thought Miss Letty was to be here to the end of the week.»

Mrs. Watton raised her shoulders. «She sent a note in to me at half-past eight to say her mother was n't well, and she was wanted at home. She just rushed in to say good-bye to me, chattered a great deal, kissed everybody a great deal—and I know no more. I hear she had breakfast and a fly, which is all I troubled myself about. I never interfere with the modern young woman.»

Then she raised her eye-glass, and looked hard and curiously at Tressady. His face told her nothing, however, and as she was the least sympathetic of women she soon forgot her own curiosity.

Evelyn Watton, a vision of fresh girlhood in her morning frock, glanced shyly at him once or twice as she gave him scones and mustard. She was passing through a moment of poetry and happy dreams. All human beings walked glorified in her eyes, especially if they were young. Letty was not wholly to

her taste, and had never been a particular friend. But she thought ill of no one, and her little heart must needs flutter tenderly in the presence of anything that suggested love and marriage. It had delighted her to watch George and Letty together. Now, why had Letty rushed away like this? *She* thought with concern, thrilling all the time, that Sir George looked grave and depressed.

George, however, was not depressed—or thought he was not. He walked into the library after breakfast, whistling and quoting to himself:

And there be they  
Who kissed his wings which brought him  
yesterday,  
And thank his wings to-day that he is flown.

He prided himself on his memory of some modern poets, and the lines pleased him particularly.

He had no sooner done quoting, however, than his mother peered into the room, claiming the business talk that had been promised. From that talk George emerged irritable and silent. His mother's extravagance was really preposterous—not to be borne. For four years now he had been free from the constant daily friction of money troubles, which had spoiled his youth and robbed him of all power of respecting his mother. And he had hugged his freedom. But all the time it seemed he had been hugging illusion, and the troubles had been merely piling up for his return. Her present claims—and he knew very well that they were not the whole—would exhaust all his available balance at his bankers'.

Lady Tressady, for her part, thought, with indignant despair, that he had not behaved at all as an only son should—especially an only son just returned to a widowed mother after four years' absence. How could any one suppose that in four years there would be no debts—on such a pittance of an income? Some money, indeed, he had promised her; but not nearly enough, and not immediately. He «must look into things at home.» Lady Tressady was enraged with herself and him that she had not succeeded better in making him understand how pressing, how urgent, matters were.

She must, indeed, bring it home to him that there might be a scandal at any moment. That odious livery-stable man, two or three dressmakers—in these directions every phase and shift of the debtor's long finesse had been exhausted long ago. Even she was at her wits' end.

As for other matters— But from these her thoughts turned hurriedly away. Luck

would change, of course, some time; it must change! No need to say anything about that just yet, especially while George's temper was in such a queer state.

It was very odd—most annoying! As a baby even he had never been caressing or sweet like other people's babies. And now, really!—why *her* son should have such unattractive ways!

But, manœuvre as she would, George would not be drawn into further discussion. She could only show him offended airs, and rack her brains morning and night as to how best to help herself.

Meanwhile George had never been so little pleased with living as during these few days. He was overwhelmed with congratulations; and, to judge from the newspapers, «all England,» as Lady Tressady said, «was talking of him.» It seemed to him ridiculous that a man should derive so little entertainment from such a fact. Nevertheless his dullness remained and refused to be got rid of. He discussed with himself, of course, for a new set of reasons, the possibility of evading the shooting-parties and departing. But he was deeply pledged to stay, and he was under considerable obligations to the Wattons. So he stayed; but he shot so as to increase his own dissatisfaction with the universe, and to make the other men in the house wonder what might be the general value of an Indian sporting reputation when it came to dealing with the British pheasant.

Then he turned to business. He tried to read some parliamentary reports bearing on a coming measure, and full of notes by Fontenoy, which Fontenoy had left with him. But it only ended in his putting them hastily aside, lest in the mood of obscure contradiction that possessed him he should destroy his opinions before he had taken his seat.

On the day before the last «shoot,» among the letters his servant brought him in the early morning was one that he tore open in a hurry, tossing the rest aside.

It was from Miss Sewell, requesting, prettily, in as few words as possible, that he would return her a book she had lent him.

«My mother,» she wrote, «has almost recovered from her sudden attack of chill. I trust the shooting-parties have amused you, and that you have read *all* Lord Fontenoy's Blue Books.»

George wrote a reply before he went down to breakfast—a piece of ordinary small talk, that seemed to him the most wretched stuff conceivable. But he pulled two pens to pieces before he achieved it.

Then he went out for a long walk alone,

pondering what was the matter with him. Had that little witch dropped the old familiar poison into his veins, after all? Certainly some women made life vivacity and pleasure, while others—his mother or Mrs. Watton, for instance—made it fatigue or tedium.

Ever since his boyhood Tressady had been conscious of intermittent assaults of melancholy, fits of some inner disgust, which hung the world in black, crippled his will, made him hate himself and despise his neighbors. It was possibly some half-conscious dread lest this morbid speck in his nature should gain upon the rest that made him so hungry for travel and change of scene after he left college. It explained many surprises, many apparent ficklenesses, in his life. During the three weeks that he had spent in the same house with Letty Sewell he had never once been conscious of this lurking element of his life. And now, after four days, he found himself positively pining for her voice, the rustle of her delicate dress, her defiant, provocative ways that kept a man on the alert—still more, her smiling silences, that seemed to challenge all his powers; the touch of her small, cool hand, that crushed so easily in his.

What had she left the house for in that wilful way? He did not believe her excuses. Yet he was mystified. Did she realize that things were becoming serious, and did she not mean them to be serious? If so, who or what hindered?

As for Fontenoy—

Tressady quickened his step impatiently as he recalled that harassed and toiling figure. Politics or no politics, he would live his life! Besides, it was obviously to his profit to marry. How could he ever make a common household with his mother? He meant to do his duty by her, but she annoyed and abashed him twenty times a day. He would be far happier married, far better able to do his work. He was not passionately in love—not at all. But—for it was no good fencing with himself any longer—he desired Letty Sewell's companionship more than he had desired anything for a long time. He wanted the right to carry off the little musical box, with all its tunes, and set it playing in his own house, to keep him gay. Why not? He could house it prettily, and reward it well.

As for the rest, he decided, without thinking about it, that Letty Sewell was well born and bred. She had, of course, all the little refinements a fastidious taste might desire in a woman. She would never discredit a man in society. On the contrary, she would be a great strength to him there. And she

must be sweet-tempered, or that pretty child Evelyn Watton would not be so fond of her.

That pretty child, meanwhile, was absorbed in the excitement of her own small rôle. Tressady, who had only made duty-conversation with her before, had found out somehow that she was sympathetic—that she would talk to him charmingly about Letty. After a very little pretending he let himself go, and Evelyn dreamed at night of his confidences, her heart, without knowing it, leaping forward to the time when a man would look at her so, for her own sake—not another's. She forgot that she had ever criticized Letty, thought her vain or selfish. Nay, she made a heroine of her forthwith; she remembered all sorts of delightful things to say of her, simply that she might keep the young member talking in a corner, that she might still enjoy the delicious pride of feeling that she knew—she was helping it on.

After the big «shoot» for instance, when all the other gentlemen were stiff and sleepy, George spent the whole evening in chattering to Evelyn, or, rather, in making her chatter. Lady Tressady loitered near them once or twice. She heard the names «Letty,» «Miss Sewell,» passing and repassing, one talker catching up the other. Over any topic that included Miss Sewell they lingered; when anything was begun that did not concern her it dropped at once, like a ball ill thrown. The mother went away smiling rather sourly.

She watched her son, indeed, cat-like all these days, trying to discover what had happened—what his real mind was. She did not wish for a daughter-in-law at all, and she had even a secret fear of Letty Sewell in that capacity. But somehow George must be managed, her own needs must be met. She felt that she might be undoing the future; but the present drove her on.

On the following morning, from one of Mrs. Watton's numerous letters there dropped out the fact that Letty Sewell was expected immediately at a country house in North Mercia whereof a certain Mrs. Corfield was mistress—a house only distant some twenty miles from the Tressadys' estate of Ferth Place.

«My sister-in-law has recovered with remarkable rapidity,» said Mrs. Watton, raising a sarcastic eye. «Do you know anything of the Corfields, Sir George?»

«Nothing at all,» said George. «One hears of them sometimes from neighbors. They are said to be very lively folk. Miss Sewell will have a gay time.»

«Corfield?» said Lady Tressady, her head on one side and her cup balanced in two jew-

eled hands. «What! *Aspasia Corfield!* Why, my dear George—one of my oldest friends!»

George laughed—the short, grating laugh his mother so often evoked.

«Beg pardon, mother; I can only answer for myself. To the best of my belief I never saw her, either at Ferth or anywhere else.»

«Why, *Aspasia Corfield* and I,» said Lady Tressady, with languid reflectiveness—«*Aspasia Corfield* and I copied each other's dresses and bought our hats at the same place when we were eighteen. I have n't seen her for an eternity. But *Aspasia* used to be a dear girl—and so fond of me!»

She put down her cup with a sigh, intended as a reproach to George. George only buried himself the deeper in his morning's letters.

Mrs. Watton, behind her newspaper, glanced grimly from the mother to the son.

«I wonder if that woman has a single real old friend in the world. How is George Tressady going to put up with her?»

The Wattons themselves had been on friendly terms with Tressady's father for many years. Since Sir William's death and George's absence, however, Mrs. Watton had not troubled herself much about Lady Tressady, in which she believed she was only following suit with the rest of West Mercia. But now that George had reappeared as a promising politician, his mother—till he married—had to be to some extent accepted along with him. Mrs. Watton, accordingly, had thought it her duty to invite her for the election, not without an active sense of martyrdom. «She always has bored me to tears since I first saw Sir William trailing her about,» she would remark to Letty. «Where did he pick her up? The marvel is that she has kept respectable. She has never looked it. I always feel inclined to ask her at breakfast why she dresses for dinner twelve hours too soon!»

Very soon after the little conversation about the Corfields Lady Tressady withdrew to her room, sat thoughtful for a while, with her writing-block on her knee, then wrote a letter. She was perfectly aware of the fact that since George had come back to her she was likely to be welcome once more in many houses that for years had shown no particular desire to receive her. She took the situation very easily. It was seldom her way to be bitter. She was only determined to amuse herself, to enjoy her life in her own way. If people disapproved of her, she thought them fools; but it did not prevent her from trying to make it up with them next day, if she saw an opening and it seemed worth while.

«There!» she said to herself as she sealed

the letter and looked at it with admiration. «I really have a knack for doing those things. I should think *Aspasia Corfield* would ask him by return—me, too, if she has any decency, though she *has* dropped me for fifteen years. She has a tribe of daughters. Why I should play Miss Sewell's game like this I don't know! Well, one must try something.»

THAT same afternoon mother and son took their departure for Ferth Place.

George, who had only spent a few weeks at Ferth since his return from India, should have found plenty to do both indoors and out. The house struck him as singularly dingy and out of order. Changes were imperatively demanded in the garden and in the estate. His business as a colliery-owner was in a tangled and critical condition. And meanwhile Fontenoy plied him incessantly with a political correspondence which of itself made large demands upon intelligence and energy.

Nevertheless he shuffled out of everything, unless it were the correspondence with Fontenoy. As to the notion that all the languor could be due merely to an unsatisfied craving for Letty Sewell's society, when it presented itself he still fought with it. The Indian climate might have somehow affected him. An English winter is soon forgotten, and has to be relearned like a distasteful lesson.

About a week after their arrival at Ferth, George was sitting at his solitary breakfast when his mother came floating into the room, preceded by a rattle of bangles, a flutter of streamers, and the barking of little dogs.

She held various newly opened letters, and, running up to him, she laid her hands on his shoulders.

«Now,» thought George to himself, with annoyance, «she is going to be arch!»

«Oh, you silly boy!» she said, holding him, with her head on one side. «Who's been cross and nasty to his poor old mammy? Who wants cheering up a bit before he settles down to his horrid work? Who would take his mammy to a nice party at a nice house, if he were prettily asked—eh? Who would?»

She pinched his cheek before he could escape.

«Well, mother, of course you will do what you like,» said George, walking off to supply himself with ham. «I shall not leave home again just yet.»

Lady Tressady smiled.

«Well, anyhow, you can read *Aspasia Corfield's* letter,» she said, holding it out to him. «You know, really, that house is n't bad. They



took over the Dryburghs' *chef*, and Aspasia knows how to pick her people.)

«Aspasia!» The tone of patronizing intimacy! George blushed, if his mother did not.

Yet he took the letter. He read it, then put it down, and walked to the window to look at a crowd of birds that had been collecting around a plate of food he had just put out upon the snow.

«Well, will you go?» said his mother.

«If you particularly wish it,» he said, after a pause, in an embarrassed voice.

Lady Tressady's dimples were in full play as she settled herself into her seat and began to gather a supply of provisions. But as he returned to his place, and she glanced at him, she saw that he was not in a mood to be bantered, and understood that he was not going to let her force his confidence, however shrewdly she might guess at his affairs. So she controlled herself, and began to chatter about the Corfields and their party. He responded, and by the end of breakfast they were on much better terms than they had been for some weeks.

That morning, also, he wrote a check for her immediate necessities, which made her—for the time—a happy woman; and she overwhelmed him with grateful tears and embraces, which he did his best to bear.

Early in December he and she became the Corfields' guests. They found a large party collected, and Letty Sewell happily established as the spoiled child of the house. At the first touch of her hand, the first glance of her eyes, George's cloud dispersed.

«Why did you run away?» George asked her on the first possible occasion.

Letty laughed, fenced with the question for four days, during which George was never dull for a single instant, and then capitulated. She allowed him to propose to her, and was graciously pleased to accept him.

THE following week Tressady went down with Letty to her home at Helbeck. He found an invalid father, a remarkably foolish, inconsequent mother, and a younger sister, Elsie, on whom, as it seemed to him, the burdens of the house mainly rested.

The father, who was suffering from a slow but incurable disease, had the remains of much natural ability and acuteness. He was well content with Tressady as a son-in-law, though in the few interviews that Tressady was able to have with him on the question of settlements, the young man took pains to state his money affairs as carefully and modestly as possible. Letty was not often in her

father's room, and Mr. Sewell treated her, when she did come, rather like an agreeable guest than a daughter. But he was evidently extremely proud of her,—as also was the mother,—and he would talk much to George, when his health allowed it, of her good looks and her social success.

With the younger sister Tressady did not find it easy to make friends.

She was plain, sickly, and rather silent. She seemed to have scientific tastes, and to be a great reader. And, so far as he could judge, the two sisters were not intimate.

«Don't hate me for taking her away,» he said, as he was bidding good-by to Elsie, and glancing over her shoulder at Letty on the stairs.

The girl's quiet eyes were crossed by a momentary look of amusement. Then she controlled herself, and said gently:

«We did n't expect to keep her! Good-by!»

#### IV.

«OH, Tully, look at my cloak! You've let it fall! Hold my fan, please, and give me the opera-glasses.»

The speaker was Miss Sewell. She and an elderly lady were sitting side by side in the stalls, about half-way down St. James's Hall. The occasion was a popular concert, and, as Joachim was to play, every seat in the hall was rapidly filling up.

Letty rose as she asked for the opera-glasses, and scanned the crowds streaming in through the side doors.

«No—no signs of him! He must have been kept at the House, after all,» she said, with annoyance. «Really, Tully, I do think you might have got a program all this time! Why do you leave everything to me?»

«My dear,» said her companion, protesting, «you did n't tell me to.»

«Well, I don't see why I should tell you everything. Of course I want a program. Is that he? No! What a nuisance!»

«Sir George must have been detained,» murmured her companion, timidly.

«What a very original thing to say, was n't it, Tully?» remarked Miss Sewell, with sarcasm, as she sat down again.

The lady addressed was silent, instinctively waiting till Letty's nerves should have quieted down. She was a Miss Tulloch, a former governess of the Sewells, and now often employed by Letty, when she was in town, as a convenient chaperon. Letty was accustomed to stay with an aunt in Cavendish Square, an old lady who did not go out in the evenings. A chaperon, therefore, was indispensable,

and Maria Tulloch could always be had. She existed somewhere in West Kensington, on an income of seventy pounds a year. Letty took her freely to the opera and the theater, to concerts and galleries, and occasionally gave her a dress she did not want. Miss Tulloch clung to the connection as her only chance of relief from the boarding-house routine she detested, and was always abjectly ready to do as she was told. She saw nothing she was not meant to see, and she could be shaken off at a moment's notice. For the rest, she came of a stock of gentlefolk, and her invariable black dress, her bits of carefully treasured lace, the weak refinement of her face, and her timid manner, did no discredit to the brilliant creature beside her.

When the first number of the program was over, Letty got up once more, opera-glass in hand, to search among the late comers for her missing lover. She nodded to many acquaintances, but George Tressady was not to be seen; and she sat down finally in no mood either to listen or to enjoy, though the magician of the evening was already at work.

«There's something very special, is n't there, you want to see Sir George about to-night?» Tully inquired, humbly, when the next pause occurred.

«Of course there is!» said Letty, crossly. «You do ask such foolish questions, Tully! If I don't see him to-night he may let that house in Brook street slip. There are several people after it, the agents told me.»

«And he thinks it too expensive?»

«Only because of *her*. If she makes him pay her that preposterous allowance, of course it will be too expensive. But I don't mean him to pay it.»

«Lady Tressady is terribly extravagant,» murmured Miss Tulloch.

«Well, so long as she is n't extravagant with his money—*our* money—I don't care a rap,» said Letty; «only she sha'n't spend all her own and all ours too, which is what she has been doing. When George was away he let her live at Ferth and spend almost all the income, except five hundred a year that he kept for himself. And *then* she got so shamefully into debt that he does n't know when he shall ever clear her. He gave her money at Christmas, and again, I am *sure*, just lately. Oh, no!» said Letty, sharply, drawing herself up; «it must be *stopped*. I don't know that I shall be able to do much till I'm married, but I mean to make him take this house.»

«Is Lady Tressady nice to you? She is in town, is n't she?»

«Oh, yes, she's in town. Nice?» said Let-

ty, with a little laugh. «She can't bear me, of course; but we're quite civil.»

«I thought she tried to bring it on?» said the confidante, anxious, above all things, to be sympathetic.

«Well, she brought him to the Corfields', and let me know she had. I don't know why she did it. I suppose she wanted to get something out of him. Ah, *there* he is!»

And Letty stood up, smiling and beckoning, while Tressady's tall, thin figure made its way along the central passage.

«Horrid House! What made you so late?» she said, as he sat down between her and Miss Tulloch.

George Tressady looked at her with delight. The shrewish contractions in the face, which had been very evident to Tully a few minutes before, had all disappeared, and the sharp, slight lines of it seemed to George the height of delicacy. At sight of him color and eyes had brightened. Yet at the same time there was not a trace of the raw girl about her. She knew very well that he had no taste for *ingénues*, and she was neither nervous nor sentimental in his company.

«Do you suppose I should have stayed a second longer than I was obliged?» he asked her, smiling, pressing her little hand under pretense of taking her program.

The first notes of a new Brahms quartet mounted, thin and sweet, into the air. The musical portion of the audience, having come for this particular morsel, prepared themselves eagerly for the tasting and trying of it. George and Letty tried to say a few things more to each other before yielding to the general silence, but an old gentleman in front turned upon them a face of such disdain and fury they must needs laugh and desist.

Not that George was unwilling. He was tired; and silence with Letty beside him was not only repose, but pleasure. Moreover, he derived a certain honest pleasure of a mixed sort from music. It suggested literary or pictorial ideas to him which stirred him, and gave him a sense of enjoyment. Now, as the playing flowed on, it called up delightful images in his brain: of woody places, of whirling forms, of quiet rivers, of thin trees Corot-like against the sky—scenes of pleading, of frolic, reproachful pain, dissolving joy. With it all mingled his own story, his own feeling; his pride of possession in this white creature touching him; his sense of youth, of opening life, of a crowded stage whereon his «cue» had just been given, his «call» sounded. He listened with eagerness, welcoming each fancy as it floated past, con-

scious of a grain of self-abandonment even—a rare mood with him. He was not absorbed in love by any means; the music suggested to him a hundred other kindling or enchanting things. Nevertheless it made it doubly pleasant to be there, with Letty beside him. He was quite satisfied with himself and her; quite certain that he had done everything for the best. All this the music in some way emphasized—made clear.

When it was over, and the applause was subsiding, Letty said in his ear, «Have you settled about the house?»

He smiled down upon her, not hearing what she said, but admiring her dress, its little complication and subtleties, the violets that perfumed every movement, the slim fingers holding the fan. Her mere ways of personal adornment were to him like pleasant talk. They surprised and amused him—stood between him and ennui.

She repeated her question.

A frown crossed his brow, and the face changed wholly.

«Ah!—it is so difficult to see one's way,» he said, with a little sigh of annoyance.

Letty played with her fan, and was silent.

«Do you so much prefer it to the others?» he asked her.

Letty looked up with astonishment.

«Why, it is a house!» she said, lifting her eyebrows; «and the others—»

«Hovels? Well, you are about right. The small London house is an abomination. Perhaps I can make them take less premium.»

Letty shook her head.

«It is not at all a dear house,» she said decidedly.

He still frowned, with the look of one recalled to an annoyance he had shaken off.

«Well, darling, if you wish it so much, that settles it. Promise to be still nice to me when we go through the Bankruptcy Court!»

«We will let lodgings, and I will do the waiting,» said Letty, just laying her hand lightly against his for an instant. «Just think! That house would draw like anything. Of course we will only take the eldest sons of peers. By the way, do you see Lord Fontenoy?»

They were in the middle of the «interval,» and almost every one about them, including Miss Tulloch, was standing up, talking or examining their neighbors.

George craned his neck round Miss Tulloch, and saw Fontenoy sitting beside a lady on the other side of the middle gangway.

«Who is the lady?» Letty inquired. «I saw her with him the other night at the Foreign Office.»

George smiled.

«That—if you want to know—is Fontenoy's story!»

«Oh, but tell me at once!» said Letty, imperiously. «But he has n't got a story, or a heart. He's only stuffed with Blue Book.»

«So I thought till a few weeks ago. But I know a good deal more now about Master Fontenoy than I did.»

«But who is she?»

«She is a Mrs. Allison. Is n't that white hair beautiful? And her face—half saint—I always think; you might take her for a mother-abbess—and half princess. Did you ever see such diamonds?»

George pulled his mustaches and grinned as he looked across at Fontenoy.

«Tell me quick!» said Letty, tapping him on the arm. «Is she a widow—and is he going to marry her? Why did n't you tell me before? Why did n't you tell me at Malford?»

«Because I did n't know,» said George, laughing. «Oh, it's a strange story—too long to tell now. She is a widow, but he is not going to marry her, apparently. She has a grown-up son, just gone to college, and thinks it is n't fair to him. If Fontenoy wants to introduce her, don't refuse. She is the mistress of Castle Luton, and has delightful parties. Yes—if I'd known at Malford what I know now!»

And he laughed again, remembering Fontenoy's nocturnal incursion upon him, and its apparent object. Who would have imagined that the preacher of that occasion had ever given one serious thought to woman and woman's arts—least of all that he was the creation and slave of a woman!

Letty's curiosity was piqued, and she would have plied George with questions, but that she suddenly perceived that Fontenoy had risen and was coming across to them.

«Gracious!» she said; «here he comes. I can't think why; he does n't like me.»

Fontenoy, however, when he had made his way to them, greeted Miss Sewell with as much apparent cordiality as he showed to any one else. He had received George's news of the marriage with all decorum, and had since sent a handsome wedding-present to the bride elect. Letty, however, was never at ease with him, which, indeed, was the case with most women.

He stood beside the *fiancés* for a minute or two, exchanging a few commonplaces with Letty on the performers and the audience; then he turned to George with a change of look.

«No need for us to go back to-night, I think?»

«What—to the House? Dear, no! Grooby and Havershon may be trusted to drone the evening out, I should hope, with no trouble to anybody but themselves. The Government are just keeping a house, that 's all. Have you been grinding at your speech all day?»

Fontenoy shrugged his shoulders.

«I sha'n't get anything out that I want to say. Are you coming to the House on Friday, Miss Sewell?»

«Friday?» said Letty, looking puzzled.

George laughed.

«I told you. You must plead trousseau if you want to save yourself!»

Amusement shone in his blue eyes as they passed from Letty to Fontenoy. He had long ago discovered that Letty was incapable of any serious interest in his public life. It did not disturb him at all. But it tickled his sense of humor that Letty would have to talk politics all the same, and to talk them with people like Fontenoy.

«Oh, you mean your Resolution!» cried Letty. «Is n't it a Resolution? Yes, of course I'm coming. It's very absurd, for I don't know anything about it. But George says I must, and till I promise to obey, you see, I don't mind being obedient!»

Archness, however, was thrown away on Fontenoy. He stood beside her, awkward and irresponsive. Not being allowed to be womanish, she could only try once more to be political.

«It's to be a great attack on Mr. Dowson, is n't it?» she asked him. «You and George are mad about some things he has been doing? He's Home Secretary, is n't he? Yes, of course! And he's been driving trade away, and tyrannizing over the manufacturers? I wish you'd explain it to me! I ask George, and he tells me not to talk shop.»

«Oh, for goodness' sake,» groaned George, «let it alone! I came to meet you and hear Joachim. However, I may as well warn you, Letty, that I sha'n't have time to be married once Fontenoy's anti-Maxwell campaign begins, and it will go on till the Day of Judgment.»

«Why anti-Maxwell?» said Letty, puzzled. «I thought it was Mr. Dowson you are going to attack?»

George, a little vexed that she should require it, began to explain that as Maxwell was «only a miserable peer,» he could have nothing to do with the House of Commons, and that Dowson was the official mouthpiece of the Maxwell group and policy in the Lower House. «The hands were the hands of Esau,» etc. Letty meanwhile, conscious that she was not showing to advantage, flushed, began to

play nervously with her fan, and wished that George would leave off.

Fontenoy did nothing to assist George's political lesson. He stood impassive, till suddenly he tried to look across his immediate neighbors, and then said, turning to Letty:

«The Maxwells, I see, are here to-night.» He nodded toward a group on the left, some two or three benches behind them. «You've seen her, have n't you, Miss Sewell?»

«Oh, yes, *often!*» said Letty, annoyed by the question, standing, however, eagerly on tiptoe. «I know her, too, a little; but she never remembers me. She was at the Foreign Office on Saturday, with such a *hideous* dress on—it spoiled her completely.»

«Hideous!» said Fontenoy, with a puzzled look. «Some artist—I forget who—came and raved to me about it; said it was like some Florentine picture—I forget what—don't think I ever heard of it.»

Letty looked contemptuous. Her expression said that in this matter, at any rate, she knew what she was talking about. Nevertheless her eyes followed the dark head Fontenoy had pointed out to her.

Lady Maxwell was at the moment the center of a large group of people, mostly men, all of whom seemed to be eager to get a word with her; and she was talking with great animation, appealing from time to time to a tall, broad-shouldered gentleman, with grayish hair, who stood, smiling and silent, at the edge of the group. Letty noticed that many glasses from the balcony were directed to this particular knot of persons; that everybody near them, or rather every woman, was watching Lady Maxwell, or trying to get a better view of her. The girl felt a secret pang of envy and dislike.

The figure of a well-known accompanist appeared suddenly at the head of the staircase leading from the artists' room. The interval was over, and the audience began to subside into attention.

Fontenoy bowed and took his leave.

«You see, he *did* n't introduce me,» said Letty, not without chagrin, as she settled down. «And how plain he is! I think him uglier every time I see him.»

George made a vague sound of assent, but did not really agree with her in the least. Fontenoy's air of overwork was more decided than ever; his eyes had almost sunk out of sight; the complexion of his broad, strong face had reddened and coarsened from lack of exercise and sleep; his brown hair was thinning and grizzling fast. Nevertheless a man saw much to admire in the ungainly head



and long-limbed frame, and did not think any the better of a woman's intelligence for failing to perceive it.

After the concert, as George and Letty stood together in the crowded vestibule, he said to her, with a smile:

«So I take that house?»

«If you want to do anything disagreeable,» she retorted quickly, «don't *ask* me. Do it, and then wait till I am good-tempered again!»

«What a tempting prospect! Do you know that when you put on that particular hood, I would take Buckingham Palace to please you? Do you know also that my mother will think us very extravagant?»

«Ah, we can't all be economical!» said Letty.

He saw the little toss of the head and sharpening of the lips. They only amused him. Though he had never, so far, discussed his mother and her affairs with Letty in any detail, he understood perfectly well that her feeling about this particular house in some way concerned his mother, and that Letty and Lady Tressady were rapidly coming to dislike each other. Well, why should Letty pretend? He liked her the better for not pretending.

There was a movement in the crowd about them, and Letty, looking up, suddenly found herself close to a tall lady whose dark eyes were bent upon her.

«How do you do, Miss Sewell?»

Letty, a little fluttered, gave her hand and replied. Lady Maxwell glanced across her at the tall young man with the fair, irregular face. George bowed involuntarily, and she slightly responded. Then she was swept on by her own party.

«Have you sent for your carriage?» George heard some one say to her.

«No; I am going home in a hansom. I've tired out both the horses to-day. Aldous is going down to the club to see if he can hear anything about Devizes.»

«Oh! the election?»

She nodded, then caught sight of her husband at the door beckoning, and hurried on.

«What a head!» said George, looking after her with admiration.

«Yes,» said Letty, unwillingly. «It's the hair that's so splendid—the long black waves of it. How ridiculous to talk of tiring out her horses—that's just like her! As though she might n't have fifty horses if she liked! Oh, George, there's our man! Quick, Tully!»

They made their way out. In the press George put his arm half round Letty, shielding her. The touch of her light form, the nearness of her delicate face, enchanted him. When

their carriage had rolled away, and he turned homeward along Piccadilly, he walked absently for a time, conscious only of pulsing pleasure.

It was a mild February night. After a long frost and a grudging thaw, westerly winds were setting in, and spring could be foreseen. It had been pouring with rain during the concert, but was now fair, the rushing clouds leaving behind them, as they passed, great torn spaces of blue, where the stars shone.

Gusts of warm, moist air swept through the street. As George's moment of intoxication gradually subsided, he felt the physical charm of the soft buffeting wind. How good seemed all living—youth and capacity, this roaring multitudinous London, the future with its chances! This common pleasant chance of marriage amongst them—he was glad he had put out his hand to it. His wife that was to be was no saint and no philosopher. He thanked the fates! He at least asked for neither—on the hearth. «Praise, blame, love, kisses»—for all of those life with Letty would give scope; yet for none of them in excess. There would be plenty of room left for other things, other passions—the passion of political power, for instance; the art of dealing with and commanding other men. He, the novice, the beginner, to talk of «commanding»! Yet already he felt his foot upon the ladder. Fontenoy consulted him and confided in him more and more. In spite of his engagement he was informing himself rapidly on a hundred questions, and the mental wrestle of every day was exhilarating. Their small group in the House, compact, tireless, audacious, was growing in importance and in the attention it extorted from the public. This attack upon Dowson—upon a meddling and tyrannical Home Office—would give them their first great chance. The «season» and «dangerous» trades harassed by the administrative energy of the Government had rallied to Fontenoy's support with loud alarums and lamentations. A certain number of Liberals, especially an active and Whiggish group of manufacturers, were likely to vote with him; while the socialist Labor party, who just at the moment were on bad terms with the Government, could not be trusted. The attack and defense would probably take two nights; for the Government, admitting the gravity of the assault, had agreed, in case the debate should not be concluded on Friday, to give up Monday to it. Altogether the affair would make a noise. George would probably get in his maiden speech on the second night, and was, in truth, devoting a great deal of his mind

to the prospect, though to Letty he had persistently laughed at it and belittled it, refusing altogether to let her come and hear him.

Then, after Easter, would come Maxwell's bill, and the fat in the fire! Poor little Letty!—she would get but few of the bridal observances due to her when *that* struggle began. But first would come Easter and their wedding; that one short fortnight, when he would carry her off—soft, willing prey—to the country, draw a «wind-warm space» about himself and her, and minister to all her whims.

He turned down St. James's street, passed Marlborough House, and entered the Mall, on the way to Warwick Square, where he was living with his mother.

Suddenly he became aware of a crowd, immediately in front of him, in the direction of Buckingham Palace. A hansom and horse were standing in the roadway; the driver, crimson and hatless, was bandying words with one of the policemen, who had his note-book open, and from the middle of the crowd came a sound of wailing.

He walked up to the edge of the circle.

«Anybody hurt?» he said to the policeman as the man shut his note-book.

«Little girl run over, sir.»

«Can I be of any assistance? Is there an ambulance coming?»

«No, sir. There was a lady in the hansom. She's just now bandaging the child's leg, and says she'll take it to the hospital.»

George mounted on one of the seats under the trees that stood handy, and looked over the heads of the crowd to the space in the center which the other policeman was keeping clear. A little girl lay on the ground, or rather on a heap of coats; another girl, apparently about sixteen, stood near her, crying bitterly; and a lady—

«Goodness!» said Tressady; and, jumping down, he touched the policeman on the shoulder.

«Can you get me through? I think I could be some help. That lady»—he spoke a word in the policeman's ear.

The man touched his hat.

«Stand back, please,» he said, addressing the crowd, «and let this gentleman through.»

The crowd divided unwillingly. But at the same moment it parted from the inside, and a little procession came through, both policemen joining their energies to make a free passage for it. In front walked the policeman carrying the little girl, a child apparently about twelve years old. Her right foot lay stiffly across his arm, held straight and still in an impromptu splint of umbrellas

and handkerchiefs. Immediately behind him came the lady whom George had caught sight of, holding the other girl's hand in hers. She was bareheaded and in evening dress. Her opera-cloak, with its heavy sable collar, showed beneath it a dress of some light-colored satin, which had already suffered deplorably from the puddles of the road; and as she neared the lamp beneath which the cab had stopped, the diamonds on her wrists sparkled in the light. During her passage through the crowd, George perceived that one or two people recognized her, and that a murmur ran from mouth to mouth.

Of anything of the sort she herself was totally unconscious. George saw at once that she, not the policeman, was in command. She gave him directions, as they approached the cab, in a quick, imperative voice which left no room for hesitation.

«The driver is drunk,» he heard her say; «who will drive?»

«One of us will drive, ma'am.»

«What—the other man? Ask him to take the reins at once, please, before I get in. The horse is fresh, and might start. That's right. Now, when I say the word, give me the child.»

She settled herself in the cab. George saw the policeman somewhat embarrassed for a moment with his burden. He came forward to his help, and between them they handed in the child, placing her carefully on her protector's knee.

Then, standing at the open door of the cab, George raised his hat. «Can I be of any further assistance to you, Lady Maxwell? I saw you just now at the concert.»

She turned in some astonishment as she heard her name, and looked at the speaker. Then, very quickly, she seemed to understand.

«I don't know,» she said, pondering. «Yes, you could help me. I am going to take the child to hospital. But there is this other girl. Could you take her home?—she is very much upset. No! first, could you bring her after me to St. George's? She wants to see where we put her sister.»

«I will call another cab, and be there as soon as you.»

«Thank you. Just let me speak to the sister a moment, please.»

He put the weeping girl forward, and Lady Maxwell bent across the burden on her knee to say a few words to her—soft, quick words in another voice. The girl understood; her face cleared a little, and she let Tressady take charge of her.

One of the policemen mounted the box of the hansom, amid the «chaff» of the crowd, and the cab started. A few hats were raised in George's neighborhood, and there was something of a cheer.

«I tell yer,» said a voice, «I knowed her fust sight—seed her picture lots o' times in the papers, and in the winders, too. My word, ain't she good-lookin'! And did yer see all them diamonds?»

«Come along!» said George, impatiently, hurrying his charge into the four-wheeler the other policeman had just stopped for them.

In a few more seconds, he, the girl, and the policeman were pursuing Lady Maxwell's hansom at the best speed of an indifferent horse. George tried to say a few consoling things to his neighbor, and the girl, reassured by his kind manner, found her tongue, and began to chatter in a tearful voice about the how and when of the accident; about the elder sister in a lodging in Crawford street, Tottenham Court Road, whom she and the little one had been visiting; the grandmother in Westminster with whom they lived; poor Lizzie's place in a laundry, which now she must lose; how the lady had begged handkerchiefs and umbrellas from the crowd to tie up Lizzie's leg with—and so on through a number of other details incoherent or plaintive.

George heard her absently. His mind all the time was absorbed in the dramatic or ironic aspects of what he had just seen. For dramatic they were—though perhaps a little cheap. Could he, could any one, have made acquaintance with this particular woman in more characteristic fashion? He laughed to think how he would tell the story to Fontenoy. The beautiful creature in her diamonds, kneeling on her satin dress in the mud, to bind up a little laundry-maid's leg—it was so extravagantly in keeping with Marcella Maxwell that it amused one like an overdone coincidence in a clumsy play.

What made her so beautiful? The face had marked defects; but in color, expression, subtlety of line—incomparable! On the other hand, the manner—no!—he shrugged his shoulders. The remembrance of its mannish—or should it be, rather, boyish?—energy and assurance somehow set him on edge.

In the end, they were not much behind the hansom, for the hospital porter was only just in the act of taking the injured child from Lady Maxwell as Tressady dismounted and went forward again to see what he could do.

But, somewhat to his chagrin, he was not wanted. Lady Maxwell and the porter did everything. As they went into the hospital

George caught a few of the things she was saying to the porter as she supported the child's leg. She spoke in a rapid, professional way, and the man answered, as the policeman had done, with a deference and understanding which were clearly not due only to her «grand air» and her evening dress. George was puzzled.

He and the elder sister followed her into the waiting-room. The house surgeon and a nurse were summoned, and the injured leg was put into a splint there and then. The patient moaned and cried most of the time, and Tressady had hard work to keep the sister quiet. Then nurse and doctor lifted the child.

«They are going to put her to bed,» said Lady Maxwell, turning to George. «I am going up with them. Would you kindly wait? The sister»—she dropped her business tone, and, smiling, touched the elder girl on the arm—«can come up when the little one is undressed.»

The little procession swept away, and George was left with his charge. As soon as the small sister was out of sight the elder one began to chatter again out of sheer excitement, crying at intervals. George did not heed her much. He walked up and down with his hands in his pockets, conscious of a curious irritability. He did not think a woman should take a strange man's service quite so coolly.

At the end of another quarter of an hour a nurse appeared to summon the sister. Tressady was told he might come too if he would, and his charge threw him a quick, timid look, as though asking him not to desert her in this unknown and formidable place. So they followed the nurse up white stone stairs, and through half-lit corridors, where all was silent, save that once a sound of delirious shrieking and talking reached them through a closed door, and made the sister's consumptive little face turn whiter still.

At last the nurse, putting her finger on her lip, turned a handle, and George was conscious of a sudden feeling of pleasure.

They were standing on the threshold of a children's ward. On either hand was a range of beds, bluish-white between the yellow picture-covered walls and the middle way of spotless floor. Far away, at the other end, a great fire glowed. On a bare table in the center, laden with bottles and various surgical necessities, stood a shaded lamp, and beside it the chair where the night nurse had been sitting. In the beds were sleeping children of various ages, some burrowing

face downward, animal-like, into their pillows; others lying on their backs, painfully straight and still. The air was warm, yet light, and there was the inevitable smell of antiseptics. Something in the fire-lit space and comfort of the great room, its ordered lines and colors, the gentleness of the shaded light as contrasted with the dim figures in the beds, seemed to make a poem of it—a poem of human tenderness.

Two or three beds away to the right, Lady Maxwell was standing with the night nurse of the ward. The little girl had been undressed, and was lying quiet, with a drawn, piteous face that turned eagerly as her sister came in. The whole scene was new and touching to Tressady. Yet, after the first impression, his attention was perforce held by Lady Maxwell, and he saw the rest only in relation to her. She had slipped off her heavy cloak, in order, perhaps, that she might help in the undressing of the child. Beneath she wore a little shawl or cape of some delicate lace over her low dress. The dress itself was of a pale shade of green; the mire and mud with which it was bedabbled no longer showed in the half light, and the satin folds glistened dimly as she moved. The poetic dignity of the head, so finely wreathed with its black hair, of the full throat and falling shoulders, received a sort of special emphasis from the wide spaces, the pale colors and level lines of the ward. Tressady was conscious again of the dramatic, significant note as he watched her, yet without any softening of his nascent feeling of antagonism.

She turned and beckoned to the sister as they entered.

«Come and see how comfortable she is! And then you must give this lady your name and address.»

The girl timidly approached. While she was occupied with her sister and with the nurse, Lady Maxwell suddenly looked round, and saw Tressady standing by the table a yard or two from her.

A momentary expression of astonishment crossed her face. He saw that, in her absorption with the case and the two sisters, she had clean forgotten all about him. But in a flash she remembered and smiled.

«So you are really going to take her home? That is very kind of you. It will make all the difference to the grandmother that somebody should go and explain. You see, they leave her in the splint for the night, and to-morrow they

will put the leg in plaster. Probably they won't keep her in hospital more than about three weeks, for they are very full.»

«You seem to know all about it!»

«I was a nurse myself once, for a time,» she said, but with a certain stiffness which seemed to mark the transition from the professional to the great lady.

«Ah! I should have remembered that. I had heard it from Edward Watton.»

She looked up quickly. He felt that for the first time she took notice of him as an individual.

«You know Mr. Watton? I think you are Sir George Tressady, are you not? You got in for Market Malford in November? I recollect. I did n't like your speeches.»

She laughed. So did he.

«Yes, I got in just in time for a fighting session.»

Her laugh disappeared.

«An odious fight!» she said gravely.

«I am not so sure. That depends on whether you like fighting, and how certain you are of your cause!»

She hesitated a moment, then she said:

«How can Lord Fontenoy be certain of his cause!»

The slight note of scorn roused him.

«Is n't that what all parties say of their opponents?»

She glanced at him again curiously. He was evidently quite young—younger than herself, she guessed. But his careless ease and experience of bearing, contrasted with his thin boy's figure, attracted her. Her lip softened reluctantly into a smile.

«Perhaps,» she said. «Only sometimes, you know, it must be true! Well, evidently we can't discuss it here at one o'clock in the morning—and there is the nurse making signs to me. It is really very good of you. If you are in our neighborhood on Sunday, will you report?»

«Certainly—with the greatest pleasure. I will come and give you a full account of my mission.»

She held out a slim hand. The sister, red-eyed with crying, was handed over to him, and he and she were soon in a cab speeding toward the Westminster mews, whither she directed him.

Well, was Maxwell to be so greatly envied? Tressady was not sure. Such a woman, he thought, for all her beauty, would not have greatly stirred his own pulses.

(To be continued.)

Mary A. Ward.



# LIFE OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

BY WILLIAM M. SLOANE.

## NAPOLEON THE WAR LORD.

TRAFALGAR—AUSTERLITZ—THE NEW MAP OF EUROPE—THE BUSINESS OF EMPEROR.



DRAWN BY H. A. OGDEN.  
NAPOLEON IN PETIT COSTUME  
OF THE EMPEROR.

TRAFALGAR.

THE fantastic movements of the French fleet, whereby Napoleon intended to give an air of verisimilitude to his grand feint against England, and perhaps to make invasion actually possible, had resulted, as will be recalled, in a partial fiasco. Villeneuve consumed so much time in recrossing the Atlantic that Nelson's cruiser brought word to

highly efficient. Every official except Admiral Collingwood was totally in the dark as to the enemy's plans, and even he was correct only in one surmise, the firm belief that Villeneuve would return at once from the West Indies; he was wrong in his conviction that Ireland was Napoleon's mark. The united French and Spanish fleets made a fine appearance in the accounts which reached the admiralty, and the activity of the French dockyards was alarming. England's naval ascendancy appeared to the English to be seriously jeopardized.

Villeneuve and his subordinates were apparently the only ones who positively knew that the show made by the allied fleets was deceptive. They complained bitterly of the deficiencies in the equipment of both. They had good cause to do so, and that Napoleon was not altogether unaware of it is sufficiently proved by Villeneuve's being retained in command, and by the fact that some one less despondent was not put in his place. In justice to the French admiral it should be remembered that after his return from the West Indies he displayed great ability. It was a series of masterly movements in which he withdrew from before Calder, and, entering Ferrol, sailed thence on August 13 with his own and the ships he found there. For nearly a week he sought to beat up against a storm and enter the Channel. Finally, on the 20th he was informed by a Danish merchantman that three English ships then in sight were the advance-guard of a fleet of twenty-five. This, together with the bad condition of many of his ill-equipped craft, which were much damaged by the gale, constituted, to his mind, the unforeseen casualty before which, according to the Emperor's alternative orders, he should make for Cadiz. Accordingly he ran for that harbor, and entered it the same evening with thirty-five ships. Collingwood drew off his little blockading squadron, but immediately returned to hover before

London of the French admiral's return in time for Lord Barham, head of the English admiralty, to raise the blockade of Rochefort and reinforce Calder's squadron off Ferrol with Cornwallis's five ships, for the purpose of enabling the former to intercept Villeneuve, should he attempt to enter the Channel. The meeting occurred off Finisterre on July 22, 1805. It was indecisive in the sense that the allied French and Spanish fleets were not annihilated; but it thwarted Napoleon, inasmuch as Villeneuve was compelled to retreat toward Cadiz. In spite of this result, England was by no means sure of her naval superiority. The French had fought bravely at the battle of the Nile; Nelson, though not exactly outwitted in the chase to the West Indies and back, had failed to catch his opponent; Villeneuve had again escaped without serious loss. In the administration of the admiralty there had been great slackness, except during Barham's short term; and it is now generally agreed that the navy was not