

Sara Jeannette Duncan, 1861-1922 (aka Mrs. Everard Cotes)

The Imperialist

Chapter I

It would have been idle to inquire into the antecedents, or even the circumstances, of old Mother Beggarlegs. She would never tell; the children, at all events, were convinced of that; and it was only the children, perhaps, who had the time and the inclination to speculate. Her occupation was clear; she presided like a venerable stooping hawk, over a stall in the covered part of the Elgin market-place, where she sold gingerbread horses and large round gingerbread cookies, and brown sticky squares of what was known in all circles in Elgin as taffy. She came, it was understood, with the dawn; with the night she vanished, spending the interval on a not improbable broomstick. Her gingerbread was better than anybody's; but there was no comfort in standing, first on one foot and then on the other, while you made up your mind--the horses were spirited and you could eat them a leg at a time, but there was more in the cookies--she bent such a look on you, so fierce and intolerant of vacillation. She belonged to the group of odd characters, rarer now than they used to be, etched upon the vague consciousness of small towns as in a way mysterious and uncanny; some said that Mother Beggarlegs was connected with the aristocracy and some that she had been "let off" being hanged. The alternative was allowed full swing, but in any case it was clear that such persons contributed little to the common good and, being reticent, were not entertaining. So you bought your gingerbread, concealing, as it were, your weapons, paying your copper coins with a neutral nervous eye, and made off to a safe distance, whence you turned to shout insultingly, if you were an untrounced young male of Elgin, "Old Mother Beggarlegs! Old Mother Beggarlegs!" And why "Beggarlegs" nobody in the world could tell you. It might have been a dateless waggery, or it might have been a corruption of some more dignified surname, but it was all she ever got. Serious, meticulous persons called her "Mrs" Beggarlegs, slightly lowering their voices and slurring it, however, it must be admitted. The name invested her with a graceless, anatomical interest, it penetrated her wizened black and derisively exposed her; her name went far indeed to make her dramatic. Lorne Murchison, when he was quite a little boy was affected by this and by the unfairness of the way it singled her out. Moved partly by the oppression of the feeling and partly by a desire for information he asked her sociably one day, in the act of purchase, why the gilt was generally off her gingerbread. He had been looking long, as a matter of fact, for gingerbread with the gilt on it, being accustomed to the phrase on the lips of his father in connection with small profits. Mother Beggarlegs, so unaccustomed to politeness that she could not instantly recognize it, answered him with an imprecation at which he, no doubt, retreated, suddenly thrown on the defensive hurling the usual taunt. One prefers to hope he didn't, with the invincible optimism one has for the behaviour of lovable people; but whether or not his kind attempt at colloquy is the first indication I can find of that active sympathy with the disabilities of his fellow-beings which stamped him later so intelligent

a meliorist. Even in his boy's beginning he had a heart for the work; and Mother Beggarlegs, but for a hasty conclusion, might have made him a friend.

It is hard to invest Mother Beggarlegs with importance, but the date helps me--the date I mean, of this chapter about Elgin; she was a person to be reckoned with on the twenty-fourth of May. I will say at once, for the reminder to persons living in England that the twenty-fourth of May was the Queen's Birthday. Nobody in Elgin can possibly have forgotten it. The Elgin children had a rhyme about it--

The twenty-fourth of May
Is the Queen's Birthday;
If you don't give us a holiday,
We'll all run away.

But Elgin was in Canada. In Canada the twenty-fourth of May WAS the Queen's Birthday; and these were times and regions far removed from the prescription that the anniversary "should be observed" on any of those various outlying dates which by now, must have produced in her immediate people such indecision as to the date upon which Her Majesty really did come into the world. That day, and that only, was the observed, the celebrated, a day with an essence in it, dawning more gloriously than other days and ending more regretfully, unless, indeed, it fell on a Sunday when it was "kept" on the Monday, with a slightly clouded feeling that it wasn't exactly the same thing. Travelled persons, who had spent the anniversary there, were apt to come back with a poor opinion of its celebration in "the old country"--a pleasant relish to the more-than-ever appreciated advantages of the new, the advantages that came out so by contrast. More space such persons indicated, more enterprise they boasted, and even more loyalty they would flourish, all with an affectionate reminiscent smile at the little ways of a grandmother. A "Bank" holiday, indeed! Here it was a real holiday, that woke you with bells and cannon--who has forgotten the time the ancient piece of ordnance in "the Square" blew out all the windows in the Methodist church?--and went on with squibs and crackers till you didn't know where to step on the sidewalks, and ended up splendidly with rockets and fire-balloons and drunken Indians vociferous on their way to the lock-up. Such a day for the hotels, with teams hitched three abreast in front of their aromatic barrooms; such a day for the circus, with half the farmers of Fox County agape before the posters--with all their chic and shock they cannot produce such posters nowadays, nor are there any vacant lots to form attractive backgrounds--such a day for Mother Beggarlegs! The hotels, and the shops and stalls for eating and drinking, were the only places in which business was done; the public sentiment put universal shutters up, but the public appetite insisted upon excepting the means to carnival. An air of ceremonial festivity those fastened shutters gave; the sunny little town sat round them, important and significant, and nobody was ever known to forget that they were up, and go on a fool's errand. No doubt they had an impressiveness for the young countryfolk that strolled up and down Main Street in their honest best, turning into Snow's for ice-cream when a youth was disposed to treat. (Gallantry exacted ten-cent dishes, but for young ladies alone, or family parties, Mrs Snow would bring five-cent quantities almost without asking, and for very small boys one dish and the requisite number of spoons.) There was discrimination, there was choice, in this matter of treating. A happy excitement

accompanied it, which you could read in the way Corydon clapped his soft felt hat on his head as he pocketed the change. To be treated--to ten-cent dishes--three times in the course of the day by the same young man gave matter for private reflection and for public entertainment, expressed in the broad grins of less reckless people. I speak of a soft felt hat, but it might be more than that: it might be a dark green one, with a feather in it; and here was distinction, for such a hat indicated that its owner belonged to the Independent Order of Foresters, who would leave their spring wheat for forty miles round to meet in Elgin and march in procession, wearing their hats, and dazzlingly scatter upon Main Street. They gave the day its touch of imagination, those green cocked hats; they were lyrical upon the highways; along the prosaic sidewalks by twos and threes they sang together. It is no great thing, a hat of any quality; but a small thing may ring dramatic on the right metal, and in the vivid idea of Lorne Murchison and his sister Advena a Robin Hood walked in every Independent Forester, especially in the procession. Which shows the risks you run if you, a person of honest livelihood and solicited vote, adopt any portion of a habit not familiar to you. and go marching about with a banner and a band. Two children may be standing at the first street corner, to whom your respectability and your property may at once become illusion and your outlawry the delightful fact.

A cheap trip brought the Order of Green Hats to Elgin; and there were cheap trips on this great day to persuade other persons to leave it. The Grand Trunk had even then an idea of encouraging social combination for change of scene, and it was quite a common thing for the operatives of the Milburn Boiler Company to arrange to get themselves carried to the lakeside or "the Falls" at half a dollar a head. The "hands" got it up themselves and it was a question in Elgin whether one might sink one's dignity and go as a hand for the sake of the fifty-cent opportunity, a question usually decided in the negative. The social distinctions of Elgin may not be easily appreciated by people accustomed to the rough and ready standards of a world at the other end of the Grand Trunk; but it will be clear at a glance that nobody whose occupation prescribed a clean face could be expected to travel cheek by jowl, as a privilege, with persons who were habitually seen with smutty ones, barefaced smut, streaming out at the polite afternoon hour of six, jangling an empty dinner pail. So much we may decide, and leave it, reflecting as we go how simple and satisfactory, after all, are the prejudices which can hold up such obvious justification. There was recently to be pointed out in England the heir to a dukedom who loved stoking, and got his face smutty by preference. He would have been deplorably subversive of accepted conventions in Elgin; but, happily or otherwise, such persons and such places have at present little more than an imaginative acquaintance, vaguely cordial on the one side, vaguely critical on the other, and of no importance in the sum.

Polite society, to return to it, preferred the alternative of staying at home and mowing the lawn or drinking raspberry vinegar on its own beflagged verandah; looking forward in the afternoon to the lacrosse match. There was nearly always a lacrosse match on the Queen's Birthday, and it was the part of elegance to attend and encourage the home team, as well as that of small boys, with broken straw hats, who sneaked an entrance, and were more enthusiastic than anyone. It was "a quarter" to get in, so the spectators were naturally composed of persons who

could afford the quarter, and persons like the young Flannigans and Finnigans, who absolutely couldn't, but who had to be there all the same. Lorne and Advena Murchison never had the quarter, so they witnessed few lacrosse matches, though they seldom failed to refresh themselves by a sight of the players after the game when, crimson and perspiring, but still glorious in striped jerseys, their lacrosses and running shoes slung over one shoulder, these heroes left the field.

The Birthday I am thinking of, with Mrs Murchison as a central figure in the kitchen, peeling potatoes for dinner, there was a lacrosse match of some importance for the Fox County Championship and the Fox County Cup as presented by the Member for the South Riding. Mrs Murchison remains the central figure, nevertheless, with her family radiating from her, gathered to help or to hinder in one of those domestic crises which arose when the Murchisons were temporarily deprived of a "girl." Everybody was subject to them in Elgin, everybody had to acknowledge and face them. Let a new mill be opened, and it didn't matter what you paid her or how comfortable you made her, off she would go, and you might think yourself lucky if she gave a week's warning. Hard times shut down the mills and brought her back again; but periods of prosperity were very apt to find the ladies of Elgin where I am compelled to introduce Mrs Murchison--in the kitchen. "You'd better get up--the girl's gone," Lorne had stuck his head into his sister's room to announce, while yet the bells were ringing and the rifles of the local volunteers were spitting out the feu de joie. "I've lit the fire an' swep' out the dining-room. You tell mother. Queen's Birthday, too--I guess Lobelia's about as mean as they're made!" And the Murchisons had descended to face the situation. Lorne had by then done his part, and gone out into the chromatic possibilities of the day; but the sense of injury he had communicated to Advena in her bed remained and expanded. Lobelia, it was felt, had scurvily manipulated the situation--her situation, it might have been put, if any Murchison had been in the temper for jesting. She had taken unjustifiable means to do a more unjustifiable thing, to secure for herself an improper and unlawful share of the day's excitements, transferring her work, by the force of circumstances, to the shoulders of other people since, as Mrs Murchison remarked, somebody had to do it. Nor had she her mistress testified the excuse of fearing unreasonable confinement. "I told her she might go when she had done her dishes after dinner," said Mrs Murchison, "and then she had only to come back at six and get tea--what's getting tea? I advised her to finish her ironing yesterday, so as to be free of it today; and she said she would be very glad to. Now, I wonder if she DID finish it!" and Mrs Murchison put down her pan of potatoes with a thump to look in the family clothes basket. "Not she! Five shirts and ALL the coloured things. I call it downright deceit!"

"I believe I know the reason she'll SAY," said Advena. "She objects to rag carpet in her bedroom. She told me so."

"Rag carpet--upon my word!" Mrs Murchison dropped her knife to exclaim. "It's what her betters have to do with! I've known the day when that very piece of rag carpet--sixty balls there were in it and every one I sewed with my own fingers--was the best I had for my spare room, with a bit of ingrain in the middle. Dear me!" she went on with a smile that lightened the whole situation, "how proud I was of that performance! She didn't tell ME she

objected to rag carpet!"

"No, Mother," Advena agreed, "she knew better."

They were all there in the kitchen, supporting their mother, and it seems an opportunity to name them. Advena, the eldest, stood by the long kitchen table washing the breakfast cups in "soft" soap and hot water. The soft soap--Mrs Murchison had a barrelful boiled every spring in the back yard, an old colonial economy she hated to resign--made a fascinating brown lather with iridescent bubbles. Advena poured cupfuls of it from on high to see the foam rise, till her mother told her for mercy's sake to get on with those dishes. She stood before a long low window, looking out into the garden and the light, filtering through apple branches on her face showed her strongly featured and intelligent for fourteen. Advena was named after one grandmother; when the next girl came Mrs Murchison, to make an end of the matter, named it Abigail, after the other. She thought both names outlandish and acted under protest, but hoped that now everybody would be satisfied. Lorne came after Advena, at the period of a naive fashion of christening the young sons of Canada in the name of her Governor-General. It was a simple way of attesting a loyal spirit, but with Mrs Murchison more particular motives operated. The Marquis of Lorne was not only the deputy of the throne, he was the son-in-law of a good woman of whom Mrs Murchison thought more, and often said it, for being the woman she was than for being twenty times a Queen; and he had made a metrical translation of the Psalms, several of which were included in the revised psalter for the use of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, from which the whole of Knox Church sang to the praise of God every Sunday. These were circumstances that weighed with Mrs Murchison, and she called her son after the Royal representative, feeling that she was doing well for him in a sense beyond the mere bestowal of a distinguished and a euphonious name, though that, as she would have willingly acknowledged, was "well enough in its place."

We must take this matter of names seriously; the Murchisons always did. Indeed, from the arrival of a new baby until the important Sunday of the christening, nothing was discussed with such eager zest and such sustained interest as the name he should get--there was a fascinating list at the back of the dictionary--and to the last minute it was problematical. In Stella's case, Mrs Murchison actually changed her mind on the way to church; and Abby, who had sat through the sermon expecting Dorothy Maud, which she thought lovely, publicly cried with disappointment. Stella was the youngest, and Mrs Murchison was thankful to have a girl at last whom she could name without regard to her own relations or anybody else's. I have skipped about a good deal, but I have only left out two, the boys who came between Abby and Stella. In their names the contemporary observer need not be too acute to discover both an avowal and to some extent an enforcement of Mr Murchison's political views; neither an Alexander Mackenzie nor an Oliver Mowat could very well grow up into anything but a sound Liberal in that part of the world without feeling himself an unendurable paradox. To christen a baby like that was, in a manner, a challenge to public attention; the faint relaxation about the lips of Dr Drummond--the best of the Liberals himself, though he made a great show of keeping it out of the pulpit--recognized this, and the just perceptible stir of the congregation proved it. Sonorously he said it. "Oliver Mowat, I baptize thee in the Name of the Father--" The

compliment should have all the impressiveness the rite could give it, while the Murchison brothers and sisters, a-row in the family pew, stood on one foot with excitement as to how Oliver Mowat would take the drops that defined him. The verdict was, on the way home, that he behaved splendidly. Alexander Mackenzie, the year before, had roared.

He was weeping now, at the age of seven, silently, but very copiously, behind the woodpile. His father had finally cuffed him for importunity; and the world was no place for a just boy, who asked nothing but his rights. Only the woodpile, friendly mossy logs unsplit, stood inconscient and irresponsible for any share in his black circumstances; and his tears fell among the lichens of the stump he was bowed on till, observing them, he began to wonder whether he could cry enough to make a pond there, and was presently disappointed to find the source exhausted. The Murchisons were all imaginative.

The others, Oliver and Abby and Stella, still "tormented." Poor Alec's rights--to a present of pocket-money on the Queen's Birthday--were common ones, and almost statutory. How their father, sitting comfortably with his pipe in the flickering May shadows under the golden pipin, reading the Toronto paper, could evade his liability in the matter was unfathomable to the Murchisons; it was certainly illiberal; they had a feeling that it was illegal. A little teasing was generally necessary, but the resistance today had begun to look ominous and Alec, as we know, too temerarious, had retired in disorder to the woodpile.

Oliver was wiping Advena's dishes. He exercised himself ostentatiously upon a plate, standing in the door to be within earshot of his father.

"Eph Wheeler," he informed his family, "Eph Wheeler, he's got twenty-five cents, an' a English sixpence, an' a Yankee nickel. An' Mr Wheeler's only a common working man, a lot poorer'n we are."

Mr Murchison removed his pipe from his lips in order, apparently, to follow unimpeded the trend of the Dominion's leading article. Oliver eyed him anxiously. "Do, Father," he continued in logical sequence. "Aw do."

"Make him, Mother," said Abby indignantly. "It's the Queen's BIRTHDAY!"

"Time enough when the butter bill's paid," said Mrs Murchison.

"Oh the BUTTER bill! Say, Father, aren't you going to?"

"What?" asked John Murchison, and again took out his pipe, as if this were the first he had heard of the matter.

"Give us our fifteen cents each to celebrate with. You can't do it under that," Oliver added firmly. "Crackers are eight cents a packet this year, the small size."

"Nonsense," said Mr Murchison. The reply was definite and final, and its ambiguity was merely due to the fact that their father disliked giving a plump refusal. "Nonsense" was easier to say, if not to hear than "No." Oliver considered for a moment, drew Abby to colloquy by the pump, and sought his brother behind the woodpile.

Then he returned to the charge.

"Look here, Father," he said, "CASH DOWN, we'll take ten."

John Murchison was a man of few words, but they were usually impregnated with meaning, especially in anger. "No more of this," he said. "Celebrate fiddlesticks! Go and make yourselves of some use. You'll get nothing from me, for I haven't got it." So saying, he went through the kitchen with a step that forbade him to be followed. His eldest son, arriving over the backyard fence in a state of heat, was just in time to hear him. Lorne's apprehension of the situation was instant, and his face fell, but the depression plainly covered such splendid spirits that his brother asked resentfully, "Well, what's the matter with YOU?"

"Matter? Oh, not much. I'm going to see the Cayugas beat the Wanderers, that's all; an' Abe Mackinnon's mother said he could ask me to come back to tea with them. Can I, Mother?"

"There's no objection that I know of," said Mrs Murchison, shaking her apron free of stray potato-parings, "but you won't get money for the lacrosse match or anything else from your father today, _I_ can assure you. They didn't do five dollars worth of business at the store all day yesterday, and he's as cross as two sticks."

"Oh, that's all right." Lorne jingled his pocket and Oliver took a fascinated step toward him. "I made thirty cents this morning, delivering papers for Fisher. His boy's sick. I did the North Ward--took me over'n hour. Guess I can go all right, can't I?"

"Why, yes, I suppose you can," said his mother. The others were dumb. Oliver hunched his shoulders and kicked at the nearest thing that had paint on it. Abby clung to the pump handle and sobbed aloud. Lorne looked gloomily about him and went out. Making once more for the back fence, he encountered Alexander in the recognized family retreat. "Oh, my goodness!" he said, and stopped. In a very few minutes he was back in the kitchen, followed sheepishly by Alexander, whose grimy face expressed the hope that beat behind his little waistcoat.

"Say, you kids," he announced, "Alec's got four cents, an' he says he'll join up. This family's going to celebrate all right. Come on down town."

No one could say that the Murchisons were demonstrative. They said nothing, but they got their hats. Mrs Murchison looked up from her occupation.

"Alec," she said, "out of this house you don't go till you've washed your face. Lorne, come here," she added in a lower voice, producing a bunch of keys. "If you look in the right-hand corner of the top small drawer in my bureau you'll find about twenty cents. Say nothing about it, and mind you don't meddle with anything else. I guess the Queen isn't going to owe it all to you."

Chapter II

"We've seen changes, Mr Murchison. Aye. We've seen

changes. "

Dr Drummond and Mr Murchison stood together in the store door, over which the sign "John Murchison: Hardware," had explained thirty years of varying commercial fortune. They had pretty well begun life together in Elgin. John Murchison was one of those who had listened to Mr Drummond's trial sermon, and had given his vote to "call" him to the charge. Since then there had been few Sundays when, morning and evening, Mr Murchison had not been in his place at the top of his pew, where his dignified and intelligent head appeared with the isolated significance of a strong individuality. People looked twice at John Murchison in a crowd; so did his own children at home. Hearing some discussion of the selection of a premier, Alec, looking earnestly at him once said, "Why don't they tell Father to be it?" The young minister looked twice at him that morning of the trial sermon, and asked afterward who he was. A Scotchman, Mr Drummond was told, not very long from the old country, who had bought the Playfair business on Main Street, and settled in the "Plummer Place," which already had a quarter of a century's standing in the annals of the town. The Playfair business was a respectable business to buy; the Plummer Place, though it stood in an unfashionable outskirts, was a respectable place to settle in; and the minister, in casting his lot in Elgin, envisaged John Murchison as part of it, thought of him confidently as a "dependance," saw him among the future elders and office-bearers of the congregation, a man who would be punctual with his pew-rent, sage in his judgements, and whose views upon church attendance would be extended to his family.

So the two came, contemporaries, to add their labour and their lives to the building of this little outpost of Empire. It was the frankest transfer, without thought of return; they were there to spend and be spent within the circumference of the spot they had chosen, with no ambition beyond. In the course of nature, even their bones and their memories would enter into the fabric. The new country filled their eyes; the new town was their opportunity, its destiny their fate. They were altogether occupied with its affairs, and the affairs of the growing Dominion, yet obscure in the heart of each of them ran the undercurrent of the old allegiance. They had gone the length of their tether, but the tether was always there. Thus, before a congregation that always stood in the early days, had the minister every Sunday morning for thirty years besought the Almighty, with ardour and humility, on behalf of the Royal Family. It came in the long prayer, about the middle. Not in the perfunctory words of a ritual, but in the language of his choice, which varied according to what he believed to be the spiritual needs of the reigning House, and was at one period, touching certain of its members, though respectful, extremely candid. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, "now in session," also--was it ever forgotten once? And even the Prime Minister, "and those who sit in council with him," with just a hint of extra commendation if it happened to be Mr Gladstone. The minister of Knox Church, Elgin, Ontario, Canada, kept his eye on them all. Remote as he was, and concerned with affairs of which they could know little, his sphere of duty could never revolve too far westward to embrace them, nor could his influence, under any circumstances, cease to be at their disposal. It was noted by some that after Mr Drummond had got his D.D. from an American University he also prayed occasionally for the President of the neighbouring republic; but this was rebutted by others, who pointed

out that it happened only on the occurrence of assassinations, and held it reasonable enough. The cavillers mostly belonged to the congregation of St Andrew's, "Established"--a glum, old-fashioned lot indeed--who now and then dropped in of a Sunday evening to hear Mr Drummond preach. (There wasn't much to be said for the preaching at St Andrew's.) The Established folk went on calling the minister of Knox Church "Mr" Drummond long after he was "Doctor" to his own congregation, on account of what they chose to consider the dubious source of the dignity; but the Knox Church people had their own theory to explain this hypercriticism, and would promptly turn the conversation to the merits of the sermon.

Twenty-five years it was, in point, this Monday morning when the Doctor--not being Established we need not hesitate, besides by this time nobody did--stood with Mr Murchison in the store door and talked about having seen changes. He had preached his anniversary sermon the night before to a full church when, laying his hand upon his people's heart, he had himself to repress tears. He was aware of another strand completed in their mutual bond: the sermon had been a moral, an emotional, and an oratorical success; and in the expansion of the following morning Dr Drummond had remembered that he had promised his housekeeper a new gas cooking-range, and that it was high time he should drop into Murchison's to inquire about it. Mrs Forsyth had mentioned at breakfast that they had ranges with exactly the improvement she wanted at Thompson's, but the minister was deaf to the hint. Thompson was a Congregationalist and, improvement or no improvement, it wasn't likely that Dr Drummond was going "outside the congregation" for anything he required. It would have been on a par with a wandering tendency in his flock, upon which he systematically frowned. He was as great an autocrat in this as the rector of any country parish in England undermined by Dissent; but his sense of obligation worked unfailingly both ways.

John Murchison had not said much about the sermon; it wasn't his way, and Dr Drummond knew it. "You gave us a good sermon last night, Doctor"; not much more than that, and "I noticed the Milburns there; we don't often get Episcopalians"; and again, "The Wilcoxes"--Thomas Wilcox, wholesale grocer, was the chief prop of St Andrew's--"were sitting just in front of us. We overtook them going home, and Wilcox explained how much they liked the music. 'Glad to see you,' I said. 'Glad to see you for any reason,'" Mr Murchison's eye twinkled. "But they had a great deal to say about 'the music.'" It was not an effusive form of felicitation; the minister would have liked it less if it had been, felt less justified, perhaps, in remembering about the range on that particular morning. As it was, he was able to take it with perfect dignity and good humour, and to enjoy the point against the Wilcoxes with that laugh of his that did everybody good to hear; so hearty it was, so rich in the grain of the voice, so full of the zest and flavour of the joke. The range had been selected, and their talk of changes had begun with it, Mr Murchison pointing out the new idea in the boiler and Dr Drummond remembering his first kitchen stove that burned wood and stood on its four legs, with nothing behind but the stove pipe, and if you wanted a boiler you took off the front lids and put it on, and how remarkable even that had seemed to his eyes, fresh from the conservative kitchen notions of the old country. He had come, unhappily, a widower to the domestic improvements on the other side of the Atlantic. "Often I used to think," he said to Mr Murchison, "if my poor wife could

have seen that stove how delighted she would have been! But I doubt this would have been too much for her altogether!"

"That stove!" answered Mr Murchison. "Well I remember it. I sold it myself to your predecessor, Mr Wishart, for thirty dollars--the last purchase he ever made, poor man. It was great business for me--I had only two others in the store like it. One of them old Milburn bought--the father of this man, d'ye mind him?--the other stayed by me a matter of seven years. I carried a light stock in those days."

It was no longer a light stock. The two men involuntarily glanced round them for the satisfaction of the contrast Murchison evoked, though neither of them, from motives of vague delicacy, felt inclined to dwell upon it. John Murchison had the shyness of an artist in his commercial success, and the minister possibly felt that his relation toward the prosperity of a member had in some degree the embarrassment of a tax-gatherer's. The stock was indeed heavy now. You had to go upstairs to see the ranges, where they stood in rows, and every one of them bore somewhere upon it, in raised black letters, John Murchison's name. Through the windows came the iterating ring on the iron from the foundry in Chestnut Street which fed the shop, with an overflow that found its way from one end of the country to the other. Finicking visitors to Elgin found this wearing, but to John Murchison it was the music that honours the conqueror of circumstances. The ground floor was given up to the small wares of the business, chiefly imported; two or three young men, steady and knowledgeable-looking, moved about in their shirt sleeves among shelves and packing-cases. One of them was our friend Alec; our other friend Oliver looked after the books at the foundry. Their father did everything deliberately; but presently, in his own good time, his commercial letter paper would be headed, with regard to these two, "John Murchison and Sons." It had long announced that the business was "Wholesale and Retail."

Dr Drummond and Mr Murchison, considering the changes in Elgin from the store door, did it at their leisure, the merchant with his thumbs thrust comfortably in the armholes of his waistcoat, the minister, with that familiar trick of his, balancing on one foot and suddenly throwing his slight weight forward on the other. "A bundle of nerves," people called the Doctor: to stand still would have been a penance to him; even as he swayed backward and forward in talking, his hand must be busy at the seals on his watch chain and his shrewd glance travelling over a dozen things you would never dream so clever a man would take notice of. It was a prospect of moderate commercial activity they looked out upon, a street of mellow shopfronts on both sides, of varying height and importance, wearing that air of marking a period, a definite stop in growth, that so often coexists with quite a reasonable degree of activity and independence in colonial towns. One could almost say, standing there in the door at Murchison's, where the line of legitimate enterprise had been overpassed and where its intention had been none too sanguine--on the one hand in the faded, and pretentious red brick building with the false third storey, occupied by Cleary which must have been let at a loss to dry-goods or anything else; on the other hand in the solid "Gregory block," opposite the market, where rents were as certain as the dividends of the Bank of British North America.

Main Street expressed the idea that, for the purpose of

growing and doing business, it had always found the days long enough. Drays passed through it to the Grand Trunk station, but they passed one at a time; a certain number of people went up and down about their affairs, but they were never in a hurry; a street car jogged by every ten minutes or so, but nobody ran after it. There was a decent procedure; and it was felt that Bofield--he was dry-goods, too--in putting in an elevator was just a little unnecessarily in advance of the times. Bofield had only two storeys, like everybody else, and a very easy staircase, up which people often declared they preferred to walk rather than wait in the elevator for a young man to finish serving and work it. These, of course, were the sophisticated people of Elgin; countryfolk, on a market day, would wait a quarter of an hour for the young man and think nothing of it; and I imagine Bofield found his account in the elevator, though he did complain sometimes that such persons went up and down on frivolous pretexts or to amuse the baby. As a matter of fact, Elgin had begun as the centre of "trading" for the farmers of Fox County, and had soon over-supplied that limit in demand; so that when other interests added themselves to the activity of the town there was still plenty of room for the business they brought. Main Street was really, therefore, not a fair index; nobody in Elgin would have admitted it. Its appearance and demeanour would never have suggested that it was now the chief artery of a thriving manufacturing town, with a collegiate institute, eleven churches, two newspapers, and an asylum for the deaf and dumb, to say nothing of a fire department unsurpassed for organization and achievement in the Province of Ontario. Only at twelve noon it might be partly realized when the prolonged "toots" of seven factory whistles at once let off, so to speak, the hour. Elgin liked the demonstration; it was held to be cheerful and unmistakable, an indication of "go-ahead" proclivities which spoke for itself. It occurred while yet Dr Drummond and Mr Murchison stood together in the store door.

"I must be getting on," said the minister, looking at his watch. "And what news have you of Lorne?"

"Well, he seems to have got through all right."

"What--you've heard already, then?"

"He telegraphed from Toronto on Saturday night." Mr Murchison stroked his chin, the better to retain his satisfaction. "Waste of money--the post would have brought it this morning--but it pleased his mother. Yes, he's through his Law Schools examination, and at the top, too, as far as I can make out."

"Dear me, and you never mentioned it!" Dr Drummond spoke with the resigned impatience of a familiar grievance. It was certainly a trying characteristic of John Murchison that he never cared about communicating anything that might seem to ask for congratulation. "Well, well! I'm very glad to hear it."

"It slipped my mind," said Mr Murchison. "Yes, he's full-fledged 'barrister and solicitor' now; he can plead your case or draw you up a deed with the best of them. Lorne's made a fair record, so far. We've no reason to be ashamed of him."

"That you have not." Personal sentiments between these two Scotchmen were indicated rather than indulged. "He's going in with Fulke and Warner, I suppose--you've got

that fixed up?"

"Pretty well. Old man Warner was in this morning to talk it over. He says they look to Lorne to bring them in touch with the new generation. It's a pity he lost that son of his."

"Oh, a great pity. But since they had to go outside the firm they couldn't have done better; they couldn't have done better. I hope Lorne will bring them a bit of Knox Church business too; there's no reason why Bob Mackintosh should have it all. They'll be glad to see him back at the Hampden Debating Society. He's a great light there, is Lorne; and the Young Liberals, I hear are wanting him for chairman this year."

"There's some talk of it. But time enough--time enough for that! He'll do first-rate if he gets the law to practise, let alone the making of it."

"Maybe so; he's young yet. Well, good morning to you. I'll just step over the way to the Express office and get a proof out of them of that sermon of mine. I noticed their reporter fellow--what's his name?--Rawlins, with his pencil out last night, and I've no faith in Rawlins."

"Better cast an eye over it," responded Mr Murchison cordially, and stood for a moment or two longer in the door watching the crisp, significant little figure of the minister as he stepped briskly over the crossing to the newspaper office. There Dr Drummond sat down, before he explained his errand, and wrote a paragraph.

"We are pleased to learn," it ran "that Mr Lorne Murchison, eldest son of Mr John Murchison, of this town, has passed at the capital of the Province his final examination in Law, distinguishing himself by coming out at the top of the list. It will be remembered that Mr Murchison, upon entering the Law Schools, also carried off a valuable scholarship. We are glad to be able to announce that Mr Murchison, Junior, will embark upon his profession in his native town, where he will enter the well-known firm of Fulke and Warner."

The editor, Mr Horace Williams, had gone to dinner, and Rawlins was out so Dr Drummond had to leave it with the press foreman. Mr Williams read it appreciatively on his return, and sent it down with the following addition:

"This is doing it as well as it can be done. Elgin congratulates Mr L. Murchison upon having produced these results, and herself upon having produced Mr L. Murchison."

Chapter III

From the day she stepped into it Mrs Murchison knew that the Plummer Place was going to be the bane of her existence. This may have been partly because Mr Murchison had bought it, since a circumstance welded like that into one's life is very apt to assume the character of a bane, unless one's temperament leads one to philosophy, which Mrs Murchison's didn't. But there were other reasons more difficult to traverse: it was plainly true that the place did require a tremendous amount of "looking after," as such things were measured in Elgin, far more looking after than the Murchisons could afford to give it. They

could never have afforded, in the beginning, to possess it had it not been sold, under mortgage, at a dramatic sacrifice. The house was a dignified old affair, built of wood and painted white, with wide green verandahs compassing the four sides of it, as they often did in days when the builder had only to turn his hand to the forest. It stood on the very edge of the town; wheatfields in the summer billowed up to its fences, and corn-stacks in the autumn camped around it like a besieging army. The plank sidewalk finished there; after that you took the road or, if you were so inclined, the river, into which you could throw a stone from the orchard of the Plummer Place. The house stood roomily and shadily in ornamental grounds, with a lawn in front of it and a shrubbery at each side, an orchard behind, and a vegetable garden, the whole intersected by winding gravel walks, of which Mrs Murchison was wont to say that a man might do nothing but weed them and have his hands full. In the middle of the lawn was a fountain, an empty basin with a plaster Triton, most difficult to keep looking respectable and pathetic in his frayed air of exile from some garden of Italy sloping to the sea. There was also a barn with stabling, a loft, and big carriage doors opening on a lane to the street. The originating Plummer, Mrs Murchison often said, must have been a person of large ideas, and she hoped he had the money to live up to them. The Murchisons at one time kept a cow in the barn, till a succession of "girls" left on account of the milking, and the lane was useful as an approach to the backyard by the teams that brought the cordwood in the winter. It was trying enough for a person with the instinct of order to find herself surrounded by out-of-door circumstances which she simply could not control but Mrs Murchison often declared that she could put up with the grounds if it had stopped there. It did not stop there. Though I was compelled to introduce Mrs Murchison in the kitchen, she had a drawing-room in which she might have received the Lieutenant-Governor, with French windows and a cut-glass chandelier, and a library with an Italian marble mantelpiece. She had an icehouse and a wine cellar, and a string of bells in the kitchen that connected with every room in the house; it was a negligible misfortune that not one of them was in order. She had far too much, as she declared, for any one pair of hands and a growing family, and if the ceiling was not dropping in the drawing-room, the cornice was cracked in the library or the gas was leaking in the dining-room, or the verandah wanted reflooring if anyone coming to the house was not to put his foot through it; and as to the barn, if it was dropping to pieces it would just have to drop. The barn was definitely outside the radius of possible amelioration--it passed gradually, visibly, into decrepitude, and Mrs Murchison often wished she could afford to pull it down.

It may be realized that in spite of its air of being impossible to "overtake"--I must, in this connection, continue to quote its mistress--there was an attractiveness about the dwelling of the Murchisons the attractiveness of the large ideas upon which it had been built and designed, no doubt by one of those gentlefolk of reduced income who wander out to the colonies with a nebulous view to economy and occupation, to perish of the readjustment. The case of such persons, when they arrive, is at once felt to be pathetic; there is a tacit local understanding that they have made a mistake. They may be entitled to respect, but nothing can save them from the isolation of their difference and their misapprehension. It was like that with the house. The house was admired--

without enthusiasm--but it was not copied. It was felt to be outside the general need, misjudged, adventitious; and it wore its superiority in the popular view like a folly. It was in Elgin, but not of it: it represented a different tradition; and Elgin made the same allowance for its bedroom bells and its old-fashioned dignities as was conceded to its original master's habit of a six-o'clock dinner, with wine.

The architectural expression of the town was on a different scale, beginning with "frame," rising through the semidetached, culminating expensively in Mansard roofs, cupolas and modern conveniences, and blossoming, in extreme instances, into Moorish fretwork and silk portieres for interior decoration. The Murchison house gained by force of contrast: one felt, stepping into it, under influences of less expediency and more dignity, wider scope and more leisured intention; its shabby spaces had a redundancy the pleasanter and its yellow plaster cornices a charm the greater for the numerous close-set examples of contemporary taste in red brick which made, surrounded by geranium beds, so creditable an appearance in the West Ward. John Murchison in taking possession of the house had felt in it these satisfactions, had been definitely penetrated and soothed by them, the more perhaps because he brought to them a capacity for feeling the worthier things of life which circumstances had not previously developed. He seized the place with a sense of opportunity leaping sharp and conscious out of early years in the grey "wynds" of a northern Scottish town; and its personality sustained him, very privately but none the less effectively, through the worry and expense of it for years. He would take his pipe and walk silently for long together about the untidy shrubberies in the evening, for the acute pleasure of seeing the big horse chestnuts in flower; and he never opened the hall door without a feeling of gratification in its weight as it swung under his hand. In so far as he could, he supplemented the idiosyncrasies he found. The drawing-room walls, though mostly bare in their old-fashioned French paper--lavender and gilt, a grape-vine pattern--held a few good engravings; the library was reduced to contain a single bookcase, but it was filled with English classics. John Murchison had been made a careful man, not by nature, by the discipline of circumstances; but he would buy books. He bought them between long periods of abstinence, during which he would scout the expenditure of an unnecessary dollar, coming home with a parcel under his arm for which he vouchsafed no explanation, and which would disclose itself to be Lockhart, or Sterne, or Borrow, or Defoe. Mrs Murchison kept a discouraging eye upon such purchases; and when her husband brought home Chambers's Dictionary of English Literature, after shortly and definitely repulsing her demand that he should get himself a new winter overcoat, she declared that it was beyond all endurance. Mrs Murchison was surrounded, indeed, by more of "that sort of thing" than she could find use or excuse for; since, though books made but a sporadic appearance, current literature, daily, weekly, and monthly, was perpetually under her feet. The Toronto paper came as a matter of course, as the London daily takes its morning flight into the provinces, the local organ as simply indispensable, the Westminster as the corollary of church membership and for Sunday reading. These were constant, but there were also mutables--Once a Week, Good Words for the Young, Blackwood's, and the Cornhill they used to be; years of back numbers Mrs Murchison had packed away in the attic, where Advena on rainy days came into the inheritance of them, and made an early acquaintance

with fiction in Ready Money Mortiboy and Verner's Pride, while Lorne, flat on his stomach beside her, had glorious hours on The Back of the North Wind. Their father considered such publications and their successors essential, like tobacco and tea. He was also an easy prey to the subscription agent, for works published in parts and paid for in instalments, a custom which Mrs Murchison regarded with abhorrence. So much so that when John put his name down for Masterpieces of the World's Art, which was to cost twenty dollars by the time it was complete, he thought it advisable to let the numbers accumulate at the store.

Whatever the place represented to their parents, it was pure joy to the young Murchisons. It offered a margin and a mystery to life. They saw it far larger than it was; they invested it, arguing purely by its difference from other habitations, with a romantic past. "I guess when the Prince of Wales came to Elgin, Mother, he stayed here," Lorne remarked, as a little boy. Secretly he and Advena took up boards in more than one unused room, and rapped on more than one thick wall to find a hollow chamber; the house revealed so much that was interesting, it was apparent to the meanest understanding that it must hide even more. It was never half lighted, and there was a passage in which fear dwelt--wild were the gallopades from attic to cellar in the early nightfall, when every young Murchison tore after every other, possessed, like cats, by a demoniac ecstasy of the gloaming. And the garden, with the autumn moon coming over the apple trees and the neglected asparagus thick for ambush, and a casual untrimmed boy or two with the delicious recommendation of being utterly without credentials, to join in the rout and be trusted to make for the back fence without further hint at the voice of Mrs Murchison--these were joys of the very fibre, things to push ideas and envisage life with an attraction that made it worth while to grow up.

And they had all achieved it--all six. They had grown up sturdily, emerging into sobriety and decorum by much the same degrees as the old house, under John Murchison's improving fortunes, grew cared for and presentable. The new roof went on, slate replacing shingles, the year Abby put her hair up; the bathroom was contemporary with Oliver's leaving school; the electric light was actually turned on for the first time in honour of Lorne's return from Toronto, a barrister and solicitor; several rooms had been done up for Abby's wedding. Abby had married, early and satisfactorily, Dr Harry Johnson, who had placidly settled down to await the gradual succession of his father's practice; "Dr Harry and Dr Henry" they were called. Dr Harry lived next door to Dr Henry, and had a good deal of the old man's popular manner. It was an unacknowledged partnership, which often provided two opinions for the same price; the town prophesied well of it. That left only five at home, but they always had Abby over in the West Ward, where Abby's housekeeping made an interest and Abby's baby a point of pilgrimage. These considerations almost consoled Mrs Murchison declaring, as she did, that all of them might have gone but Abby, who alone knew how to be "any comfort or any dependence" in the house; who could be left with a day's preserving; and I tell you that to be left by Mrs Murchison with a day's preserving, be it cherries or strawberries, damsons or pears, was a mark of confidence not easy to obtain. Advena never had it; Advena, indeed, might have married and removed no prop of the family economy. Mrs Murchison would have been "sorry for the man"--she maintained a candour toward and about those belonging to her that

permitted no illusions--but she would have stood cheerfully out of the way on her own account. When you have seen your daughter reach and pass the age of twenty-five without having learned properly to make her own bed, you know without being told that she will never be fit for the management of a house--don't you? Very well then. And for ever and for ever, no matter what there was to do, with a book in her hand--Mrs Murchison would put an emphasis on the "book" which scarcely concealed a contempt for such absorption. And if, at the end of your patience, you told her for any sake to put it down and attend to matters, obeying in a kind of dream that generally drove you to take the thing out of her hands and do it yourself, rather than jump out of your skin watching her.

Sincerely Mrs Murchison would have been sorry for the man if he had arrived, but he had not arrived. Advena justified her existence by taking the university course for women at Toronto, and afterward teaching the English branches to the junior forms in the Collegiate Institute, which placed her arbitrarily outside the sphere of domestic criticism. Mrs Murchison was thankful to have her there--outside--where little more could reasonably be expected of her than that she should be down in time for breakfast. It is so irritating to be justified in expecting more than seems likely to come. Mrs Murchison's ideas circulated strictly in the orbit of equity and reason; she expected nothing from anybody that she did not expect from herself; indeed, she would spare others in far larger proportion. But the sense of obligation which led her to offer herself up to the last volt of her energy made her miserable when she considered that she was not fairly done by in return. Pressed down and running over were the services she offered to the general good, and it was on the ground of the merest justice that she required from her daughters "some sort of interest" in domestic affairs. From her eldest she got no sort of interest, and it was like the removal of a grievance from the hearth when Advena took up employment which ranged her definitely beyond the necessity of being of any earthly use in the house. Advena's occupation to some extent absorbed her shortcomings, which was much better than having to attribute them to her being naturally "through-other," or naturally clever, according to the bias of the moment. Mrs Murchison no longer excused or complained of her daughter; but she still pitied the man.

"The boys," of course, were too young to think of matrimony. They were still the boys, the Murchison boys; they would be the boys at forty if they remained under their father's roof. In the mother country, men in short jackets and round collars emerge from the preparatory schools; in the daughter lands boys in tailcoats conduct serious affairs. Alec and Oliver, in the business, were frivolous enough as to the feminine interest. For all Dr Drummond's expressed and widely known views upon the subject, it was a common thing for one or both of these young men to stray from the family pew on Sunday evenings to the services of other communions, thereafter to walk home in the dusk under the maples with some attractive young person, and be sedately invited to finish the evening on her father's verandah. Neither of them was guiltless of silk ties knitted or handkerchiefs initialed by certain fingers; without repeating scandal, one might say by various fingers. For while the ultimate import of these matters was not denied in Elgin, there was a general feeling against giving too much meaning to them, probably originating in a reluctance among heads of families to add to their responsibilities. These early spring

indications were belittled and laughed at; so much so that the young people themselves hardly took them seriously, but regarded them as a form of amusement almost conventional. Nothing would have surprised or embarrassed them more than to learn that their predilections had an imperative corollary, that anything should, of necessity, "come of it." Something, of course, occasionally did come of it; and, usually after years of "attention," a young man of Elgin found himself mated to a young woman, but never under circumstances that could be called precipitate or rash. The cautious blood and far sight of the early settlers, who had much to reckon with, were still preponderant social characteristics of the town they cleared the site for. Meanwhile, however, flowers were gathered, and all sorts of evanescent idylls came and went in the relations of young men and maidens. Alec and Oliver Murchison were already in the full tide of them.

From this point of view they did not know what to make of Lorne. It was not as if their brother were in any way ill calculated to attract that interest which gave to youthful existence in Elgin almost the only flavour that it had. Looks are looks, and Lorne had plenty of them; taller by an inch than Alec, broader by two than Oliver, with a fine square head and blue eyes in it, and features which conveyed purpose and humour, lighted by a certain simplicity of soul that pleased even when it was not understood. "Open," people said he was, and "frank"--so he was, frank and open, with horizons and intentions; you could see them in his face. Perhaps it was more conscious of them than he was. Ambition, definitely shining goals, adorn the perspectives of young men in new countries less often than is commonly supposed. Lorne meant to be a good lawyer, squarely proposed to himself that the country should hold no better; and as to more selective usefulness, he hoped to do a little stumping for the right side when Frank Jennings ran for the Ontario House in the fall. It wouldn't be his first electioneering: from the day he became chairman of the Young Liberals the party had an eye on him, and when occasion arose, winter or summer, by bobsleigh or buggy, weatherbeaten local bosses would convey him to country schoolhouses for miles about to keep a district sound on railway policy, or education, or tariff reform. He came home smiling with the triumphs of these occasions, and offered them, with the slow, good-humoured, capable drawl that inspired such confidence in him, to his family at breakfast, who said "Great!" or "Good for you, Lorne!" John Murchison oftenest said nothing, but would glance significantly at his wife, frowning and pursing his lips when she, who had most spirit of them all, would exclaim, "You'll be Premier yet, Lorne!" It was no part of the Murchison policy to draw against future balances: they might believe everything, they would express nothing; and I doubt whether Lorne himself had any map of the country he meant to travel over in that vague future, already defining in local approbation, and law business coming freely in with a special eye on the junior partner. But the tract was there, subconscious, plain in the wider glance, the alerter manner; plain even in the grasp and stride which marked him in a crowd; plain, too, in the preoccupation with other issues, were it only turning over a leader in the morning's Dominion, that carried him along indifferent to the allurements I have described. The family had a bond of union in their respect for Lorne, and this absence of nugatory inclinations in him was among its elements. Even Stella who, being just fourteen, was the natural mouthpiece of family sentiment, would declare that Lorne had something better to do than go hanging about after

girls, and for her part she thought all the more of him for it.

Chapter IV

"I am requested to announce," said Dr Drummond after the singing of the last hymn, "the death, yesterday morning, of James Archibald Ramsay, for fifteen years an adherent and for twenty-five years a member of this church. The funeral will take place from the residence of the deceased, on Court House Street, tomorrow afternoon at four o'clock. Friends and acquaintances are respectfully--invited--to attend."

The minister's voice changed with the character of its affairs. Still vibrating with the delivery of his sermon, it was now charged with the official business of the interment. In its inflections it expressed both elegy and eulogy; and in the brief pause before and after "invited" and the fall of "attend" there was the last word of comment upon the mortal term. A crispation of interest passed over the congregation; every chin was raised. Dr Drummond's voice had a wonderful claiming power, but he often said he wished his congregation would pay as undivided attention to the sermon as they did to the announcements.

"The usual weekly prayer meeting will be held in the basement of the church on Wednesday evening." Then almost in a tone of colloquy, and with just a hint of satire about his long upper lip--

"I should be glad to see a better attendance of the young people at these gatherings. Time was when the prayer meeting counted among our young men and women as an occasion not to be lightly passed over. In these days it would seem that there is too much business to be done, or too much pleasure to be enjoyed, for the oncoming generation to remember their weekly engagement with the Lord. This is not as it should be; and I rely upon the fathers and mothers of this congregation, who brought these children in their arms to the baptismal font, there to be admitted to the good hopes and great privileges of the Church of God--I rely upon them to see that there shall be no departure from the good old rule, and that time is found for the weekly prayer meeting."

Mrs Murchison nudged Stella, who returned the attention, looking elaborately uninterested, with her foot. Alec and Oliver smiled consciously; their father, with an expression of severe gravity, backed up the minister who, after an instant's pause, continued--

"On Tuesday afternoon next, God willing, I shall visit the following families in the East Ward--Mr Peterson, Mr Macormack, Mrs Samuel Smith, and Mr John Flint. On Thursday afternoon in the South Ward, Mrs Reid, Mr P. C. Cameron, and Mr Murchison. We will close by singing the Third Doxology: Blessed be Jehovah, Israel's God to all eternity--"

The congregation trooped out; the Murchisons walked home in a clan, Mr and Mrs Murchison, with Stella skirting the edge of the sidewalk beside them, the two young men behind. Abby, when she married Harry, had "gone over" to the Church of England. The wife must worship with the

husband; even Dr Drummond recognized the necessity, though he professed small opinion of the sway of the spouse who, with Presbyterian traditions behind her, could not achieve union the other way about; and Abby's sanctioned defection was a matter of rather shame-faced reference by her family. Advena and Lorne had fallen into the degenerate modern habit of preferring the evening service.

"So we're to have the Doctor on Thursday," said Mrs Murchison, plainly not displeased. "Well, I hope the dining-room carpet will be down."

"I expect he'll be wanting his tea," replied Mr Murchison. "He's got you in the right place on the list for that, Mother--as usual."

"I'd just like to see him go anywhere else for his tea the day he was coming to our house," declared Stella. "But he GENERALLY has too much sense."

"You boys," said Mrs Murchison, turning back to her sons, "will see that you're on hand that evening. And I hope the Doctor will rub it in about the prayer meeting." Mrs Murchison chuckled. "I saw it went home to both of you, and well it might. Yes, I think I may as well expect him to tea. He enjoys my scalloped oysters, if I do say it myself."

"We'll get Abby over," said Mr Murchison. "That'll please the Doctor."

"I must say," remarked Stella, "he seems to think a lot more of Abby now that she's Mrs Episcopal Johnson."

"Yes, Abby and Harry must come," said Mrs Murchison, "and I was thinking of inviting Mr and Mrs Horace Williams. We've been there till I'm ashamed to look them in the face. And I've pretty well decided," she added autocratically, "to have chicken salad. So if Dr Drummond has made up his mouth for scalloped oysters he'll be disappointed."

"Mother," announced Stella, "I'm perfectly certain you'll have both."

"I'll consider it," replied her mother. "Meanwhile we would be better employed in thinking of what we have been hearing. That's the third sermon from the Book of Job in six weeks. I must say, with the whole of the two Testaments to select from, I don't see why the Doctor should be so taken up with Job."

Stella was vindicated; Mrs Murchison did have both. The chicken salad gleamed at one end of the table and the scalloped oysters smoked delicious at the other. Lorne had charge of the cold tongue and Advena was entrusted with the pickled pears. The rest of the family were expected to think about the tea biscuits and the cake, for Lobelia had never yet had a successor that was any hand with company. Mrs Murchison had enough to do to pour out the tea. It was a table to do anybody credit, with its glossy damask and the old-fashioned silver and best china that Mrs Murchison had brought as a bride to her housekeeping--for, thank goodness, her mother had known what was what in such matters--a generous attractive table that you took some satisfaction in looking at. Mrs Murchison came of a family of noted housekeepers; where she got her charm I don't know. Six-o'clock tea, and that the last meal in the day, was the rule in Elgin, and a

good enough rule for Mrs Murchison, who had no patience with the innovation of a late dinner recently adopted by some people who could keep neither their servants nor their digestions in consequence. It had been a crisp October day; as Mr Murchison remarked, the fall evenings were beginning to draw in early; everybody was glad of the fire in the grate and the closed curtains. Dr Drummond had come about five, and the inquiries and comments upon family matters that the occasion made incumbent had been briskly exchanged, with just the word that marked the pastoral visit and the practical interest that relieved it. And he had thought, on the whole, that he might manage to stay to tea, at which Mrs Murchison's eyes twinkled as she said affectionately--

"Now, Doctor, you know we could never let you off."

Then Abby had arrived and her husband, and finally Mr and Mrs Williams, just a trifle late for etiquette, but well knowing that it mustn't be enough to spoil the biscuits. Dr Drummond in the place of honour, had asked the blessing, and that brief reminder of the semi official character of the occasion having been delivered, was in the best of humours. The Murchisons were not far wrong in the happy divination that he liked coming to their house. Its atmosphere appealed to him; he expanded in its humour, its irregularity, its sense of temperament. They were doubtful allurements, from the point of view of a minister of the Gospel, but it would not occur to Dr Drummond to analyse them. So far as he was aware, John Murchison was just a decent, prosperous, Christian man, on whose word and will you might depend, and Mrs Murchison a stirring, independent little woman, who could be very good company when she felt inclined. As to their sons and daughters, in so far as they were a credit, he was as proud of them as their parents could possibly be, regarding himself as in a much higher degree responsible for the formation of their characters and the promise of their talents. And indeed, since every one of them had "sat under" Dr Drummond from the day he or she was capable of sitting under anybody, Mr and Mrs Murchison would have been the last to dispute this. It was not one of those houses where a pastor could always be sure of leaving some spiritual benefit behind; but then he came away himself with a pleasant sense of nervous stimulus which was apt to take his mind off the matter. It is not given to all of us to receive or to extend the communion of the saints; Mr and Mrs Murchison were indubitably of the elect, but he was singularly close-mouthed about it, and she had an extraordinary way of seeing the humorous side--altogether it was paralysing, and the conversation would wonderfully soon slip round to some robust secular subject, public or domestic. I have mentioned Dr Drummond's long upper lip; all sorts of racial virtues resided there, but his mouth was also wide and much frequented by a critical, humorous, philosophical smile which revealed a view of life at once kindly and trenchant. His shrewd grey eyes were encased in wrinkles, and when he laughed his hearty laugh they almost disappeared in a merry line. He had a fund of Scotch stories, and one or two he was very fond of, at the expense of the Methodists, that were known up and down the Dominion, and nobody enjoyed them more than he did himself. He had once worn his hair in a high curl on his scholarly forehead, and a silvering tuft remained brushed upright; he took the old-fashioned precaution of putting cotton wool in his ears, which gave him more than ever the look of something highly concentrated and conserved but in no way detracted from his dignity. St Andrew's folk accused him of vanity because of the

diamond he wore on his little finger. He was by no means handsome, but he was intensely individual; perhaps he had vanity; his people would have forgiven him worse things. And at Mrs Murchison's tea party he was certainly, as John Murchison afterward said, "in fine feather."

An absorbing topic held them, a local topic, a topic involving loss and crime and reprisals. The Federal Bank had sustained a robbery of five thousand dollars. and in the course of a few days had placed their cashier under arrest for suspected complicity. Their cashier was Walter Ormiston, the only son of old Squire Ormiston, of Moneida Reservation, ten miles out of Elgin, who had administered the affairs of the Indians there for more years than the Federal Bank had existed. Mr Williams brought the latest news, as was to be expected; news flowed in rivulets to Mr Williams all day long; he paid for it, dealt in it, could spread or suppress it.

"They've admitted the bail," Mr Williams announced, with an air of self-surveillance. Rawlins had brought the intelligence in too late for the current issue, and Mr Williams was divided between his human desire to communicate and his journalistic sense that the item would be the main feature of the next afternoon's Express.

"I'm glad of that. I'm glad of that," repeated Dr Drummond. "Thank you, Mrs Murchison, I'll send my cup. And did you learn, Williams, for what amount?"

Mr Williams ran his hand through his hair in the effort to remember, and decided that he might as well let it all go. The Mercury couldn't fail to get it by tomorrow anyhow.

"Three thousand," he said. "Milburn and Dr Henry Johnson."

"I thought Father was bound to be in it," remarked Dr Harry.

"Half and half?" asked John Murchison.

"No," contributed Mrs Williams. "Mr Milburn two and Dr Henry one. Mr Milburn is Walter's uncle, you know."

Mr Williams fastened an outraged glance on his wife, who looked another way. Whatever he thought proper to do, it was absolutely understood that she was to reveal nothing of what "came in," and was even carefully to conserve anything she heard outside with a view to bringing it in. Mrs Williams was too prone to indiscretion in the matter of letting news slip prematurely; and as to its capture, her husband would often confess, with private humour, that Minnie wasn't much of a mouser.

"Well, that's something to be thankful for," said Mrs Murchison. "I lay awake for two hours last night thinking of that boy in jail, and his poor old father, seventy-nine years of age, and such a fine old man, so thoroughly respected."

"I don't know the young fellow," said Dr Drummond. "but they say he's of good character, not over-solid, but bears a clean reputation. They're all Tories together, of course, the Ormistons."

"It's an old U. E. Loyalist family," remarked Advena. "Mr Ormiston has one or two rather interesting Revolutionary trophies at his house out there."

"None the worse for that. None the worse for that," said Dr Drummond.

"Old Ormiston's father," contributed the editor of the Express, "had a Crown grant of the whole of Moneida Reservation at one time. Government actually bought it back from him to settle the Indians there. He was a well-known Family Compact man, and fought tooth and nail for the Clergy Reserves in 'fifty."

"Well, well," said Dr Drummond, with a twinkle. "We'll hope young Ormiston is innocent, nevertheless."

"Nasty business for the Federal Bank if he is," Mr Williams went on. "They're a pretty unpopular bunch as it is."

"Of course he's innocent," contributed Stella, with indignant eyes; "and when they prove it, what can he do to the bank for taking him up? That's what I want to know."

Her elders smiled indulgently. "A lot you know about it, kiddie," said Oliver. It was the only remark he made during the meal. Alec passed the butter assiduously, but said nothing at all. Adolescence was inarticulate in Elgin on occasions of ceremony.

"I hear they've piled up some big evidence," said Mr Williams. "Young Ormiston's been fool enough to do some race-betting lately. Minnie, I wish you'd get Mrs Murchison to show you how to pickle pears. Of course," he added, "they're keeping it up their sleeve."

"It's a hard place to keep evidence," said Lorne Murchison at last with a smile which seemed to throw light on the matter. They had all been waiting, more or less consciously, for what Lorne would have to say.

"Lorne, you've got it!" divined his mother instantly.

"Got what, Mother?"

"The case! I've suspected it from the minute the subject was mentioned! That case came in today!"

"And you sitting there like a bump on a log, and never telling us!" exclaimed Stella, with reproach.

"Stella, you have a great deal too much to say," replied her brother. "Suppose you try sitting like a bump on a log. We won't complain. Yes, the Squire seems to have made up his mind about the defence, and my seniors haven't done much else today."

"Rawlins saw him hitched up in front of your place for about two hours this morning," said Mr Williams. "I told him I thought that was good enough, but we didn't say anything, Rawlins having heard it was to be Flynn from Toronto. And I hadn't forgotten the Grand Trunk case we put down to you last week without exactly askin'. Your old man was as mad as a hornet--wanted to stop his subscription; Rawlins had no end of a time to get round him. Little things like that will creep in when you've got to trust to one man to run the whole local show. But I didn't want the Mercury to have another horse on us."

"Do you think you'll get a look in, Lorne?" asked Dr Harry.

"Oh, not a chance of it. The old man's as keen as a razor on the case, and you'd think Warner never had one before! If I get a bit of grubbing to do, under supervision, they'll consider I ought to be pleased." It was the sunniest possible tone of grumbling; it enlisted your sympathy by its very acknowledgement that it had not a leg to stand on.

"They're pretty wild about it out Moneida way," said Dr Harry. "My father says the township would put down the bail three times over."

"They swear by the Squire out there," said Mr Horace Williams, liberally applying his napkin to his moustache. "He treated some of them more than square when the fall wheat failed three years running, about ten years back; do you remember, Mr Murchison? Lent them money at about half the bank rate, and wasn't in an awful sweat about getting it in at that either."

"And wasn't there something about his rebuilding the school-house at his own expense not so long ago?" asked Dr Drummond.

"Just what he did. I wanted to send Rawlins out and make a story of it--we'd have given it a column, with full heads; but the old man didn't like it. It's hard to know what some people will like. But it was my own foolishness for asking. A thing like that is public property."

"There's a good deal of feeling," said Lorne. "So much that I understand the bank is moving for change of venue."

"I hope they won't get it," said Dr Drummond sharply. "A strong local feeling is valuable evidence in a case like this. I don't half approve this notion that a community can't manage its own justice when it happens to take an interest in the case. I've no more acquaintance with the Squire than 'How d'ye do?' and I don't know his son from Adam; but I'd serve on the jury tomorrow if the Crown asked it, and there's many more like me."

Mr Williams, who had made a brief note on his shirt cuff, restored his pencil to his waistcoat pocket. "I shall oppose a change of venue," said he.

Chapter V

It was confidently expected by the Murchison family that when Stella was old enough she would be a good deal in society. Stella, without doubt, was well equipped for society; she had exactly those qualities which appealed to it in Elgin, among which I will mention two--the quality of being able to suggest that she was quite as good as anybody without saying so, and the even more important quality of not being any better. Other things being equal--those common worldly standards that prevailed in Elgin as well as anywhere else in their degree--other things being equal, this second simple quality was perhaps the most important of all. Mr and Mrs Murchison made no claim and small attempt upon society. One doubts whether, with children coming fast and hard times long at the door, they gave the subject much consideration; but if they did, it is highly unlikely to have occurred to them that they were too good for their environment. Yet in a

manner they were. It was a matter of quality, of spiritual and mental fabric; they were hardly aware that they had it, but it marked them with a difference, and a difference is the one thing a small community, accustomed comfortably to scan its own intelligible averages, will not tolerate. The unusual may take on an exaggeration of these; an excess of money, an excess of piety, is understood; but idiosyncrasy susceptible to no common translation is regarded with the hostility earned by the white crow, modified among law-abiding humans into tacit repudiation. It is a sound enough social principle to distrust that which is not understood, like the strain of temperament inarticulate but vaguely manifest in the Murchisons. Such a strain may any day produce an eccentric or a genius, emancipated from the common interests, possibly inimical to the general good; and when, later on, your genius takes flight or your eccentric sells all that he has and gives it to the poor, his fellow townsmen exchange shrewd nods before the vindicating fact.

Nobody knew it at all in Elgin, but this was the Murchisons' case. They had produced nothing abnormal, but they had to prove that they weren't going to, and Stella was the last and most convincing demonstration. Advena, bookish and unconventional, was regarded with dubiety. She was out of the type; she had queer satisfactions and enthusiasms. Once as a little girl she had taken a papoose from a drunken squaw and brought it home for her mother to adopt. Mrs Murchison's reception of the suggested duty may be imagined, also the comments of acquaintances--a trick like that! The inevitable hour arrived when she should be instructed on the piano, and the second time the music teacher came her pupil was discovered on the roof of the house, with the ladder drawn up after her. She did not wish to learn the piano, and from that point of vantage informed her family that it was a waste of money. She would hide in the hayloft with a novel; she would be off by herself in a canoe at six o'clock in the morning; she would go for walks in the rain of windy October twilights and be met kicking the wet leaves along in front of her "in a dream." No one could dream with impunity in Elgin, except in bed. Mothers of daughters sympathized in good set terms with Mrs Murchison. "If that girl were mine--" they would say, and leave you with a stimulated notion of the value of corporal punishment. When she took to passing examinations and teaching, Elgin considered that her parents ought to be thankful in the probability that she had escaped some dramatic end. But her occupation further removed her from intercourse with the town's more exclusive circles: she had taken a definite line, and she pursued it, preoccupied. If she was a brand snatched from the burning, she sent up a little curl of reflection in a safe place, where she was not further interrupted.

Abby, inheriting all these prejudices, had nevertheless not done so badly; she had taken no time at all to establish herself; she had almost immediately married. In the social estimates of Elgin the Johnsons were "nice people," Dr Henry was a fine old figure in the town, and Abby's chances were good enough. At all events, when she opened her doors as a bride, receiving for three afternoons in her wedding dress, everybody had "called." It was very distinctly understood, of course, that this was a civility that need not lead to anything whatever, a kind of bowing recognition, to be formally returned and quite possibly to end there. With Abby, in a good many cases, it hadn't ended there; she was doing very well, and as she often said with private satisfaction, if she went out anywhere

she was just as likely as not to meet her brothers. Elgin society, shaping itself, I suppose, to ultimate increase and prosperity, had this peculiarity, that the females of a family, in general acceptance, were apt to lag far behind the males. Alec and Oliver enjoyed a good deal of popularity, and it was Stella's boast that if Lorne didn't go out much it needn't be supposed he wasn't asked. It was an accepted state of things in Elgin that young men might be invited without their sisters, implying an imperturbability greater than London's, since London may not be aware of the existence of sisters, while Elgin knew all sorts of more interesting things about them. The young men were more desirable than the young women; they forged ahead, carrying the family fortunes, and the "nicest" of them were the young men in the banks. Others might be more substantial, but there was an allure about a young man in a bank as difficult to define as to resist. To say of a certain party-giver that she had "about every bank clerk in town" was to announce the success of her entertainment in ultimate terms. These things are not always penetrable, but no doubt his gentlemanly form of labour and its abridgement in the afternoons, when other young men toiled on till the stroke of six, had something to do with this apotheosis of the bank clerk, as well as his invariable taste in tailoring, and the fact that some local family influence was probably represented in his appointment. Privilege has always its last little stronghold, and it still operates to admiration on the office stools of minor finance in towns like Elgin. At all events, the sprouting tellers and cashiers held unquestioned sway--young doctors and lawyers simply didn't think of competing; and since this sort of thing carries its own penalty, the designation which they shared with so many distinguished persons in history became a byword on the lips of envious persons and small boys, by which they wished to express effeminacy and the substantive of the "stuck-up." "D'ye take me fur a bank clurk?" was a form of repudiation among corner loafers as forcible as it was unjustifiable.

I seem to have embarked, by way of getting to the Milburns' party--there is a party at the Milburns' and some of us are going--upon an analysis of social principles in Elgin, an adventure of difficulty, as I have once or twice hinted, but one from which I cannot well extricate myself without at least leaving a clue or two more for the use of the curious. No doubt these rules had their nucleus in the half-dozen families, among whom we may count the shadowy Plummers, who took upon themselves for Fox County, by the King's pleasure, the administration of justice, the practice of medicine and of the law, and the performance of the charges of the Church of England a long time ago. Such persons would bring their lines of demarcation with them, and in their new milieu of backwoods settlers and small traders would find no difficulty in drawing them again. But it was a very long time ago. The little knot of gentry-folk soon found the limitations of their new conditions; years went by in decades, aggrandizing none of them. They took, perforce, to the ways of the country, and soon nobody kept a groom but the Doctor, and nobody dined late but the Judge. There came a time when the Sheriff's whist club and the Archdeacon's port became a tradition to the oldest inhabitant. Trade flourished, education improved, politics changed. Her Majesty removed her troops--the Dominion wouldn't pay, a poor-spirited business--and a bulwark went with the regiment. The original dignified group broke, dissolved, scattered. Prosperous traders groupclosed them, the spirit of the times defeated them, young Liberals succeeded them in

office. Their grandsons married the daughters of well-to-do persons who came from the north of Ireland, the east of Scotland, and the Lord knows where. It was a sorry tale of disintegration with a cheerful sequel of rebuilding, leading to a little unavoidable confusion as the edifice went up. Any process of blending implies confusion to begin with; we are here at the making of a nation.

This large consideration must dispose of small anomalies, such as the acceptance, without cant, of certain forms of the shop, euphemized as the store, but containing the same old vertebral counter. Not all forms. Dry-goods were held in respect and chemists in comparative esteem; house furnishings and hardware made an appreciable claim, and quite a leading family was occupied with seed grains. Groceries, on the other hand, were harder to swallow, possibly on account of the apron, though the grocer's apron, being of linen, had several degrees more consideration than the shoemaker's, which was of leather; smaller trades made smaller pretensions; Mrs Milburn could tell you where to draw the line. They were all hard-working folk together, but they had their little prejudices: the dentist was known as "Doc," but he was not considered quite on a medical level; it was doubtful whether you bowed to the piano-tuner, and quite a curious and unreasonable contempt was bound up in the word "veterinary." Anything "wholesale" or manufacturing stood, of course, on its own feet; there was nothing ridiculous in molasses, nothing objectionable in a tannery, nothing amusing in soap. Such airs and graces were far from Elgin, too fundamentally occupied with the amount of capital invested, and too profoundly aware how hard it was to come by. The valuable part of it all was a certain bright freedom, and this was of the essence. Trade was a decent communal way of making a living, rooted in independence and the general need; it had none of the meaner aspects. Your bow was negligible to the piano-tuner, and everything veterinary held up its head. And all this again qualified, as everywhere, by the presence or absence of the social faculty, that magnetic capacity for coming, as Mrs Murchison would say, "to the fore," which makes little of disadvantages that might seem insuperable and, in default, renders null and void the most unquestionable claims. Anyone would think of the Delarues. Mr Delarue had in the dim past married his milliner, yet the Delarues were now very much indeed to the fore. And, on the other hand, the Leverets of the saw mills, rich and benevolent; the Leverets were not in society simply, if you analysed it, because they did not appear to expect to be in it. Certainly it was well not to be too modest; assuredly, as Mrs Murchison said, you put your own ticket on, though that dear soul never marked herself in very plain figures, not knowing, perhaps for one thing, quite how much she was worth. On the other hand, "Scarce of company, welcome trumpery," Mrs Murchison always emphatically declared to be no part of her social philosophy. The upshot was that the Murchisons were confined to a few old friends and looked, as we know, half-humorously, half-ironically, for more brilliant excursions, to Stella and "the boys."

It was only, however, the pleasure of Mr Lorne Murchison's company that was requested at the Milburns' dance. Almost alone among those who had slipped into wider and more promiscuous circles with the widening of the stream, the Milburns had made something like an effort to hold out. The resisting power was not thought to reside in Mr Milburn, who was personally aware of no special ground for it, but in Mrs Milburn and her sister, Miss Filkin, who seemed to have inherited the strongest ideas. in the

phrase of the place, about keeping themselves to themselves. A strain of this kind is sometimes constant, even so far from the fountainhead, with its pleasing proof that such views were once the most general and the most sacred defence of middle-class firesides, and that Thackeray had, after all, a good deal to excuse him. Crossing the Atlantic they doubtless suffered some dilution; but all that was possible to conserve them under very adverse conditions Mrs Milburn and Miss Filkin made it their duty to do. Nor were these ideas opposed, contested, or much traversed in Elgin. It was recognized that there was "something about" Mrs Milburn and her sister--vaguely felt--that you did not come upon that thinness of nostril, and slope of shoulder, and set of elbow at every corner. They must have got it somewhere. A Filkin tradition prevailed, said to have originated in Nova Scotia: the Filkins never had been accessible, but if they wanted to keep to themselves, let them. In this respect Dora Milburn, the only child, was said to be her mother's own daughter. The shoulders, at all events, testified to it; and the young lady had been taught to speak, like Mrs Milburn, with what was known as an "English accent." The accent in general use in Elgin was borrowed--let us hope temporarily--from the other side of the line. It suffered local modifications and exaggerations, but it was clearly an American product. The English accent was thoroughly affected, especially the broad "a." The time may come when Elgin will be at considerable pains to teach itself the broad "a," but that is in the embroidery of the future, and in no way modifies the criticism of Dora Milburn.

Lorne Murchison, however, was invited to the dance. The invitation reached him through the post: coming home from office early on Saturday he produced it from his pocket. Mrs Murchison and Abby sat on the verandah enjoying the Indian summer afternoon; the horse chestnuts dropped crashing among the fallen leaves, the roadside maples blazed, the quiet streets ran into smoky purple, and one belated robin hopped about the lawn. Mrs Murchison had just remarked that she didn't know why, at this time of year, you always felt as if you were waiting for something.

"Well, I hope you feel honoured," remarked Abby. Not one of them would have thought that Lorne should feel especially honoured; but the insincerity was so obvious that it didn't matter. Mrs Murchison, cocking her head to read the card, tried hard not to look pleased.

"Mrs Milburn. At Home," she read. "Dancing. Well she might be at home dancing, for all me! Why couldn't she just write you a little friendly note, or let Dora do it? It's that Ormiston case," she went on shrewdly. "They know you're taking a lot of trouble about it. And the least they could do, too."

Lorne sat down on the edge of the verandah with his hands in his trousers pockets, and stuck his long legs out in front of him. "Oh, I don't know," he said. "They have the name of being nifty, but I haven't got anything against the Milburns."

"Name!" ejaculated Mrs Murchison. "Now long ago was it the Episcopalians began that sewing-circle business for the destitute clergy of Saskatchewan?"

"Mother!" put in Abby, with deprecation.

"Well, I won't be certain about the clergy, but I tell

you it had to do with Saskatchewan, for that I remember! And anyhow, the first meeting was held at the Milburns' --members lent their drawing-rooms. Well, Mrs Leveret and Mrs Delarue went to the meeting--they were very thick just then, the Leverets and the Delarues. They were so pleased to be going that they got there about five minutes too soon, and they were the first to come. Well, they rang the bell and in they went. The girl showed them into the front drawing-room and asked them to sit down. And there in the back drawing-room sat Mrs Milburn and Miss Filkin, AND NEVER SPOKE TO THEM! Took not the smallest notice, any more than if they had been stray cats--not so much! Their own denomination, mind you, too! And there they might have been sitting still if Mrs Leveret hadn't had the spirit to get up and march out. No thank you. No Milburns for me."

Lorne watched his mother with twinkling eyes till she finished.

"Well, Mother, after that, if it was going to be a sewing circle I think I'd send an excuse," he said, "but maybe they won't be so mean at a dance."

Chapter VI

Octavius Milburn would not, I think, have objected to being considered, with relation to his own line in life, a representative man. He would have been wary to claim it, but if the stranger had arrived unaided at this view of him, he would have been inclined to think well of the stranger's power of induction. That is what he was--a man of averages, balances, the safe level, no more disposed to an extravagant opinion than to wear one side whisker longer than the other. You would take him any day, especially on Sunday in a silk hat, for the correct medium: by his careful walk with the spring in it, his shrewd glance with the caution in it, his look of being prepared to account for himself, categorically, from head to foot. He was fond of explaining, in connection with an offer once made him to embark his capital in Chicago, that he preferred a fair living under his own flag to a fortune under the Stars and Stripes. There we have the turn of his mind, convertible into the language of bookkeeping, a balance struck, with the profit on the side of the flag, the patriotic equivalent in good sound terms of dollars and cents. With this position understood, he was prepared to take you up on any point of comparison between the status and privileges of a subject and a citizen--the political MORALE of a monarchy and a republic--the advantage of life on this and the other side of the line. There was nothing he liked better to expatiate upon, with that valuable proof of his own sincerity always at hand for reference and illustration. His ideal was life in a practical, go-ahead, self-governing colony, far enough from England actually to be disabused of her inherited anachronisms and make your own tariff, near enough politically to keep your securities up by virtue of her protection. He was extremely satisfied with his own country; one saw in his talk the phenomenon of patriotism in double bloom, flower within flower. I have mentioned his side whiskers: he preserved that facial decoration of the Prince Consort; and the large steel engraving that represents Queen Victoria in a flowing habit and the Prince in a double-breasted frock coat and a stock, on horseback, hung over the mantelpiece in his

drawing-room. If the outer patriotism was a little vague, the inner had vigour enough. Canada was a great place. Mr Milburn had been born in the country, and had never "gone over" to England; Canada was good enough for him. He was born, one might say, in the manufacturing interest, and inherited the complacent and Conservative political views of a tenderly nourished industry. Mr Milburn was of those who were building up the country; with sufficient protection he was prepared to go on doing it long and loyally; meanwhile he admired the structure from all points of view. As President of the Elgin Chamber of Commerce, he was enabled once a year to produce no end of gratifying figures; he was fond of wearing on such occasions the national emblem in a little enamelled maple leaf; and his portrait and biography occupied a full page in a sumptuous work entitled *Canadians of Today*, sold by subscription, where he was described as the "Father of the Elgin Boiler."

Mr and Mrs Milburn were in the drawing-room to receive their young guests, a circumstance which alone imparted a distinction to the entertainment. At such parties the appearance of the heads of the house was by no means invariable; frequently they went to bed. The simple explanation was that the young people could stand late hours and be none the worse next day; their elders had to be more careful if they wanted to get down to business. Moreover, as in all new societies, between the older and the younger generation there was a great gulf fixed, across which intercourse was difficult. The sons and daughters, born to different circumstances, evolved their own conventions, the old people used the ways and manners of narrower days; one paralysed the other. It might be gathered from the slight tone of patronage in the address of youth to age that the advantage lay with the former; but polite conversation, at best, was sustained with discomfort. Such considerations, however, were far from operating with the Milburns. Mrs Milburn would have said that they were characteristic of quite a different class of people; and so they were.

No one would have supposed, from the way in which the family disposed itself in the drawing-room, that Miss Filkin had only just finished making the claret cup, or that Dora had been cutting sandwiches till the last minute, or that Mrs Milburn had been obliged to have a distinct understanding with the maid--Mrs Milburn's servants were all "maids," even the charwoman, who had buried three husbands--on the subject of wearing a cap when she answered the door. Mrs Milburn sat on a chair she had worked herself, occupied with something in the new stitch; Dora performed lightly at the piano; Miss Filkin dipped into *Selections from the Poets of the Century*, placed as remotely as possible from the others; Mr Milburn, with his legs crossed, turned and folded a Toronto evening paper. Mrs Milburn had somewhat objected to the evening paper in the drawing-room. "Won't you look at a magazine, Octavius?" she said; but Mr Milburn advanced the argument that it removed "any appearance of stiffness," and prevailed. It was impossible to imagine a group more disengaged from the absurd fuss that precedes a party among some classes of people; indeed, when Mr Lorne Murchison arrived--like the unfortunate Mrs Leveret and Mrs Delarue, he was the first--they looked almost surprised to see him.

Lorne told his mother afterward that he thought, in that embarrassing circumstance, of Mrs Leveret and Mrs Delarue, and they laughed consumedly together over his discomforture;

but what he felt at the moment was not the humour of the situation. To be the very first and solitary arrival is nowhere esteemed the happiest fortune, but in Elgin a kind of ridiculous humiliation attached to it, a greed for the entertainment, a painful unsophistication. A young man of Elgin would walk up and down in the snow for a quarter of an hour with the thermometer at zero to escape the ignominy of it; Lorne Murchison would have so walked. Our young man was potentially capable of not minding, by next morning he didn't mind; but immediately he was fast tied in the cobwebs of the common prescription, and he made his way to each of the points of the compass of the Milburns' drawing-room to shake hands, burning to the ears. Before he subsided into a chair near Mr Milburn he grasped the collar of his dress coat on each side and drew it forward, a trick he had with his gown in court, a nervous and mechanical action. Dora, who continued to play, watched him over the piano with an amusement not untinged with malice. She was a tall fair girl, with several kinds of cleverness. She did her hair quite beautifully, and she had a remarkable, effective, useful reticence. Her father declared that Dora took in a great deal more than she ever gave out--an accomplishment, in Mr Milburn's eyes, on the soundest basis. She looked remarkably pretty and had remarkably good style, and as she proceeded with her mazurka she was thinking, "He has never been asked here before: how perfectly silly he must feel coming so early!" Presently as Lorne grew absorbed in talk and forgot his unhappy chance, she further reflected, "I don't think I've ever seen him till now in evening dress; it does make him a good figure." This went on behind a faultless coiffure and an expression almost classical in its detachment; but if Miss Milburn could have thought on a level with her looks I, for one, would hesitate to take any liberty with her meditations.

However, the bell began to ring with the briefest intermissions, the maid in the cap to make constant journeys. She opened the door with a welcoming smile, having practically no deportment to go with the cap: human nature does not freeze readily anywhere. Dora had to leave the piano: Miss Filkin decided that when fifteen had come she would change her chair. Fifteen soon came, the young ladies mostly in light silks or muslins cut square, not low, in the neck, with half-sleeves. This moderation was prescribed in Elgin, where evening dress was more a matter of material than of cut, a thing in itself symbolical if it were desirable to consider social evolution here. For middle-aged ladies high necks and long sleeves were usual; and Mrs Milburn might almost have been expected to appear thus, in a nicely made black broche, perhaps. It was recognized as like Mrs Milburn, in keeping with her unbending ideas, to wear a dress cut as square as any young lady's, with just a little lace let in, of a lavender stripe. The young men were nearly all in the tailor's convention for their sex the world over, with here and there a short coat that also went to church; but there some departures from orthodoxy in the matter of collars and ties, and where white bows were achieved, I fear none of the wearers would have dreamed of defending them from the charge of being ready-made.

It was a clear, cold January night and everybody, as usual, walked to the party; the snow creaked and ground underfoot, one could hear the arriving steps in the drawing-room. They stamped and scraped to get rid of it in the porch, and hurried through the hall, muffled figures in overshoes, to emerge from an upstairs bedroom radiant, putting a last touch to hair and button hole,

smelling of the fresh winter air. Such gatherings usually consisted entirely of bachelors and maidens, with one or two exceptions so recently yoked together that they had not yet changed the plane of existence; married people, by general consent, left these amusements to the uncultured. They had, as I have hinted, more serious preoccupations, "something else to do"; nobody thought of inviting them. Nobody, that is, but Mrs Milburn and a few others of her way of thinking, who saw more elegance and more propriety in a mixture. On this occasion she had asked her own clergyman, the pleasant-faced rector of St Stephen's, and Mrs Emmett, who wore that pathetic expression of fragile wives and mothers who have also a congregation at their skirts. Walter Winter was there, too. Mr Winter had the distinction of having contested South Fox in the Conservative interest three times unsuccessfully. Undeterred, he went on contesting things: invariably beaten, he invariably came up smiling and ready to try again. His imperturbability was a valuable asset; he never lost heart or dreamed of retiring from the arena, nor did he ever cease to impress his party as being their most useful and acceptable representative. His business history was chequered and his exact financial equivalent uncertain, but he had tremendously the air of a man of affairs; as the phrase went, he was full of politics, the plain repository of deep things. He had a shrewd eye, a double chin, and a bluff, crisp, jovial manner of talking as he lay back in an armchair with his legs crossed and played with his watch chain, an important way of nodding assent, a weighty shake of denial. Voting on purely party lines, the town had later rewarded his invincible expectation by electing him Mayor, and then provided itself with unlimited entertainment by putting in a Liberal majority on his council, the reports of the weekly sittings being constantly considered as good as a cake walk. South Fox, as people said, was not a healthy locality for Conservatives. Yet Walter Winter wore a look of remarkable hardiness. He had also tremendously the air of a dark horse, the result both of natural selection and careful cultivation. Even his political enemies took it kindly when he "got in" for Mayor, and offered him amused congratulations. He made a personal claim on their cordiality, which was not the least of his political resources. Nature had fitted him to public uses; the impression overflowed the ranks of his own supporters and softened asperity among his opponents. Illustration lies, at this moment close to us. They had not been in the same room a quarter of an hour before he was in deep and affectionate converse with Lorne Murchison, whose party we know, and whose political weight was increasing, as this influence often does, with a rapidity out of proportion with his professional and general significance.

"It's a pity now," said Mr Winter, with genial interest, "you can't get that Ormiston defence into your own hands. Very useful thing for you."

The younger man shifted a little uncomfortably in his seat. It is one thing to entertain a private vision and another to see it materialized on other lips.

"Oh I'd like it well enough," he said, "but it's out of the question, of course. I'm too small potatoes."

"There's a lot of feeling for old Ormiston. Folks out there on the Reserve don't know how to show it enough."

"They've shown it a great deal too much. We don't want to win on 'feeling,' or have it said either. And we were

as near as possible having to take the case to the Hamilton Assizes."

"I guess you were--I guess you were." Mr Winter's suddenly increased gravity expressed his appreciation of the danger. "I saw Lister of the Bank the day they heard from Toronto--rule refused. Never saw a man more put out. Seems they considered the thing as good as settled. General opinion was it would go to Hamilton, sure. Well I don't know how you pulled it off, but it was a smart piece of work, sir."

Lorne encountered Mr Winter's frank smile with an expression of crude and rather stolid discomfort. It had a base of indignation, corrected by a concession to the common idea that most events, with an issue pendent, were the result of a smart piece of work: a kind of awkward shrug was in it. He had no desire to be unpleasant to Walter Winter--on the contrary. Nevertheless, an uncompromising line came on each side of his mouth with his reply.

"As far as I know," he said, "the application was dismissed on its demerits."

"Of course it was," said Mr Winter good-humouredly. "You don't need to tell me that. Well, now, this looks like dancing. Miss Filkin, I see, is going to oblige on the piano. Now I wonder whether I'm going to get Miss Dora to give me a waltz or not."

Chairs and table were in effect being pushed back, and folding doors opened which disclosed another room prepared for this relaxation. Miss Filkin began to oblige vigorously on the piano, Miss Dora granted Mr Winter's request, which he made with elaborate humour as an impudent old bachelor whom "the boys" would presently take outside and kill. Lorne watched him make it, envying him his assurance; and Miss Milburn was aware that he watched and aware that he envied. The room filled with gaiety and movement: Mr Milburn, sidling dramatically along the wall to escape the rotatory couples, admonished Mr Murchison to get a partner. He withdrew himself from the observation of Miss Dora and Mr Winter, and approached a young lady on a sofa, who said "With very great pleasure." When the dance was over he re-established the young lady on the sofa and fanned her with energy. Looking across the room, he saw that Walter Winter, seated beside Dora, was fanning himself. He thought it disgusting and, for some reason which he did not pause to explore, exactly like Winter. He had met Miss Milburn once or twice before without seeing her in any special way: here, at home, the centre of the little conventions that at once protected and revealed her, conventions bound up in the impressive figures of her mother and her aunt, she had a new interest, and all the attraction of that which is not easily come by. It is also possible that although Lorne had met her before, she had not met him; she was meeting him now for the first time, as she sat directly opposite and talked very gracefully to Walter Winter. Addressing Walter Winter, Lorne was the object of her pretty remarks. While Mr Winter had her superficial attention, he was the bland medium which handed her on. Her consciousness was fixed on young Mr Murchison, quite occupied with him: she could not imagine why they had not asked him long ago; he wasn't exactly "swell," but you could see he was somebody. So already she figured the potential distinction in the set of his shoulders and the carriage of his head. It might have been translated in simple terms of integrity and force by anyone who looked for those things. Miss Milburn

was incapable of such detail, but she saw truly enough in the mass.

Lorne, on the opposite sofa, looked at her across the town's traditions of Milburn exclusiveness. Oddly enough, at this moment when he might have considered that he had overcome them, they seemed to gather force, exactly in his line of vision. He had never before been so near Dora Milburn, and he had never before perceived her so remote. He had a sense of her distance beyond those few yards of carpet quite incompatible with the fact. It weighed upon him, but until she sent him a sudden unexpected smile he did not know how heavily. It was a dissipating smile; nothing remained before it. Lorne carefully restored his partner's fan, bowed before her, and went straight across the room.

Chapter VII

It is determined with something like humour that communities very young should occupy themselves almost altogether with matters of grave and serious import. The vision of life at that period is no doubt unimpeded and clear; its conditions offer themselves with a certain nakedness and force, both as to this world and to that which is to come. The town of Elgin thus knew two controlling interests--the interest of politics and the interest of religion. Both are terms we must nevertheless circumscribe. Politics were a complexion strictly local, provincial, or Dominion. The last step of France in Siam, the disputed influence of Germany in the Persian Gulf, the struggle of the Powers in China were not matters greatly talked over in Elgin; the theatre of European diplomacy had no absorbed spectators here. Nor can I claim that interest in the affairs of Great Britain was in any way extravagant.

A sentiment of affection for the reigning house certainly prevailed. It was arbitrary, rococo, unrelated to current conditions as a tradition sung down in a ballad, an anachronism of the heart, cherished through long rude lifetimes for the beauty and poetry of it--when you consider, beauty and poetry can be thought of in this. Here was no Court aiding the transmutation of the middle class, no King spending money; here were no picturesque contacts of Royalty and the people, no pageantry, no blazonry of the past, nothing to lift the heart but an occasional telegram from the monarch expressing, upon an event of public importance, a suitable emotion. Yet the common love for the throne amounted to a half-ashamed enthusiasm that burned with something like a sacred flame, and was among the things not ordinarily alluded to, because of the shyness that attaches to all feeling that cannot be justified in plain terms. A sentiment of affection for the reigning house certainly prevailed; but it was a thing by itself. The fall of a British Government would hardly fail to excite comment, and the retirement of a Prime Minister would induce both the Mercury and the Express to publish a biographical sketch of him, considerably shorter than the leader embodying the editor's views as to who should get the electric light contract. But the Government might become the sole employer of labour in those islands, Church and school might part company for ever, landlords might be deprived of all but compassionate allowances and, except for the degree of extravagance involved in these propositions, they would hardly be current in Elgin. The complications

of England's foreign policy were less significant still. It was recognized dimly that England had a foreign policy, more or less had to have it, as they would have said in Elgin; it was part of the huge unnecessary scheme of things for which she was responsible--unnecessary from Elgin's point of view as a father's financial obligations might be to a child he had parted with at birth. It all lay outside the facts of life, far beyond the actual horizon, like the affairs of a distant relation from whom one has nothing to hope, not even personal contact, and of whose wealth and greatness one does not boast much, because of the irony involved. Information upon all these matters was duly put before Elgin every morning in the telegrams of the Toronto papers; the information came, until the other day, over cables to New York and was disseminated by American news agencies. It was, therefore, not devoid of bias; but if this was perceived it was by no means thought a matter for protesting measures, especially as they would be bound to involve expense. The injury was too vague, too remote, to be more than sturdily discounted by a mental attitude. Belief in England was in the blood, it would not yield to the temporary distortion of facts in the newspapers--at all events, it would not yield with a rush. Whether there was any chance of insidious sapping was precisely what the country was too indifferent to discover. Indifferent, apathetic, self-centred--until whenever, down the wind, across the Atlantic, came the faint far music of the call to arms. Then the old dog of war that has his kennel in every man rose and shook himself, and presently there would be a baying! The sense of kinship, lying too deep for the touch of ordinary circumstance, quickened to that; and in a moment "we" were fighting, "we" had lost or won.

Apart, however, from the extraordinary, the politics of Elgin's daily absorption were those of the town, the Province, the Dominion. Centres of small circumference yield a quick swing; the concern of the average intelligent Englishman as to the consolidation of his country's interests in the Yangtse Valley would be a languid manifestation beside that of an Elgin elector in the chances of an appropriation for a new court house. The single mind is the most fervid: Elgin had few distractions from the question of the court house or the branch line to Clayfield. The arts conspired to be absent; letters resided at the nearest university city; science was imported as required, in practical improvements. There was nothing, indeed, to interfere with Elgin's attention to the immediate, the vital, the municipal: one might almost read this concentration of interest in the white dust of the rambling streets, and the shutters closed against it. Like other movements of the single mind, it had something of the ferocious, of the inflexible, of the unintelligent; but it proudly wore the character of the go-ahead and, as Walter Winter would have pointed out to you, it had granted eleven bonuses to "capture" sound commercial concerns in six years.

In wholesome fear of mistake, one would hesitate to put church matters either before or after politics among the preoccupations of Elgin. It would be safer and more indisputable to say that nothing compared with religion but politics, and nothing compared with politics but religion. In offering this proposition also we must think of our dimensions. There is a religious fervour in Oxford, in Mecca, in Benares, and the sign for these ideas is the same; we have to apply ourselves to the interpretation. In Elgin religious fervour was not beautiful, or dramatic,

or self-immolating; it was reasonable. You were perhaps your own first creditor; after that your debt was to your Maker. You discharged this obligation in a spirit of sturdy equity: if the children didn't go to Sunday school you knew the reason why. The habit of church attendance was not only a basis of respectability, but practically the only one: a person who was "never known to put his head inside a church door" could not be more severely reprobated, by Mrs Murchison at all events. It was the normal thing, the thing which formed the backbone of life, sustaining to the serious, impressive to the light, indispensable to the rest, and the thing that was more than any of these, which you can only know when you stand in the churches among the congregations. Within its prescribed limitations it was for many the intellectual exercise, for more the emotional lift, and for all the unfailing distraction of the week. The repressed magnetic excitement in gatherings of familiar faces, fellow-beings bound by the same convention to the same kind of behaviour, is precious in communities where the human interest is still thin and sparse. It is valuable in itself, and it produces an occasional detached sensation. There was the case, in Dr Drummond's church, of placid-faced, saintly old Sandy MacQuhot, the epileptic. It used to be a common regret with Lorne Murchison that as sure as he was allowed to stay away from church Sandy would have a fit. That was his little boy's honesty; the elders enjoyed the fit and deprecated the disturbance.

There was a simple and definite family feeling within communions. "They come to our church" was the argument of first force whether for calling or for charity. It was impossible to feel toward a Congregationalist or an Episcopalian as you felt toward one who sang the same hymns and sat under the same admonition week by week, year in and year out, as yourself. "Wesleyans, are they?" a lady of Knox Church would remark of the newly arrived, in whom her interest was suggested. "Then let the Wesleyans look after them." A pew-holder had a distinct status; an "adherent" enjoyed friendly consideration, especially if he adhered faithfully; and stray attendants from other congregations were treated with punctilious hospitality, places being found for them in the Old Testament, as if they could hardly be expected to discover such things for themselves. The religious interest had also the strongest domestic character in quite another sense from that of the family prayers which Dr Drummond was always enjoying. "Set your own house in order and then your own church" was a wordless working precept in Elgin. Threadbare carpet in the aisles was almost as personal a reproach as a hole under the dining-room table; and self-respect was barely possible to a congregation that sat in faded pews. The minister's gown even was the subject of scrutiny as the years went on. It was an expensive thing to buy, but an oyster supper would do it and leave something over for the organ. Which brings us to the very core and centre of these activities, their pivot, their focus and, in a human sense, their inspiration--the minister himself.

The minister was curiously special among a people so general; he was in a manner raised in life on weekdays as he was in the pulpit on Sundays. He had what one might call prestige; some form of authority still survived in his person, to which the spiritual democracy he presided over gave a humorous, voluntary assent. He was supposed to be a person of undetermined leisure--what was writing two sermons a week to earn your living by?--and he was probably the more revered, or the more revered, from the fact that he was in the house all day. A particular

importance attached to everything he said and did; he was a person whose life answered different springs, and was sustained on quite another principle than that of supply and demand. The province of public criticism was his; but his people made up for the meekness with which they sat under it by a generous use of the corresponding privilege in private. Comments upon the minister partook of hardiness; it was as if the members were determined to live up to the fact that the office-bearers could reduce his salary if they liked. Needless to say, they never did like. Congregations stood loyally by their pastors, and discussion was strictly intramural. If the Methodists handed theirs on at the end of three years with a breath of relief, they exhaled it among themselves; after all, for them it was a matter of luck. The Presbyterians, as in the case of old Mr Jameson of St Andrew's, held on till death, pulling a long upper lip: election was not a thing to be trifled with in heaven or upon earth.

It will be imagined whether Dr Drummond did not see in these conditions his natural and wholesome element, whether he did not fit exactly in. The God he loved to worship as Jehovah had made him a beneficent despot and given him, as it were, a commission. If the temporal power had charged him to rule an eastern province, he would have brought much the same qualities to the task. Knox Church, Elgin, was his dominion, its moral and material affairs his jealous interest, and its legitimate expansion his chief pride. In "anniversary" sermons, which he always announced the Sunday before, he seldom refrained from contrasting the number on the roll of church membership, then and now, with the particular increase in the year just closed. If the increase was satisfactory, he made little comment beyond the duty of thanksgiving--figures spoke for themselves. If it was otherwise Dr Drummond's displeasure was not a thing he would conceal. He would wing it eloquently on the shaft of his grief that the harvest had been so light; but he would more than hint the possibility that the labourers had been few. Most important among his statistics was the number of young communicants. Wanderers from other folds he admitted, with a not wholly satisfied eye upon their early theological training, and to persons duly accredited from Presbyterian churches elsewhere he gave the right hand of fellowship; but the young people of his own congregation were his chief concern always, and if a gratifying number of these had failed to "come forward" during the year, the responsibility must lie somewhere. Dr Drummond was willing to take his own share; "the ministrations of this pulpit" would be more than suspected of having come short, and the admission would enable him to tax the rest upon parents and Bible-class teachers with searching effect. The congregation would go gloomily home to dinner, and old Sandy MacQuhot would remark to his wife, "It's hard to say why will the Doctor get himself in sic a state about mere numbers. We're told 'where two or three are gathered together.' But the Doctor's all for a grand congregation."

Knox Church, under such auspices could hardly fail to enlarge her borders; but Elgin enlarged hers faster. Almost before you knew where you were there spread out the district of East Elgin, all stacks of tall chimneys and rows of little houses. East Elgin was not an attractive locality; it suffered from inundation sometimes, when the river was in spring flood; it gave unresentful room to a tannery. It was the home of dubious practices at the polls, and the invariable hunting-ground for domestic

servants. Nevertheless, in the view of Knox Church, it could not bear a character wholly degraded; too many Presbyterians, Scotch foremen, and others, had their respectable residence there. For these it was a far cry to Dr Drummond in bad weather, and there began to be talk of hiring the East Elgin schoolhouse for Sunday exercises if suitable persons could be got to come over from Knox Church and lead them. I do not know who was found to broach the matter to Dr Drummond; report says his relative and housekeeper, Mrs Forsyth, who perhaps might do it under circumstances of strategical advantage. Mrs Forsyth, or whoever it was, had her reply in the hidden terms of an equation--was it any farther for the people of East Elgin to walk to hear him preach than for him to walk to minister to the people of East Elgin, which he did quite once a week, and if so, how much? Mrs Forsyth, or whoever it was, might eliminate the unknown quantity. It cannot be said that Dr Drummond discouraged the project; he simply did not mention it and as it was known to have been communicated to him this represented effectively the policy of the closed door. He found himself even oftener in East Elgin, walking about on his pastoral errands with a fierce briskness of aspect and a sharp inquiring eye, before which one might say the proposition slunk away. Meanwhile, the Methodists who, it seemed, could tolerate decentralization, or anything short of round dances, opened a chapel with a cheerful sociable, and popularized the practice of backsliding among those for whom the position was theologically impossible. Good Presbyterians in East Elgin began to turn into makeshift Methodists. The Doctor missed certain occupants of the gallery seats and felt the logic of circumstances. Here we must all yield, and the minister concealed his discomfiture in a masterly initiative. The matter came up again at a meeting of the church managers, brought up by Dr Drummond, who had the satisfaction of hearing that a thing put into the Doctor's hands was already half done. In a very few weeks it was entirely done. The use of the schoolhouse was granted through Dr Drummond's influence with the Board free of charge; and to understand the triumph of this it should be taken into account that three of the trustees were Wesleyans. Services were held regularly, certain of Dr Drummond's elders officiating; and the conventicle in the schoolhouse speedily became known as Knox Church Mission. It grew and prospered. The first night "I to the hills will lift mine eyes" went up from East Elgin on the uplifting tune that belongs to it, the strayed came flocking back.

This kind never go forth again; once they refind the ark of the covenant there they abide. In the course of time it became a question of a better one, and money was raised locally to build it. Dr Drummond pronounced the first benediction in Knox Mission Church, and waited, well knowing human nature in its Presbyterian aspect, for the next development. It came, and not later than he anticipated, in the form of a prayer to Knox Church for help to obtain the services of a regularly ordained minister. Dr Drummond had his guns ready: he opposed the application; where a regularly ordained minister was already at the disposal of those who chose to walk a mile and a half to hear him, the luxury of more locally consecrated services should be at the charge of the locality. He himself was willing to spend and be spent in the spiritual interests of East Elgin; that was abundantly proven; what he could not comfortably tolerate was the deviation of congregational funds, the very blood of the body of belief, into other than legitimate channels. He fought for his view with all his tactician's resources,

putting up one office-bearer after another to endorse it but the matter was decided at the general yearly meeting of the congregation; and the occasion showed Knox Church in singular sympathy with its struggling offspring. Dr Drummond for the first time in his ministry, was defeated by his people. It was less a defeat than a defence, an unexpected rally round the corporate right to direct corporate activities; and the congregation was so anxious to wound the minister's feelings as little as possible that the grant in aid of the East Elgin Mission was embodied in a motion to increase Dr Drummond's salary by two hundred and fifty dollars a year. The Doctor with a wry joke, swallowed his gilded pill, but no coating could dissimulate its bitterness, and his chagrin was plain for long. The issue with which we are immediately concerned is that three months later Knox Church Mission called to minister to it the Reverend Hugh Finlay, a young man from Dumfriesshire and not long out. Dr Drummond had known beforehand what their choice would be. He had brought Mr Finlay to occupy Knox Church pulpit during his last July and August vacation, and Mrs Forsyth had reported that such midsummer congregations she had simply never worshipped with. Mrs Forsyth was an excellent hand at pressed tongue and a wonder at knitted counterpanes, but she had not acquired tact and never would.

CHAPTER VIII

The suggestion that the Reverend Hugh Finlay preached from the pulpit of Knox Church "better sermons" than its permanent occupant, would have been justly considered absurd, and nobody pronounced it. The church was full, as Mrs Forsyth observed, on these occasions; but there were many other ways of accounting for that. The Murchisons, as a family, would have been the last to make such an admission. The regular attendance might have been, as much as anything, out of deference to the wishes of the Doctor himself, who invariably and sternly hoped, in his last sermon, that no stranger occupying his place would have to preach to empty pews. He was thinking, of course, of old Mr Jamieson with whom he occasionally exchanged and whose effect on the attendance had not failed to reach him. With regard to Mr Jamieson he was compelled, in the end, to resort to tactics: he omitted to announce the Sunday before that his venerable neighbour would preach, and the congregation, outwitted, had no resource but to sustain the beard-wagging old gentleman through seventhly to the finish. There came a time when the dear human Doctor also omitted to announce that Mr Finlay would preach, but for other reasons. meanwhile, as Mrs Forsyth said, he had no difficulty in conjuring a vacation congregation for his young substitute. They came trooping, old and young. Mr and Mrs Murchison would survey their creditable family rank with a secret compunction, remembering its invariable gaps at other times, and then resolutely turn to the praise of God with the reflection that one means to righteousness was as blessed as another. They themselves never missed a Sunday, and as seldom failed to remark on the way back that it was all very interesting, but Mr Finlay couldn't drive it home like the Doctor. There were times, sparse and special occasions, when the Doctor himself made one of the congregation. Then he would lean back luxuriously in the corner of his own pew, his wiry little form half-lost in the upholstery his arms folded, his knees crossed, his face all humorous indulgence; yes, humorous. At the announcement of the

text a twinkle would lodge in the shrewd grey eyes and a smile but half-suppressed would settle about the corners of the flexible mouth: he knew what the young fellow there would be at. And as the young fellow proceeded, his points would be weighed to the accompaniment of the Doctor's pendent foot, which moved perpetually, judiciously; while the smile sometimes deepened, sometimes lapsed, since there were moments when any young fellow had to be taken seriously. It was an attitude which only the Doctor was privileged to adopt thus outwardly; but in private it was imitated all up and down the aisles, where responsible heads of families sat considering the quality of the manna that was offered them. When it fell from the lips of Mr Finlay the verdict was, upon the whole, very favourable, as long as there was no question of comparison with the Doctor.

There could be, indeed, very little question of such comparison. There was a generation between them and a school, and to that you had to add every set and cast of mind and body that can make men different. Dr Drummond, in faith and practice, moved with precision along formal and implicit lines; his orbit was established, and his operation within it as unquestionable as the simplest exhibit of nature. He took in a wonderful degree the stamp of the teaching of his adolescent period; not a line was missing nor a precept; nor was the mould defaced by a single wavering tendency of later date. Religious doctrine was to him a thing for ever accomplished, to be accepted or rejected as a whole. He taught eternal punishment and retribution, reconciling both with Divine love and mercy; he liked to defeat the infidel with the crashing question, "Who then was the architect of the Universe?" The celebrated among such persons he pursued to their deathbeds; Voltaire and Rousseau owed their reputation, with many persons in Knox Church, to their last moments and to Dr Drummond. He had a triumphant invective which drew the mind from chasms in logic, and a tender sense of poetic beauty which drew it, when he quoted great lines, from everything else. He loved the euphony of the Old Testament; his sonorous delivery would lift a chapter from Isaiah to the height of ritual, and every Psalm he read was a Magnificat whether he would or no. The warrior in him was happy among the Princes of Issachar; and the parallels he would find for modern events in the annals of Judah and of Israel were astounding. Yet he kept a sharp eye upon the daily paper, and his reference to current events would often give his listeners an audacious sense of up-to-dateness which might have been easily discounted by the argument they illustrated. The survivors of a convulsion of nature, for instance, might have learned from his lips the cause and kind of their disaster traced back forcibly to local acquiescence in iniquity, and drawn unflinchingly from the text, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." The militant history of his Church was a passion with him; if ever he had to countenance canonization he would have led off with Jenny Geddes. "A tremendous Presbyterian" they called him in the town. To hear him give out a single psalm, and sing it with his people, would convince anybody of that. There was a choir, of course, but to the front pews, at all events, Dr Drummond's leading was more important than the choir's. It was a note of dauntless vigour, and it was plain by the regular forward jerk of his surpliced shoulder that his foot was keeping time:

Where the assemblies of the just
And congregations are.

You could not help admiring, and you could not help respecting; you were compelled by his natural force and his unqualified conviction, his tireless energy and his sterling sort.

It is possible to understand, however, that after sitting for twenty-five years under direction so unfailing and so uncompromising, the congregation of Knox Church might turn with a moderate curiosity to the spiritual indications of the Reverend Hugh Finlay. He was a passionate romantic, and his body had shot up into a fitting temple for such an inhabitant as his soul. He was a great long fellow, with a shock of black hair and deep dreams in his eyes; his head was what people called a type, a type I suppose of the simple motive and the noble intention, the detached point of view and the somewhat indifferent attitude to material things, as it may be humanly featured anywhere. His face bore a confusion of ideals; he had the brow of a Covenanter and the mouth of Adonais, the flame of religious ardour in his eyes and the composure of perceived philosophy on his lips. He was fettered by an impenetrable shyness; it was in the pulpit alone that he could expand, and then only upon written lines, with hardly a gesture, and the most perfunctory glances, at conscientious intervals, toward his hearers. A poor creature, indeed, in this respect, Dr Drummond thought him--Dr Drummond, who wore an untrammelled surplice which filled like an agitated sail in his quick tacks from right to left. "The man loses half his points," said Dr Drummond. I doubt whether he did, people followed so closely, though Sandy MacQuhot was of the general opinion when he said that it would do nobody any harm if Mr Finlay would lift his head oftener from the book.

Advena Murchison thought him the probable anti type of an Oxford don. She had never seen an Oxford don, but Mr Finlay wore the characteristics these schoolmen were dressed in by novelists; and Advena noted with delight the ingenuity of fate in casting such a person into the pulpit of the Presbyterian Church in a young country. She had her perception of comedy in life; till Finlay came she had found nothing so interesting. With his arrival, however, other preoccupations fell into their proper places.

Finlay, indeed, it may be confessed at once, he and not his message was her engrossment from the beginning. The message she took with reverent gentleness; but her passionate interest was for the nature upon which it travelled, and never for the briefest instant did she confuse these emotions. Those who write, we are told transcribe themselves in spite of themselves; it is more true of those who preach, for they are also candid by profession, and when they are not there is the eye and the voice to help to betray them. Hugh Finlay, in the pulpit, made himself manifest in all the things that matter to Advena Murchison in the pew; and from the pew to the pulpit her love went back with certainty, clear in its authority and worshipping the ground of its justification. When she bowed her head it was he whom she heard in the language of his invocations; his doctrine rode, for her, on a spirit of wide and sweet philosophy; in his contemplation of the Deity she saw the man. He had those lips at once mobile, governed and patient, upon which genius chooses oftenest to rest. As to this, Advena's convictions were so private as to be hidden from herself; she never admitted that she thought Finlay had it, and in the supreme difficulty of proving anything else we may wisely accept her view. But he had something, the

subtle Celt; he had horizons, lifted lines beyond the common vision, and an eye rapt and a heart intrepid; and though for a long time he was unconscious of it, he must have adventured there with a happier confidence because of her companionship.

From the first Advena knew no faltering or fluttering, none of the baser nervous betrayals. It was all one great delight to her, her discovery and her knowledge and her love for him. It came to her almost in a logical development; it found her grave, calm, and receptive. She had even a private formula of gratitude that the thing which happened to everybody, and happened to so many people irrelevantly, should arrive with her in such a glorious defensible, demonstrable sequence. Toward him it gave her a kind of glad secret advantage; he was loved and he was unaware. She watched his academic awkwardness in church with the inward tender smile of the eternal habile feminine, and when they met she could have laughed and wept over his straightened sentences and his difficult manner, knowing how little significant they were. With his eyes upon her and his words offered to her intelligence, she found herself treating his shy formality as the convention it was, a kind of make-believe which she would politely and kindly play up to until he should happily forget it and they could enter upon simpler relations. She had to play up to it for a long time, but her love made her wonderfully clever and patient; and of course the day came when she had her reward. Knowing him as she did, she remembered the day and the difference it made.

It was toward the end of an afternoon in early April; the discoloured snow still lay huddled in the bleaker fence corners. Wide puddles stood along the roadsides, reflecting the twigs and branches of the naked maples; last year's leaves were thick and wet underfoot, and a soft damp wind was blowing. Advena was on her way home and Finlay overtook her. He passed her at first, with a hurried silent lifting of his hat; then perhaps the deserted street gave a suggestion of unfriendliness to his act, or some freshness in her voice stayed him. At all events, he waited and joined her, with a word or two about their going in the same direction; and they walked along together. He offered her his companionship, but he had nothing to say; the silence in which they pursued their way was no doubt to him just the embarrassing condition he usually had to contend with. To her it seemed pregnant, auspicious; it drew something from the low grey lights of the wet spring afternoon and the unbound heart-lifting wind; she had a passionate prevision that the steps they took together would lead somehow to freedom. They went on in that strange bound way, and the day drew away from them till they turned a sudden corner, when it lay all along the yellow sky across the river, behind a fringe of winter woods, stayed in the moment of its retreat on the edge of unvexed landscape. They stopped involuntarily to look, and she saw a smile come up from some depth in him.

"Ah, well," he said, as if to himself, "it's something to be in a country where the sun still goes down with a thought of the *primaeval*."

"I think I prefer the sophistication of chimney-pots," she replied. "I've always longed to see a sunset in London, with the fog breaking over Westminster."

"Then you don't care about them for themselves, sunsets?" he asked, with the simplest absence of mind.

"I never yet could see the sun go down, But I was angry in my heart," she said, and this time he looked at her.

"How does it go on?" he said.

"Oh, I don't know. Only those two lines stay with me. I feel it that way, too. It's the seal upon an act of violence, isn't it, a sunset? Something taken from us against our will. It's a hateful reminder, in the midst of our delightful volitions, of how arbitrary every condition of life is."

"The conditions of business are always arbitrary. Life is a business--we have to work at ourselves till it is over. So much cut off and ended it is," he said, glancing at the sky again. "If space is the area of life and time is its opportunity, there goes a measure of opportunity."

"I wonder," said Advena, "where it goes?"

"Into the void behind time?" he suggested, smiling straight at her.

"Into the texture of the future," she answered, smiling back.

"We might bring it to bear very intelligently on the future, at any rate," he returned. "The world is wrapped in destiny, and but revolves to roll it out"

"I don't remember that," she said curiously.

"No you couldn't," he laughed outright. "I haven't thought it good enough to publish."

"And it isn't the sort of thing," she ventured gaily, "you could put in a sermon."

"No, it isn't." They came to a corner of the street which led to Mr Finlay's boarding-house. It stretched narrowly to the north and there was a good deal more snow on each side of it. They lingered together for a moment talking, seizing the new joy in it which was simply the joy of his sudden liberation with her consciously pushing away the moment of parting; and Finlay's eyes rested once again on the evening sky beyond the river.

"I believe you are right and I am a moralizer," he said. "There is pain over there. One thinks a sunset beautiful and impressive, but one doesn't look at it long."

Then they separated, and he took the road to the north, which was still snowbound, while she went on into the chilly yellow west, with the odd sweet illusion that a summer day was dawning.

CHAPTER IX

The office of Messrs Fulke, Warner, & Murchison was in Market Street, exactly over Scott's drug store. Scott with his globular blue and red and green vessels in the window and his soda-water fountain inside; was on the ground floor; the passage leading upstairs separated him from Mickie, boots and shoes; and beyond Mickie, Elgin's leading tobacconist shared his place of business with a

barber. The last two contributed most to the gaiety of Market Street: the barber with the ribanded pole, which stuck out at an angle; the tobacconist with a nobly featured squaw in chocolate effigy who held her draperies under her chin with one hand and outstretched a packet of cigars with the other.

The passage staircase between Scott's and Mickie's had a hardened look, and bore witness to the habit of expectoration; ladies, going up to Dr Simmons, held their skirts up and the corners of their mouths down. Dr Simmons was the dentist: you turned to the right. The passage itself turned to the left, and after passing two doors bearing the law firm's designation in black letters on ground glass, it conducted you with abruptness to the office of a bicycle agent, and left you there. For greater emphasis the name of the firm of Messrs Fulke, Warner & Murchison was painted on the windows also; it could be seen from any part of the market square, which lay, with the town hall in the middle, immediately below. During four days in the week the market square was empty. Odds and ends of straw and paper blew about it; an occasional pedestrian crossed it diagonally for the short cut to the post-office; the town hall rose in the middle, and defied you to take your mind off the ugliness of municipal institutions. On the other days it was a scene of activity. Farmers' wagons, with the shafts turned in were ranged round three sides of it; on a big day they would form into parallel lanes and cut the square into sections as well. The produce of all Fox County filled the wagons, varying agreeably as the year went round. Bags of potatoes leaned against the sidewalk, apples brimmed in bushel measures, ducks dropped their twisted necks over the cart wheels; the town hall, in this play of colour, stood redeemed. The produce was mostly left to the women to sell. On the fourth side of the square loads of hay and cordwood demanded the master mind, but small matters of fruit, vegetables, and poultry submitted to feminine judgement. The men "unhitched," and went away on their own business; it was the wives you accosted, as they sat in the middle, with their knees drawn up and their skirts tucked close, vigilant in rusty bonnets, if you wished to buy. Among them circulated the housewives of Elgin, pricing and comparing and acquiring; you could see it all from Dr Simmons's window, sitting in his chair that screwed up and down. There was a little difficulty always about getting things home; only very ordinary people carried their own marketing. Trifling articles, like eggs or radishes, might be smuggled into a brown wicker basket with covers; but it did not consort with elegance to "trapes" home with anything that looked inconvenient or had legs sticking out of it. So that arrangements of mutual obligation had to be made: the good woman from whom Mrs Jones had bought her tomatoes would take charge of the spring chickens Mrs Jones had bought from another good woman just as soon as not, and deliver them at Mrs Jones's residence, as under any circumstances she was "going round that way."

It was a scene of activity but not of excitement, or in any sense of joy. The matter was too hard an importance; it made too much difference on both sides whether potatoes were twelve or fifteen cents a peck. The dealers were laconic and the buyers anxious; country neighbours exchanged the time of day, but under the pressure of affairs. Now and then a lady of Elgin stopped to gossip with another; the countrywomen looked on, curious, grim, and a little contemptuous of so much demonstration and so many words. Life on an Elgin market day was a serious

presentment even when the sun shone, and at times when it rained or snowed the aesthetic seemed a wholly unjustifiable point of view. It was not misery, it was even a difficult kind of prosperity, but the margin was small and the struggle plain. Plain, too, it was that here was no enterprise of yesterday, no fresh broken ground of dramatic promise, but a narrow inheritance of the opportunity to live which generations had grasped before. There were bones in the village graveyards of Fox County to father all these sharp features; Elgin market square, indeed, was the biography of Fox County and, in little, the history of the whole Province. The heart of it was there, the enduring heart of the new country already old in acquiescence. It was the deep root of the race in the land, twisted and unlovely, but holding the promise of all. Something like that Lorne Murchison felt about it as he stood for a moment in the passage I have mentioned and looked across the road. The spectacle never failed to cheer him; he was uniformly in gayer spirits, better satisfied with life and more consciously equal to what he had to do, on days when the square was full than on days when it was empty. This morning he had an elation of his own; it touched everything with more vivid reality. The familiar picture stirred a joy in him in tune with his private happiness; its undernote came to him with a pang as keen. The sense of kinship surged in his heart; these were his people, this his lot as well as theirs. For the first time he saw it in detachment. Till now he had regarded it with the friendly eyes of a participator who looked no further. Today he did look further: the whole world invited his eyes, offering him a great piece of luck to look through. The opportunity was in his hand which, if he could seize and hold, would lift and carry him on. He was as much aware of its potential significance as anyone could be, and what leapt in his veins till he could have laughed aloud was the splendid conviction of resource. Already in the door of the passage he had achieved, from that point he looked at the scene before him with an impulse of loyalty and devotion. A tenderness seized him for the farmers of Fox County, a throb of enthusiasm for the idea they represented, which had become for him suddenly moving and pictorial. At that moment his country came subjectively into his possession; great and helpless it came into his inheritance as it comes into the inheritance of every man who can take it, by deed of imagination and energy and love. He held this microcosm of it, as one might say, in his hand and looked at it ardently; then he took his way across the road.

A tall thickly built young fellow detached himself from a group, smiling broadly at the sight of Murchison, and started to meet him.

"Hello, Lorne," he said. He had smiled all the way anticipating the encounter. He was obviously in clothes which he did not put on every day, but the seriousness of this was counteracted by his hard felt hat, which he wore at an angle that disregarded convention.

"Hello, Elmore! You back?"

"That's about it."

"You don't say! Back to stay?"

"Far's I can see. Young Alf's made up his mind to learn the dentist business, and the old folks are backin' him; so I don't see but I've got to stop on and run the show.

Father's gettin' up in years now."

"Why, yes. I suppose he must be. It's a good while since you went West. Well, what sort of a country have they got out Swan River way? Booming right along?"

"Boom nothing. I don't mean to say there's anything the matter with the country; there ain't; but you've got to get up just as early in the mornings out there as y' do anywhere, far's I noticed. An' it's a lonesome life. Now I AM back I don't know but little old Ontario's good enough for me. 'N I hear you've taken up the law, Lorne. Y' always had a partiality for it, d'y' remember, up there to the Collegiate? I used to think it'd be fine to travel with samples, those days. But you were dead gone on the law. 'N by all reports it pans out pretty well don't it?"

The young men had taken their way among the shifting crowd together. Lorne Murchison, although there was something too large about him for the town's essential stamp, made by contrast, as he threaded the desultory groups of country people, a type of the conventional and the formed; his companion glanced at him now and then with admiration. The values of carriage and of clothes are relative: in Fifth Avenue Lorne would have looked countrified, in Piccadilly colonial. Districts are imaginable, perhaps not in this world, where the frequenters of even those fashionable thoroughfares would attract glances of curiosity by their failure to achieve the common standard in such things. Lorne Murchison, to dismiss the matter, was well up to the standard of Elgin, though he wore his straw hat quite on the back of his head and buried both hands in his trousers pockets. His eye was full of pleasant easy familiarity with the things he saw, and ready to see larger things; it had that beam of active inquiry, curious but never amazed that marks the man likely to expand his horizons. Meanwhile he was on capital terms with his little world, which seemed to take pleasure in hailing him by his Christian name; even morose Jim Webster, who had failed three times in groceries, said "Morning, Lorne" with a look of toleration. He moved alertly; the poise of his head was sanguine; the sun shone on him; the timidiest soul came nearer to him. He and Elmore Crow, who walked beside him, had gone through the lower forms of the Elgin Collegiate Institute together, that really "public" kind of school which has so much to do with reassorting the classes of a new country. The Collegiate Institute took in raw material and turned out teachers, more teachers than anything. The teachers taught, chiefly in rural districts where they could save money, and with the money they saved changed themselves into doctors, Fellows of the University, mining engineers. The Collegiate Institute was a potential melting-pot: you went in as your simple opportunities had made you; how you shaped coming out depended upon what was hidden in the core of you. You could not in any case be the same as your father before you; education in a new country is too powerful a stimulant for that, working upon material too plastic and too hypothetical; it is not yet a normal force, with an operation to be reckoned on with confidence. It is indeed the touchstone for character in a new people, for character acquired as apart from that inherited; it sometimes reveals surprises. Neither Lorne Murchison nor Elmore Crow illustrates this point very nearly. Lorne would have gone into the law in any case, since his father was able to send him, and Elmore would inevitably have gone back to the crops since he was early defeated by any other possibility. Nevertheless, as they walk

together in my mind along the Elgin market square, the Elgin Collegiate Institute rises infallibly behind them, a directing influence and a responsible parent. Lorne was telling his great news.

"You don't say!" remarked Elmore in response to it. "Lumbago is it? Pa's subject to that too; gets an attack most springs. Mr Fulke'll have to lay right up--it's the only thing."

"I'm afraid he will. And Warner never appeared in court in his life."

"What d'ye keep Warner for, then?"

"Oh, he does the conveyancing. He's a good conveyancer, but he isn't any pleader and doesn't pretend to be. And it's too late to transfer the case; nobody could get to the bottom of it as we have in the time. So it falls on me."

"Caesar, his ghost! How d'ye feel about it, Lorne? I'd be scared green. Y'don't TALK nervous. Now I bet you get there with both feet."

"I hope to get there," the young lawyer answered; and as he spoke a concentration came into his face which drove the elation and everything else that was boyish out of it. "It's bigger business than I could have expected for another five years. I'm sorry for the old man, though--HE'S nervous, if you like. They can hardly keep him in bed. Isn't that somebody beckoning to you?"

Elmore looked everywhere except in the right direction among the carts. If you had been "to the Collegiate," relatives among the carts selling squashes were embarrassing.

"There," his companion indicated.

"It's Mother," replied Mr Crow, with elaborate unconcern; "but I don't suppose she's in anything of a hurry. I'll just go along with you far's the post-office." He kept his glance carefully from the spot at which he was signalled, and a hint of copper colour crawled up the back of his neck.

"Oh, but she is. Come along, Elmore; I can go that way."

"It'll be longer for you."

"Not a bit." Lorne cast a shrewd glance at his companion. "And as we're passing, you might just introduce me to your mother; see?"

"She won't expect it, Lorne."

"That's all right, my son. She won't refuse to meet a friend of yours." He led the way as he spoke to the point of vantage occupied by Mrs Crow, followed, with plain reluctance, by her son. She was a frail-looking old woman, with a knitted shawl pinned tightly across her chest, and her bonnet, in the course of commercial activity, pushed so far back as to be almost falling off.

"You might smarten yourself with that change, Elmore," she addressed him, ignoring his companion. "There's folks coming back for it. Two-dollar bill, wa'n't it? Fifty cents--seventy-five--dollar'n a half. That's a Yankee

dime, an' you kin march straight back with it. They don't pass but for nine cents, as you're old enough to know. Keep twenty-five cents for your dinner--you'll get most for the money at the Barker House--an' bring me back another quarter. Better go an' get your victuals now--it's gone twelve--while they're hot."

Elmore took his instructions without visible demur; and then, as Lorne had not seen fit to detach himself, performed the ceremony of introduction. As he performed it he drew one foot back and bowed himself, which seemed obscurely to facilitate it. The suspicion faded out of Mrs Crow's tired old sharp eyes under the formula, and she said she was pleased to make our friend's acquaintance.

"Mr Murchison's changed some since the old days at the Collegiate," Elmore explained, "but he ain't any different under his coat. He's practisin' the law."

"Lawyers," Mrs Crow observed, "are folks I like to keep away from."

"Quite right, too," responded Lorne, unabashed. "And so you've got my friend here back on the farm, Mrs Crow?"

"Well, yes, he's back on the farm, an' when he's wore out his Winnipeg clothes and his big ideas, we're lookin' to make him some use." Mrs Crow's intention, though barbed, was humorous, and her son grinned broadly.

"There's more money in the law," he remarked "once you get a start. Here's Mr Murchison goin' to run the Ormiston case; his old man's down sick, an' I guess it depends on Lorne now whether Ormiston gets off or goes to penitentiary."

Mrs Crow's face tied itself up into criticism as she looked our young man up and down. "Depends upon you, does it?" she commented. "Well, all I've got to say is it's a mighty young dependence. Coming on next week, ain't it? You won't be much older by then. Yes'm," she turned to business, "I don't say but what it's high for rhubarb, but there ain't another bunch in the market, and won't be for a week yet."

Under cover of this discussion Lorne bade the Crows good morning, retreating in the rear of the lady who found the rhubarb high. Mrs Crow's drop of acid combined with his saving sense of the humour of it to adjust all his courage and his confidence, and with a braver face than ever he involuntarily hastened his steps to keep pace with his happy chance.

CHAPTER X

In the wide stretches of a new country there is nothing to bound a local excitement, or to impede its transmission at full value. Elgin was a manufacturing town in southern Ontario, but they would have known every development of the Federal Bank case at the North Pole if there had been anybody there to learn. In Halifax they did know it, and in Vancouver, B.C., while every hundred miles nearer it warmed as a topic in proportion. In Montreal the papers gave it headlines; from Toronto they sent special reporters. Of course, it was most of all the opportunity of Mr Horace Williams, of the Elgin Express, and of Rawlins, who held

all the cards in their hands, and played them, it must be said, admirably, reducing the Mercury to all sorts of futile expedients to score, which the Express would invariably explode with a guffaw of contradiction the following day. It was to the Express that the Toronto reporters came for details and local colour; and Mr Williams gave them just as much as he thought they ought to have and no more. It was the Express that managed, while elaborately abstaining from improper comment upon a matter sub judice, to feed and support the general conviction of young Ormiston's innocence, and thereby win for itself, though a "Grit" paper, wide reading in that hotbed of Toryism, Moneida Reservation, while the Conservative Mercury, with its reckless sympathy for an old party name, made itself criminally liable by reviewing cases of hard dealing by the bank among the farmers, and only escaped prosecution by the amplest retraction and the most contrite apology. As Mr Williams remarked, there was no use in dwelling on the unpopularity of the bank, that didn't need pointing out; folks down Moneida way could put any newspaper wise on the number of mortgages foreclosed and the rate for secondary loans exacted by the bank in those parts. That consideration, no doubt, human nature being what it is, contributed the active principle to the feeling so widely aroused by the case. We are not very readily the prey to emotions of faith in our fellows, especially, perhaps, if we live under conditions somewhat hard and narrow; the greater animosity behind is, at all events, valuable to give force and relief and staying power to a sentiment of generous conviction. But however we may depreciate its origin, the conviction was there, widespread in the townships: young Ormiston would "get clear"; the case for the defence might be heard over every bushel of oats in Elgin market-place.

In Elgin itself opinion was more reserved. There was a general view that these bank clerks were fast fellows, and a tendency to contrast the habits and the pay of such dashing young men, an exercise which ended in a not unnatural query. As to the irritating caste feeling maintained among them, young Ormiston perhaps gave himself as few airs as any. He was generally conceded indeed by the judging sex to be "nice to everybody"; but was not that exactly the nature for which temptations were most easily spread? The town, moreover, had a sapience of its own. Was it likely that the bank would bring a case so publicly involving its character and management without knowing pretty well what it was about? The town would not be committed beyond the circle of young Ormiston's intimate friends, which was naturally small if you compared it with the public; the town wasn't going to be surprised at anything that might be proved. On the other hand, the town was much more vividly touched than the country by the accident which had made Lorne Murchison practically sole counsel for the defence, announced as it was by the Express with every appreciation of its dramatic value. Among what the Express called "the farming community" this, in so far as it had penetrated, was regarded as a simple misfortune, a dull blow to expectancy, which expectancy had some work to survive. Elgin, with its finer palate for sensation, saw in it heightened chances, both for Lorne and for the case; and if any ratepayer within its limits had remained indifferent to the suit, the fact that one side of it had been confided to so young and so "smart" a fellow townsman would have been bound to draw him into the circle of speculation. Youth in a young country is a symbol wearing all its value. It stands not only for what it is. The trick of augury

invests it, at a glance, with the sum of its possibilities, the augurs all sincere, confident, and exulting. They have been justified so often; they know, in their wide fair fields of opportunity, just what qualities will produce what results. There is thus a complacency among adolescent peoples which is vaguely irritating to their elders; but the greybeards need not be over-captious; it is only a question of time, pathetically short-lived in the history of the race. Sanguine persons in Elgin were freely disposed to "bet on" Lorne Murchison, and there were none so despondent as to take the view that he would not come out of it, somehow; with an added personal significance. To make a spoon is a laudable achievement, but it may be no mean business to spoil a horn.

As the Express put it, there was as little standing room for ladies and gentlemen in the courthouse the first day of the Spring Assizes as there was for horses in the Court House Square. The County Crown Attorney was unusually, oddly, reinforced by Cruickshank, of Toronto--the great Cruickshank, K.C., probably the most distinguished criminal lawyer in the Province. There were those who considered that Cruickshank should not have been brought down, that it argued undue influence on the part of the bank, and his retainer was a fierce fan to the feeling in Moneida; but there is no doubt that his appearance added all that was possible to the universal interest in the case. Henry Cruickshank was an able man and, what was rarer a fastidious politician. He had held office in the Dominion Cabinet, and had resigned it because of a difference with his colleagues in the application of a principle; they called him, after a British politician of lofty but abortive views, the Canadian Renfaire. He had that independence of personality, that intellectual candour, and that touch of magnetism which combine to make a man interesting in his public relations. Cruickshank's name alone would have filled the courthouse, and people would have gone away quoting him.

From the first word of the case for the prosecution there was that in the leading counsel's manner--a gravity, a kindness, an inclination to neglect the commoner methods of scoring--that suggested, with the sudden chill of unexpectedly bad news, a foregone conclusion. The reality of his feeling reference to the painful position of the defendant's father, the sincerity of his regret on behalf of the bank, for the deplorable exigency under which proceedings had been instituted, spread a kind of blankness through the court; men frowned thoughtfully, and one or two ladies shed furtive tears. Even the counsel for the defence, it was afterward remembered, looked grave, sympathetic, and concerned, in response to the brief but significant and moving sentences with which his eminent opponent opened the case. It is not my duty to report the trial for any newspaper; I will therefore spare myself more than the most general references; but the facts undoubtedly were that a safe in the strong room of the bank had been opened between certain hours on a certain night and its contents abstracted; that young Ormiston, cashier of the bank, was sleeping, or supposed to be sleeping, upon the premises at this time, during the illness of the junior whose usual duty it was; and that the Crown was in possession of certain evidence which would be brought forward to prove collusion with the burglary on the part of the defendant, collusion to cover deficits for which he could be held responsible. In a strain almost apologetic, Mr Cruickshank explained to the jury the circumstances which led the directors to the suspicion which they now believed only too regrettably

well founded. These consisted in the fact that the young man was known to be living beyond his means, and so to be constantly visited by the temptation to such a crime; the special facilities which he controlled for its commission and, in particular, the ease and confidence with which the actual operation had been carried out, arguing no fear of detection on the part of the burglars, no danger of interference from one who should have stood ready to defend with his life the property in his charge, but who would shortly be seen to have been toward it, first, a plunderer in his own person, and afterward the accomplice of plunderers to conceal his guilt. Examination showed the safe to have been opened with the dexterity that demands both time and coolness; and the ash from a pipe knocked out against the wall at the side of the passage offered ironical testimony to the comfort in which the business had been done.

The lawyer gave these considerations their full weight, and it was in dramatic contrast with the last of them that he produced the first significant fragment of evidence against Ormiston. There had been, after all, some hurry of departure. It was shown by a sheet of paper bearing the mark of a dirty thumb and a hasty boot-heel. bearing also the combination formula for opening the safe.

The public was familiar with that piece of evidence; it had gone through every kind of mill of opinion; it made no special sensation. The evidence of the caretaker who found the formula and of the witnesses who established it to be in young Ormiston's handwriting, produced little interest. Mr Cruickshank, in elaborating his theory as to why with the formula in their hands the depredators still found it necessary to pick the lock, offered nothing to speculations already current--the duplicate key with which they had doubtless been enabled to supply themselves was a clumsy copy and had failed them; that conclusion had been drawn commonly enough. The next scrap of paper produced by the prosecution was another matter. It was the mere torn end of a greasy sheet; upon it was written "Not less than 3,000 net," and it had been found in the turning out of Ormiston's dressing-table. It might have been anything--a number of people pursed their lips contemptuously--or it might have been, without doubt, the fragment of a disreputable transaction that the prosecuting counsel endeavoured to show it. Here, no doubt, was one of the pieces of evidence the prosecution was understood to have up its sleeve, and that portion of the prosecuting counsel's garment was watched with feverish interest for further disclosures. They came rapidly enough, but we must hurry them even more. The name of Miss Florence Belton, when it rose to the surface of the evidence, riveted every eye and ear. Miss Belton was one of those ambiguous ladies who sometimes drift out from the metropolitan vortex and circle restfully in backwaters for varying periods, appearing and disappearing irrelevantly. They dress beautifully; they are known to "paint" and thought to dye their hair. They establish no relations, being much too preoccupied. making exceptions only, as a rule, in favour of one or two young men, to whom they extend amenities based--it is the common talk--upon late hours and whiskey-and-soda. They seem superior to the little prevailing conventions; they excite an unlawful interest; though nobody knows them black nobody imagines them white; and when they appear upon Main Street in search of shoelaces or elastic heads are turned and nods, possibly nudges, exchanged. Miss Belton had come from New York to the Barker House, Elgin, and young Ormiston's intimacy with her was one of the things

that counted against him in the general view. It was to so count more seriously in the particular instance. Witnesses were called to prove that he had spent the evening of the burglary with Miss Belton at her hotel, that he had remained with her until one o'clock, that he was in the habit of spending his evenings with Miss Belton.

Rawlins of the Express did not overdo the sensation which was caused in the courtroom when the name of this lady herself was called to summon her to the witness box. It was indeed the despair of his whole career. He thought despondingly ever after of the thrill, to which he himself was not superior and which, if he had only been able to handle it adequately, might have led him straight up the ladder to a night editorship. Miss Belton appeared from some unsuspected seat near the door, throwing back a heavy veil, and walking as austere as she could, considering the colour of her hair. She took her place without emotion and there she corroborated the evidence of the servants of the hotel. To the grave questions of the prosecution she fluently replied that the distraction of these evenings had been cards--cards played, certainly, for money, and that she, certainly, had won very considerable sums from the defendant from time to time. In Elgin the very mention of cards played for money will cause a hush of something deeper than disapproval; there was silence in the court at this. In producing several banknotes for Miss Belton's identification, Mr Cruickshank seemed to profit by the silence. Miss Belton identified them without hesitation, as she might easily, since they had been traced to her possession. Asked to account for them; she stated, without winking, that they had been paid to her by Mr Walter Ormiston at various times during the fortnight preceding the burglary, in satisfaction of debts at cards. She, Miss Belton, had left Elgin for Chicago the day after the burglary. Mr Ormiston knew that she was going. He had paid her the four fifty-dollar notes actually traced, the night before she left, and said. "You won't need to break these here, will you?" He seemed anxious that she should not, but it was the merest accident that she hadn't. In all, she had received from Mr Ormiston four hundred and fifty dollars. No, she had no suspicion that the young man might not be in a position to make such payments. She understood that Mr Ormiston's family was wealthy, and never thought twice about it.

She spoke with a hard dignity, the lady, and a great effect of doing business, a kind of assertion of the legitimate. The farmers of Fox County told each other in chapfallen appreciation that she was about as level-headed as they make them. Lawyer Cruickshank, as they called him, brought forth from her detail after detail, and every detail fitted damningly with the last. The effect upon young Ormiston was so painful that many looked another way. His jaw was set and his features contorted to hold himself from the disgrace of tears. He was generally acknowledged to be overwhelmed by the unexpected demonstration of his guilt, but distress was so plain in him that there was not a soul in the place that was not sorry for him. In one or two resolute faces hope still glimmered, but it hardly survived the cross-examination of the Crown's chief witness by the counsel for the defence which, as far as it went, had a perfunctory air and contributed little to the evidence before the Court. It did not go all the way, however. The case having opened late, the defence was reserved till the following day, when proceedings would be resumed with the further cross-examination of Miss Belton.

As the defendant's counsel went down the courthouse steps Rawlins came up to him to take note of his demeanour and anything else that might be going.

"Pretty stiff row to hoe you've got there, Lorne," he said.

"Pretty stiff," responded Lorne.

CHAPTER XI

Imagination, one gathers, is a quality dispensed with of necessity in the practice of most professions, being that of which nature is, for some reason, most niggardly. There is no such thing as passing in imagination for any department of public usefulness, even the government of Oriental races; the list of the known qualified would be exhausted, perhaps, in getting the papers set. Yet neither poet nor philosopher enjoys it in monopoly; the chemist may have it, and the inventor must; it has been proved the mainspring of the mathematician, and I have hinted it the property of at least two of the Murchisons. Lorne was indebted to it certainly for his constructive view of his client's situation, the view which came to him and stayed with him like a chapter in a novel, from the hour in which Ormiston had reluctantly accounted for himself upon the night of the burglary. It was a brilliant view, that perceived the young clerk the victim of the conspiracy he was charged with furthering; its justification lay back, dimly, among the intuitions about human nature which are part of the attribute I have quoted. I may shortly say that it was justified; another day's attendance at the Elgin Courthouse shall not be compulsory here, whatever it may have been there. Young Ormiston's commercial probity is really no special concern of ours; the thing which does matter, and considerably, is the special quality which Lorne Murchison brought to the task of its vindication, the quality that made new and striking appeal, through every channel of the great occasion, to those who heard him. It was that which reinforced and comforted every friend Ormiston had in the courtroom, before Lorne proceeded either to deal with the evidence of the other side, or to produce any jot or tittle of his own; and it was that which affected his distinguished opponent to the special interest which afterward showed itself so pleasantly superior to the sting of defeat. The fact that the defence was quite as extraordinarily indebted to circumstantial evidence as the prosecution in no way detracted from the character of Lorne's personal triumph; rather, indeed, in the popular view and Rawlins's, enhanced it. There was in it the primitive joy of seeing a ruffian knocked down with his own illegitimate weapons, from the moment the dropped formula was proved to be an old superseded one, and unexpected indication was produced that Ormiston's room, as well as the bank vault, had been entered the night of the robbery, to the more glorious excitement of establishing Miss Belton's connection--not to be quoted--with a cracksman at that moment being diligently inquired for by the New York police with reference to a dramatically bigger matter. You saw the plot at once as he constructed it; the pipe ash became explicable in the seduction of Miss Belton's charms. The cunning net unwove itself, delicately and deliberately, to tangle round the lady. There was in it that superiority in the art of legerdemain, of mere calm, astonishing manipulation, so applauded in regions where romance has

not yet been quite trampled down by reason. Lorne scored; he scored in face of probability, expectation, fact; it was the very climax and coruscation of score. He scored not only by the cards he held but by the beautiful way he played them, if one may say so. His nature came into this, his gravity and gentleness, his sympathy, his young angry irony. To mention just one thing, there was the way he held Miss Belton up, after the exposure of her arts, as the lady for whom his client had so chivalric a regard that he had for some time refused to state his whereabouts at the hour the bank was entered in the fear of compromising her. For this, no doubt, his client could have strangled him, but it operated, of course, to raise the poor fellow in the estimation of every body, with the possible exception of his employers. When, after the unmistakable summing-up, the foreman returned in a quarter of an hour with the verdict of "Not guilty," people noticed that the young man walked out of court behind his father with as drooping a head as if he had gone under sentence; so much so that by common consent he was allowed to slip quietly away. Miss Belton departed, followed by the detective, whose services were promptly transferred to the prosecution, and by a proportion of those who scented further entertainment in her perfumed, perjured wake. But the majority hung back, leaving their places slowly; it was Lorne the crowd wanted to shake hands with to say just a word of congratulation to, Lorne's triumph that they desired to enhance by a hearty sentence, or at least an admiring glance. Walter Winter was among the most genial.

"Young man," he said, "what did I tell you? Didn't I tell you you ought to take this case?" Mr Winter, with his chest thrust out, plumed and strutted in justifiable pride of prophecy. "Now, I'll tell you another thing: today's event will do more for you than it has for Ormiston. Mark my words!"

They were all of that opinion, all the fine foretellers of the profit Lorne should draw from his spirited and conspicuous success; they stood about in knots discussing it; to some extent it eclipsed the main interest and issue of the day, at that moment driving out, free and disconsolate, between the snake fences of the South Riding to Moneida Reservation. The quick and friendly sense of opportunity was abroad on Lorne Murchison's behalf; friends and neighbours and Dr Drummond, and people who hardly knew the fellow, exchanged wise words about what his chance would do for him. What it would immediately do was present to nobody so clearly, however, as to Mr Henry Cruickshank, who decided that he would, after all, accept Dr Drummond's invitation to spend the night with him, and find out the little he didn't know already about this young man.

That evening the Murchisons' doorbell rang twice. The first time it was to admit the Rev. Hugh Finlay, who had come to return Sordello, which he had borrowed from Advena, and to find out whether she thought with him about the interpretation of certain passages, and if not--there was always the possibility--wherein their divergence lay. The second time the door opened to Dr Drummond and Mr Cruickshank; and the electric light had to be turned on in the drawing-room, since the library was already occupied by Mr Finlay and Advena, Mr and Mrs Murchison never having got over their early habit of sitting in the dining-room after tea. Even then Mrs Murchison had to put away her workbasket, and John Murchison to knock the ashes out of his pipe, looking at

one another with surprised inquiry when Eliza informed them of their visitors. Luckily, Mr Lorne was also in, and Eliza was sent to tell him, and Mr Lorne came down the stairs two at a time to join the party in the drawing-room, which was presently supplied by Eliza with a dignified service of cake and wine. The hall divided that room from the library, and both doors were shut. We cannot hesitate about which to open; we have only, indeed, to follow the recognized tradition of Elgin, which would never have entered the library. No vivid conclusion should be drawn, no serious situation may even be indicated. It would simply have been considered, in Elgin, stupid to go into the library.

"It isn't a case for the High Commissioner for Canada," Mr Cruickshank was saying. "It's a case for direct representation of the interests concerned, and their view of the effect upon trade. That's the only voice to speak with if you want to get anything done. Conviction carries conviction. The High Commissioner is a very useful fellow to live in London and look after the ornamental, the sentimental, and immigration--nobody could do it better than Selkirk. And in England, of course, they like that kind of agency. It's the good old dignified way; but it won't do for everything. You don't find our friend Morgan operating through the American equivalent of a High Commissioner."

"No, you don't," said John Murchison.

"He goes over there as a principal, and the British Government, if he wants to deal with it, is only another principal. That's the way our deputation will go. We're practically all shippers, though of course the matter of tenders will come later. There is big business for them here, national business, and we propose to show it. The subsidy we want will come back to the country four times over in two years. Freights from Boston alone--"

"It's the patriotic, imperial argument you'll have to press, I doubt," said John Murchison. "They're not business people over there--the men in office are not. How should they be? The system draws them from the wrong class. They're gentlemen--noblemen, maybe--first, and they've no practical education. There's only one way of getting it, and that's to make your own living. How many of them have ever made tuppence? There's where the Americans beat them so badly--they've got the sixth sense, the business sense. No; you'll not find them responding greatly to what there is in it for trade--they'd like to well enough, but they just won't see it; and, by George! what a fine suspicion they'll have of ye! As to freights from Boston," he continued, as they all laughed, "I'm of opinion you'd better not mention them. What! steal the trade of a friendly power! Tut. tut!"

It was a long speech for John Murchison, but they were all excited to a pitch beyond the usual. Henry Cruickshank had brought with him an event of extraordinary importance. It seemed to sit there with him, significant and propitious, in the middle of the sofa; they all looked at it in the pauses. Dr Drummond, lost in an armchair, alternately contemplated it and remembered to assert himself part of it. As head of a deputation from the United Chambers of Commerce of Canada shortly to wait on the British Government to press for the encouragement of improved communications within the Empire, Cruickshank had been asked to select a secretary. The appointment, in view of the desirability, for political reasons, of giving the widest publicity to

the hopes and motives of the deputation, was an important one. The action of the Canadian Government, in extending conditional promises of support, had to be justified to the Canadian taxpayer; and that shy and weary person whose shoulders uphold the greatness of Britain, had also to receive such conciliation and reassurance as it was possible to administer to him, by way of nerving the administrative arm over there to an act of enterprise. Mr Cruickshank had had two or three young fellows, mostly newspaper men, in his mind's eye; but when Lorne came into his literal range of vision, the others had promptly been retired in our friend's favour. Young Mr Murchison, he had concluded, was the man they wanted; and if his office could spare him, it would probably do young Mr Murchison no harm in any sort of way to accompany the deputation to London and throw himself into the matter the deputation had at heart.

"But it's the Empire!" said Lorne, with a sort of shy fire, when Mr Cruickshank enunciated this.

We need not, perhaps, dwell upon the significance of his agreement. It was then not long since the maple leaf had been stained brighter than ever, not without honour, to maintain the word that fell from him. The three older men looked at him kindly; John Murchison, rubbing his chin as he considered the situation, slightly shook his head. One took it that in his view the Empire was not so readily envisaged.

"That has a strong bearing," Mr Cruickshank assented.

"It's the whole case--it seems to me," repeated young Murchison.

"It should help to knit us up," said Dr Drummond. "I'll put my name down on the first passenger list, if Knox Church will let me off. See that you have special rates," he added, with a twinkle, "for ministers and missionaries."

"And only ten days to get him ready in," said Mrs Murchison. "It will take some seeing to, I assure you; and I don't know how it's to be done in the time. For once, Lorne, I'll have to order you ready-made shirts, and you'll just have to put up with it. Nothing else could possibly get back from the wash."

"I'll put up with it, Mother."

They went into other details of Lorne's equipment while Mrs Murchison's eye still wandered over the necessities of his wardrobe. They arranged the date on which he was to meet the members of the deputation in Montreal, and Mr Cruickshank promised to send him all available documents and such presentation of the project as had been made in the newspapers.

"You shall be put in immediate possession of the bones of the thing," he said, "but what really matters," he added pleasantly, "I think you've got already."

It took, of course, some discussion, and it was quite ten o'clock before everything was gone into, and the prospect was clear to them all. As they emerged into the hall together, the door of the room opposite also opened, and the Rev. Hugh Finlay found himself added to their group. They all made the best of the unexpected encounter. It was rather an elaborate best, very polite and entirely grave, except in the instance of Dr Drummond, who met

his subaltern with a smile in which cordiality struggled in vain to overcome the delighted humour.

CHAPTER XII

It was the talk of the town, the pride of the market-place, Lorne Murchison's having been selected to accompany what was known as the Cruickshank deputation to England. The general spirit of congratulation was corrected by a tendency to assert it another proof of sagacity on the chairman's part; Elgin wouldn't be too flattered; Lawyer Cruickshank couldn't have done better. You may be sure the Express was well ahead with it. "Honour to Our Young Fellow Townsman. A Well-Merited Compliment," and Rawlins was round promptly next morning to glean further particulars. He found only Mrs Murchison, on a stepladder tying up the clematis that climbed about the verandah, and she told him a little about clematis and a good deal about the inconvenience of having to abandon superintending the spring cleaning in order to get Lorne ready to go to the Old Country at such short notice, but nothing he could put in the paper. Lorne, sought at the office, was hardly more communicative. Mr Williams himself dropped in there. He said the Express would now have a personal interest in the object of the deputation, and proposed to strike out a broad line, a broader line than ever.

"We've got into the way of taking it for granted," said Mr Williams, "that the subsidy idea is a kind of mediaeval idea. Raise a big enough shout and you get things taken for granted in economics for a long while. Conditions keep changing, right along, all the time, and presently you've got to reconsider. There ain't any sort of ultimate truth in the finest economic position, my son; not any at all."

"We'll subsidize over here, right enough," said Lorne.

"That's the idea--that's the prevailing idea, just now. But lots of people think different--more than you'd imagine. I was talking to old man Milburn just now--he's dead against it. 'Government has no business,' he said, 'to apply the taxes in the interests of any company. It oughtn't to know how to spell "subsidy." If the trade was there it would get itself carried,' he said."

"Well, that surprises me," said Lorne.

"Surprised me, too. But I was on the spot with him; just thought of it in time. 'Well, now, Mr Milburn,' I said, 'you've changed your mind. Thought that was a thing you Conservatives never did,' I said. 'We don't--I haven't,' he said. 'What d'ye mean? Twenty-five years ago,' I said, 'when you were considering whether you'd start the Milburn Boiler Works here or in Hamilton, Hamilton offered you a free site, and Elgin offered you a free site and a dam for your water power. You took the biggest subsidy an' came here,' I said."

Lorne laughed: "What did he say to that?"

"Hadh't a word. 'I guess it's up to me,' he said. Then he turned round and came back. 'Hold on, Williams; he said. 'You know so much already about my boiler works, it wouldn't be much trouble for you to write out an account of them from the beginning, would it? Working in

the last quarter of a century of the town's progress, you know, and all that. Come round to the office tomorrow, and I'll give you some pointers.' And he fixed up a two-column ad right away. He was afraid I'd round on him, I suppose, if I caught him saying anything more about the immorality of subsidies."

"He won't say anything more."

"Probably not. Milburn hasn't got much of a political conscience, but he's got a sense of what's silly. Well, now, I expect you want all the time there is."

Mr Williams removed himself from the edge of the table, which was strewn with maps and bluebooks, printed official, and typewritten demi-official papers.

"Give 'em a notion of those Assiniboiian wheat acres, my boy, and the ranch country we've got; tell 'em about the future of quick passage and cold storage. Get 'em a little ashamed to have made so many fortunes for Yankee beef combines; persuade 'em the cheapest market has a funny way of getting the dearest price in the end. Give it 'em, Lorne, hot and cold and fricasseed. The Express will back you up."

He slapped his young friend's shoulder, who seemed occupied with matters that prevented his at once feeling the value of this assurance. "Bye-bye," said Mr Williams. "See you again before you start."

"Oh, of course!" Lorne replied. "I'll--I'll come round. By the way, Williams, Mr Milburn didn't say anything--anything about me in connection with this business? Didn't mention, I suppose, what he thought about my going?"

"Not a word, my boy! He was away up in abstract principles; he generally is. Bye-bye."

"It's gone to his head a little bit--only natural," Horace reflected as he went down the stairs. "He's probably just feeding on what folks think of it. As if it mattered a pin's head what Octavius Milburn thinks or don't think!"

Lorne, however, left alone with his customs returns and his immigration reports, sat still, attaching a weight quite out of comparison with a pin's head to Mr Milburn's opinion. He turned it over and over, instead of the tabulated figures that were his business: he had to show himself his way to the conclusion that such a thing could not matter seriously in the end, since Milburn hadn't a dollar involved--it would be different if he were a shareholder in the Maple Line. He wished heartily, nevertheless, that he could demonstrate a special advantage to boiler-makers in competitive freights with New York. What did they import, confound them! Pig-iron? Plates and rivets? Fortunately he was in a position to get at the facts, and he got at them with an interest of even greater intensity than he had shown to the whole question since ten that morning. Even now, the unprejudiced observer, turning up the literature connected with the Cruickshank deputation, may notice a stress laid upon the advantages to Canadian importers of ore in certain stages of manufacture which may strike him as slightly, very slightly, special. Of course there are a good many of them in the country. So that Mr Horace Williams was justified to some extent in his kindly observation upon the excusable egotism of youth. Two or three letters, however, came in while Lorne was considering the relation

of plates and rivets to the objects of his deputation. They were all congratulatory; one was from the chairman of the Liberal Association at its headquarters in Toronto. Lorne glanced at them and stowed them away in his pocket. He would read them when he got home, when it would be a pleasure to hand them over to his mother. She was making a collection of them.

He had a happy perception that same evening that Mr Milburn's position was not, after all, finally and invincibly taken against the deputation and everything --everybody--concerned with it. He met that gentleman at his own garden gate. Octavius paused in his exit, to hold it open for young Murchison, thus even assisting the act of entry, a thing which thrilled Lorne sweetly enough when he had time to ponder its possible significance. Alas! the significance that lovers find! Lorne read a world in the behaviour of Dora's father in holding the gate open. He saw political principle put aside in his favour, and social position forgotten in kindness to him. He saw the gravest, sincerest appreciation of his recent success, which he took as humbly as a dog will take a bone; he read a fatherly thought at which his pulses bounded in an arrogance of triumph, and his heart rose to ask its trust. And Octavius Milburn had held the gate open because it was more convenient to hold it open than to leave it open. He had not a political view in the world that was calculated to affect his attitude toward a practical matter; and his opinion of Lorne was quite uncomplicated: he thought him a very likely young fellow. Milburn himself, in the Elgin way, preferred to see no great significance of this sort anywhere. Young people were young people; it was natural enough that they should like each other's society. They, the Milburns, were very glad to see Mr Murchison, very glad indeed. It was frequent matter for veiled humorous reference at the table that he had been to call again, at which Dora would look very stiff and dignified, and have to be coaxed back into the conversation. As to anything serious, there was no hurry; plenty of time to think of that. Such matters dwelt under the horizon; there was no need to scan them closely; and Mr Milburn went his way, conscious of nothing more than a comfortable gratification that Dora, so far as the young men were concerned, seemed as popular as other girls.

Dora was not in the drawing-room. Young ladies in Elgin had always to be summoned from somewhere. For all the Filkin instinct for the conservation of polite tradition, Dora was probably reading the Toronto society weekly--illustrated, with correspondents all over the Province--on the back verandah and, but for the irruption of a visitor, would probably not have entered the formal apartment of the house at all that evening. Drawing-rooms in Elgin had their prescribed uses--to receive in, to practise in, and for the last sad entertainment of the dead, when the furniture was disarranged to accommodate the trestles; but the common business of life went on outside them, even among prosperous people, the survival, perhaps, of a habit based upon thrift. The shutters were opened when Lorne entered, to let in the spring twilight, and the servant pulled a chair into its proper relation with the room as she went out.

Mrs Milburn and Miss Filkin both came in before Dora did. Lorne found their conversation enchanting, though it was mostly about the difficulty of keeping the lawn tidy; they had had so much rain. Mrs Milburn assured him kindly that there was not such another lawn as his father's in

Elgin. How Mr Murchison managed to have it looking so nice always she could not think. Only yesterday she and Mr Milburn had stopped to admire it as they passed.

"Spring is always a beautiful time in Elgin," she remarked. "There are so many pretty houses here, each standing in its own grounds. Nothing very grand, as I tell my friend, Miss Cham, from Buffalo where the residences are, of course, on quite a different scale; but grandeur isn't everything, is it?"

"No, indeed," said Lorne.

"But you will be leaving for Great Britain very soon now, Mr Murchison," said Miss Filkin. "Leaving Elgin and all its beauties! And I dare say you won't think of them once again till you get back!"

"I hope I shall not be so busy as that, Miss Filkin."

"Oh, no, I'm sure Mr Murchison won't forget his native town altogether," said Mrs Milburn, "though perhaps he won't like it so well after seeing dear old England!"

"I expect," said Lorne simply, "to like it better."

"Well, of course, we shall all be pleased if you say that, Mr Murchison," Mrs Milburn replied graciously. "We shall feel quite complimented. But I'm afraid you will find a great deal to criticize when you come back--that is, if you go at all into society over there. I always say there can be nothing like good English society."

"I want to attend a sitting of the House," Lorne said. "I hope I shall have time for that. I want to see those fellows handling their public business. I don't believe I shall find our men so far behind, for point of view and grasp and dispatch. Of course there's always Wallingham to make a standard for us all. But they haven't got so many Wallinghams."

"Wasn't it Wallingham, Louisa, that Mr Milburn was saying at breakfast was such a dangerous man? So able, he said, but dangerous. Something to do with the tariff."

"Oh?" said Lorne, and he said no more, for at that moment Dora came in. She came in looking very straight and graceful and composed. Her personal note was carried out in her pretty clothes, which hung and "sat" upon her like the rhythm of verses; they could fall no other way. She had in every movement the definite accent of young ladyhood; she was very much aware of herself, of the situation, and of her value in it, a setting for herself she saw it, and saw it truly. No one, from the moment she entered the room, looked at anything else.

"Oh, Mr Murchison," she said. "How do you do? Mother, do you mind if I open the window? It's quite warm out of doors--regular summer."

Lorne sprang to open the window, while Miss Filkin, murmuring that it had been a beautiful day, moved a little farther from it.

"Oh, please don't trouble, Mr Murchison; thank you very much!" Miss Milburn continued, and subsided on a sofa. "Have you been playing tennis this week?"

Mr Murchison said that he had been able to get down to

the club only once.

"The courts aren't a bit in good order. They want about a week's rolling. The balls get up anywhere," said Dora.

"Lawn tennis," Mrs Milburn asserted herself, "is a delightful exercise. I hope it will never go out of fashion; but that is what we used to say of croquet, and it has gone out and come in again."

Lorne listened to this with deference; there was a hint of patience in the regard Dora turned upon her mother. Mrs Milburn continued to dilate upon lawn tennis, dealt lightly with badminton, and brought the conversation round with a graceful sweep to canoeing. Dora's attitude before she had done became slightly permissive, but Mrs Milburn held on till she had accomplished her conception of conduct for the occasion; then she remembered a meeting in the schoolhouse.

"We are to have an address by an Indian bishop," she told them. "He is on his way to England by China and Japan, and is staying with our dear rector, Mr Murchison. Such a treat I expect it will be."

"What I am dying to know," said Miss Filkin, in a sprightly way, "is whether he is black or white!"

Mrs Milburn then left the room, and shortly afterward Miss Filkin thought she could not miss the bishop either, conveying the feeling that a bishop was a bishop, of whatever colour. She stayed three minutes longer than Mrs Milburn, but she went. The Filkin tradition, though strong, could not hold out entirely against the unwritten laws, the silently claimed privileges, of youth in Elgin. It made its pretence and vanished.

Even as the door closed the two that were left looked at one another with a new significance. A simpler relation established itself between them and controlled all that surrounded them; the very twilight seemed conscious with it; the chairs and tables stood in attentive harmony.

"You know," said Dora, "I hate your going, Lorne!"

She did indeed seem moved, about the mouth, to discontent. There was some little injury in the way she swung her foot.

"I was hoping Mr Fulke wouldn't get better in time; I was truly!"

The gratitude in young Murchison's eyes should have been dear to her. I don't know whether she saw it; but she must have been aware that she was saying what touched him, making her point.

"Oh, it's a good thing to go, Dora."

"A good thing for you! And the regatta coming off the first week in June, and a whole crowd coming from Toronto for it. There isn't another person in town I care to canoe with, Lorne, you know perfectly well!"

"I'm awfully sorry!" said Lorne. "I wish--"

"Oh, I'm GOING, I believe. Stephen Stuart has written from Toronto, and asked me to sail with him. I haven't told Mother, but he's my second cousin, so I suppose she won't make a fuss."

The young man's face clouded; seeing which she relented. "Oh, of course, I'm glad you're going, really," she assured him. "And we'll all be proud to be acquainted with such a distinguished gentleman when you get back. Do you think you'll see the King? You might, you know, in London."

"I'll see him if he's visible," laughed Lorne. "That would be something to tell your mother, wouldn't it? But I'm afraid we won't be doing business with His Majesty."

"I expect you'll have the loveliest time you ever had in all your life. Do you think you'll be asked out much, Lorne?"

"I can't imagine who would ask me. We'll get off easy if the street boys don't shout: 'What price Canucks?' at us! But I'll see England, Dora; I'll feel England, eat and drink and sleep and live in England, for a little while. Isn't the very name great? I'll be a better man for going, till I die. We're all right out here, but we're young and thin and weedy. They didn't grow so fast in England, to begin with, and now they're rich with character and strong with conduct and hoary with ideals. I've been reading up the history of our political relations with England. It's astonishing what we've stuck to her through, but you can't help seeing why--it's for the moral advantage. Way down at the bottom, that's what it is. We have the sense to want all we can get of that sort of thing. They've developed the finest human product there is, the cleanest, the most disinterested, and we want to keep up the relationship--it's important. Their talk about the value of their protection doesn't take in the situation as it is now. Who would touch us if we were running our own show?"

"I don't believe they are a bit better than we are," replied Miss Milburn. "I'm sure I haven't much opinion of the Englishmen that come out here. They don't think anything of getting into debt, and as often as not they drink, and they never know enough to--to come in out of the rain. But, Lorne--"

"Yes, but we're very apt to get the failures. The fellows their folks give five or six hundred pounds to and tell them they're not expected back till they're making a living. The best men find their level somewhere else, along recognized channels. Lord knows we don't want them--this country's for immigrants. We're manufacturing our own gentlemen quite fast enough for the demand."

"I should think we were! Why, Lorne, Canadians--nice Canadians are just as gentlemanly as they can be! They'll compare with anybody. Perhaps Americans have got more style," she weighed the matter; "but Canadians are much better form, I think. But, Lorne, how perfectly dear of you to send me those roses. I wore them, and nobody there had such beauties. All the girls wanted to know where I got them, but I only told Lily, just to make her feel a pig for not having asked you--my very greatest friend! She just about apologized--told me she wanted to ask about twenty more people, but her mother wouldn't let her. They've lost an uncle or something lately, and if it hadn't been for Clara Sims staying with them they wouldn't have been giving anything."

"I'll try to survive not having been asked. But I'm glad you wore the roses, Dora."

"I dropped one, and Phil Carter wanted to keep it. He's so silly!"

"Did you--did you let him keep it?"

"Lorne Murchison! Do you think I'd let any man keep a rose I'd been wearing?"

He looked at her, suddenly emboldened. "I don't know about roses, Dora, but pansies--those are awfully nice ones in your dress. I'm very fond of pansies; couldn't you spare me one? I wouldn't ask for a rose, but a pansy--"

His eyes were more ardent than what he found to say. Beneath them Dora grew delicately pink. The pansies drooped a little; she put her slender fingers under one, and lifted its petals.

"It's too faded for your buttonhole," she said.

"It needn't stay in my buttonhole. I know lots of other places!" he begged.

Dora considered the pansy again, then she pulled it slowly out, and the young man got up and went over to her, proffering the lapel of his coat.

"It spoils the bunch," she said prettily. "If I give you this you will have to give me something to take its place."

"I will," said Lorne.

"I know it will be something better," said Dora, and there was a little effort in her composure. "You send people such beautiful flowers, Lorne."

She rose beside him as she spoke, graceful and fair, to fasten it in; and it was his hand that shook.

"Then may I choose it?" said Lorne. "And will you wear it?"

"I suppose you may. Why are you--why do you--Oh, Lorne, stand still!"

"I'll give you, you sweet girl, my whole heart!" he said in the vague tender knowledge that he offered her a garden, where she had but to walk, and smile, to bring about her unimaginable blooms.

CHAPTER XIII

They sat talking on the verandah in the close of the May evening, Mr and Mrs Murchison. The Plummer Place was the Murchison Place in the town's mouth now, and that was only fair; the Murchisons had overstampeded the Plummers. It lay about them like a map of their lives: the big horse chestnut stood again in flower to lighten the spring dusk for them, as it had done faithfully for thirty years. John was no longer in his shirt-sleeves; the growing authority of his family had long prescribed a black alpaca coat. He smoked his meerschaum with the same old deliberation, however, holding it by the bowl as considerably as he held its original, which lasted him fifteen years. A great deal of John Murchison's character

was there, in the way he held his pipe, his gentleness and patience, even the justice and repose and quiet strength of his nature. He smoked and read the paper the unfailing double solace of his evenings. I should have said that it was Mrs Murchison who talked. She had the advantage of a free mind, only subconsciously occupied with her white wool and agile needles; and John had frequently to choose between her observations and the politics of the day.

"You saw Lorne's letter this morning, Father?"

John took his pipe out of his mouth. "Yes," he said.

"He seems tremendously taken up with Wallingham. It was all Wallingham, from one end to the other."

"It's not remarkable," said John Murchison, patiently.

"You'd think he had nothing else to write about. There was that reception at Lord What-you-may-call-him's, the Canadian Commissioner's, when the Prince and Princess of Wales came, and brought their family. I'd like to have heard something more about that than just that he was there. He might have noticed what the children had on. Now that Abby's family is coming about her I seem to have my hands as full of children's clothes as ever I had. Abby seems to think there's nothing like my old patterns; I'm sure I'm sick of the sight of them!"

Mr Murchison refolded his newspaper, took his pipe once more from his mouth, and said nothing.

"John, put down that paper! I declare it's enough to drive anybody crazy! Now look at that boy walking across the lawn. He does it every night, delivering the Express, and you take no more notice! He's wearing a regular path!"

"Sonny," said Mr Murchison, as the urchin approached, "you mustn't walk across the grass."

"Much good that will do!" remarked Mrs Murchison. "I'd teach him to walk across the grass, if--if it were my business. Boy--isn't your name Willie Parker? Then it was your mother I promised the coat and the other things to, and you'll find them ready there, just inside the hall door. They'll make down very well for you, but you can tell her from me that she'd better double-seam them, for the stuff's apt to ravel. And attend to what Mr Murchison says; go out by the gravel--what do you suppose it's there for?"

Mrs Murchison readjusted her glasses, and turned another row of the tiny sock. "I must say it's a pleasure to have the lawn neat and green," she said, with a sigh. "Never did I expect to see the day it would be anything but chickweed and dandelions. We've a great deal to be thankful for, and all our children spared to us, too. John," she continued, casting a shrewd glance over her needles at nothing in particular; "do you suppose anything was settled between Lorne and Dora Milburn before he started?"

"He said nothing to me about it."

"Oh, well, very likely he wouldn't. Young people keep such a tremendous lot to themselves nowadays. But it's my belief they've come to an understanding."

"Lily might do worse," said John Murchison, judiciously.

"I should think Dora might do worse! I don't know where she's going to do better! The most promising young man in Elgin, well brought up, well educated, well started in a profession! There's not a young fellow in this town to compare with Lorne, and perfectly well you know it, John. Might do worse! But that's you all over. Belittle your own belongings!"

Mr Murchison smiled in amused tolerance. "They've always got you to blow their trumpet, Mother," he replied.

"And more than me. You ought to hear Dr Drummond about Lorne! He says that if the English Government starts that line of boats to Halifax the country will owe it to him, much more than to Cruickshank, or anybody else."

"Dr Drummond likes to talk," said John Murchison.

"Lorne's keeping his end up all right," remarked Stella, jumping off her bicycle in time to hear what her mother said. "It's great, that old Wallingham asking him to dinner. And haven't I just been spreading it!"

"Where have you been, Stella?" asked Mrs Murchison.

"Oh, only over to the Milburns'. Dora asked me to come and show her the new flower-stitch for table centres. Dora's suddenly taken to fancy work. She's started a lot--a lot too much!" Stella added gloomily.

"If Dora likes to do fancy work I don't see why anybody should want to stop her," remarked Mrs Murchison, with a meaning glance at her husband.

"I suppose she thinks she's going to get Lorne," said Stella. Her resentment was only half-serious, but the note was there.

"What put that into your head?" asked her mother.

"Oh, well, anybody can see that he's devoted to her, and has been for ages, and it isn't as if Lorne was one to HAVE girlfriends; she's absolutely the only thing he's ever looked at twice. She hasn't got a ring, that's true, but it would be just like her to want him to get it in England. And I know they correspond. She doesn't make any secret of it."

"Oh, I dare say! Other people have eyes in their head as well as you, Stella," said Mrs Murchison, stooping for her ball. "But there's no need to take things for granted at such a rate. And, above all, you're not to go TALKING, remember!"

"Well, if you think Dora Milburn's good enough," returned Lorne's youngest sister in threatening accents, "it's more than I do, that's all. Hello, Miss Murchison!" she continued, as Advena appeared. "You're looking 'xtremely dinky-dink. Expecting his reverence?"

Advena made no further reply than a look of scornful amusement, which Stella, bicycling forth again, received in the back of her head.

"Father," said Mrs Murchison, "if you had taken any share in the bringing up of this family, Stella ought to have her ears boxed this minute!"

"We'll have to box them," said Mr Murchison, "when she comes back." Advena had retreated into the house. "Is she expecting his reverence?" asked her father with a twinkle.

"Don't ask me! I'm sure it's more than I can tell you. It's a mystery to me, that matter, altogether. I've known him come three evenings in a week and not again for a month of Sundays. And when he does come there they sit, talking about their books and their authors; you'd think the world had nothing else in it! I know, for I've heard them, hard at it, there in the library. Books and authors won't keep their house or look after their family for them; I can tell them that, if it does come to anything, which I hope it won't."

"Finlay's fine in the pulpit," said John Murchison cautiously.

"Oh, the man's well enough; it's him I'm sorry for. I don't call Advena fitted to be a wife, and last of all a minister's. Abby was a treasure for any man to get, and Stella won't turn out at all badly; she's taking hold very well for her age. But Advena simply hasn't got it in her, and that's all there is to say about it." Mrs Murchison pulled her needles out right side out with finality. "I don't deny the girl's talented in her own way, but it's no way to marry on. She'd much better make up her mind just to be a happy independent old maid; any woman might do worse. And take no responsibilities."

"There would always be you, Mother, for them to fall back on." It was as near as John Murchison ever got to flattery.

"No thank you, then! I've brought up six of my own, as well as I was able, which isn't saying much, and a hard life I've had of it. Now I'm done with it; they'll have to find somebody else to fall back on. If they get themselves into such a mess"--Mrs Murchison stopped to laugh with sincere enjoyment--"they needn't look to me to get them out."

"I guess you'd have a hand, Mother."

"Not I. But the man isn't thinking of any such folly. What do you suppose his salary is?"

"Eight hundred and fifty dollars a year. They raised it last month."

"And how far would Advena be able to make that go, with servants getting the money they do and expecting the washing put out as a matter of course? Do you remember Eliza, John, that we had when we were first married? Seven dollars a month she got; she would split wood at a pinch, and I've never had one since that could do up shirts like her. Three years and a half she was with me, and did everything, everything I didn't do. But that was management, and Advena's no manager. It would be me that would tell him, if I had the chance. Then he couldn't say he hadn't been warned. But I don't think he has any such idea."

"Advena," pronounced Mr Murchison, "might do worse."

"Well, I don't know whether she might. The creature is well enough to preach before a congregation. But what she can see in him out of the pulpit is more than I know. A great gawk of a fellow, with eyes that always look as

if he were in the middle of next week! He may be able to talk to Advena, but he's no hand at general conversation; I know he finds precious little to say to me. But he's got no such notion. He comes here because, being human, he's got to open his mouth some time or other, I suppose; but it's my opinion he has neither Advena nor anybody else in his mind's eye at present. He doesn't go the right way about it."

"H'm!" said John Murchison.

"He brought her a book the last time he came--what do you think the name of it was? The something or other of Plato! Do you call that a natural gift from a young man who is thinking seriously of a girl? Besides, if I know anything about Plato he was a Greek heathen, and no writer for a Presbyterian minister to go lending around. I'd Plato him to the rightabout if it was me!"

"She might read worse than Plato," remarked John.

"Oh, well, she read it fast enough. She's your own daughter for outlandish books. Mercy on us, here comes the man! We'll just say 'How d'ye do?' to him, and then start for Abby's, John. I'm not easy in my mind about the baby, and I haven't been over since the morning. Harry says it's nothing but stomach, but I think I know whooping-cough when I hear it. And if it is whooping-cough the boy will have to come here and rampage, I suppose, till they're clear of it. There's some use in grandmothers, if I do say it myself!"

CHAPTER XIV

If anyone had told Mr Hugh Finlay, while he was pursuing his rigorous path to the ideals of the University of Edinburgh, that the first notable interest of his life in the calling and the country to which even then he had given his future would lie in his relations with any woman, he would have treated the prediction as mere folly. To go far enough back in accounting for this one would arrive at the female sort, sterling and arid, that had presided over his childhood and represented the sex to his youth, the Aunt Lizzie, widowed and frugal and spare, who had brought him up; the Janet Wilson, who had washed and mended him from babyhood, good gaunt creature half-servant and half-friend--the mature respectable women and impossible blowsy girls of the Dumfriesshire village whence he came. With such as these relations, actual or imagined, could only be of the most practical kind, matters to be arranged on grounds of expediency, and certainly not of the first importance. The things of first importance--what you could do with your energy and your brains to beat out some microscopic good for the world, and what you could see and feel and realize in it of value to yourself--left little room for the feminine consideration in Finlay's eyes; it was not a thing, simply, that existed there with any significance. Woman in her more attractive presentment, was a daughter of the poets, with an esoteric, or perhaps only a symbolic, or perhaps a merely decorative function; in any case, a creature that required an initiation to perceive her--a process to which Finlay would have been as unwilling as he was unlikely to submit. Not that he was destitute of ideals about women--they would have formed in that case a strange exception to his general outlook--but he saw

them on a plane detached and impersonal, concerned with the preservation of society the maintenance of the home, the noble devotions of motherhood. Women had been known, historically, to be capable of lofty sentiments and fine actions: he would have been the last to withhold their due from women. But they were removed from the scope of his imagination, partly by the accidents I have mentioned and partly, no doubt, by a simple lack in him of the inclination to seek and to know them.

So that Christie Cameron, when she came to stay with his aunt in Bross during the few weeks after his ordination and before his departure for Canada, found a fair light for judgement and more than a reasonable disposition to acquiesce in the scale of her merits, as a woman, on the part of Hugh Finlay. He was familiar with the scale of her merits before she came; his Aunt Lizzie did little but run them up and down. When she arrived she answered to every item she was a good height, but not too tall; a nice figure of a woman, but not what you would call stout; a fresh-faced body whose excellent principles were written in every feature she had. She was five years older than Hugh, but even that he came to accept in Aunt Lizzie's skilful exhibition as something to the total of her advantages. A pleasant independent creature with a hundred a year of her own, sensible and vigorous and good-tempered, belonging as well to the pre-eminently right denomination. She had virtues that might have figured handsomely in an advertisement had Aunt Lizzie, in the plenitude of her good will, thought fit to take that measure on Christie's behalf. But nothing was farther from Aunt Lizzie's mind. We must, in fairness, add Christie Cameron to the sum of Finlay's acquaintance with the sex; but even then the total is slender, little to go upon.

Yet the fact which Mr Finlay would in those days have considered so unimaginable remained; it had come into being and it remained. The chief interest of his life, the chief human interest, did lie in his relations with Advena Murchison. He might challenge it, but he could not move it; he might explain, but he could not alter it. And there had come no point at which it would have occurred to him to do either. When at last he had seen how simple and possible it was to enjoy Miss Murchison's companionship upon unoccupied evenings he had begun to do it with eagerness and zest, the greater because Elgin offered him practically no other. Dr Drummond lived, for purposes of intellectual contact, at the other end of the century. The other clergy and professional men of the town were separated from Finlay by all the mental predispositions that rose from the virgin soil. He was, as Mrs Murchison said, a great gawk of a fellow; he had little adaptability; he was not of those who spend a year or two in the New World and go back with a trans-Atlantic accent, either of tongue or of mind. Where he saw a lack of dignity, of consideration, or of restraint, he did not insensibly become less dignified or considerate or restrained to smooth out perceptible differences; nor was he constituted to absorb the qualities of those defects, and enrich his nature by the geniality, the shrewdness, the quick mental movement that stood on the other side of the account. He cherished in secret an admiration for the young men of Elgin, with their unappeasable energy and their indomitable optimism, but he could not translate it in any language of sympathy and but for Advena his soul would have gone un comforted and alone.

Advena, as we know, was his companion. Seeing herself

just that, constantly content to be just that, she walked beside him closer than he knew. She had her woman's prescience and trusted it. Her own heart, all sweetly alive, counselled her to patience; her instincts laid her in bonds to concealment. She knew, she was sure; so sure that she could play sometimes, smiling, with her living heart--

The nightingale was not yet heard
For the rose was not yet blown,

she could say of his; and what was that but play, and tender laughter, at the expense of her own? And then, perhaps, looking up from the same book, she would whisper, alone in her room--

Oh, speed the day, thou dear, dear May,

and gaze humbly through tears at her own face in the glass loving it on his behalf. She took her passion with the weight of a thing ordained; she had come upon it where it waited for her, and they had gone on together, carrying the secret. There might be farther to go, but the way could never be long.

Finlay said when he came in that the heat for May was extraordinary; and Advena reminded him that he was in a country where everything was accomplished quickly, even summer.

"Except perhaps civilization," she added. They were both young enough to be pleased with cleverness for its specious self.

"Oh, that is slow everywhere," he observed; "but how you can say so, with every modern improvement staring you in the face--"

"Electric cars and telephones! Oh, I didn't say we hadn't the products," and she laughed. "But the thing itself, the precious thing; that never comes just by wishing, does it? The art of indifference, the art of choice--"

"If you had refinements in the beginning what would the end be?" he demanded. "Anaemia."

"Oh, I don't quarrel with the logic of it. I only point out the fact. To do that is to acquiesce, really. I acquiesce; I have to. But one may long for the more delicate appreciations that seem to flower where life has gone on longer."

"I imagine," Finlay said, "that to wish truly and ardently for such things is to possess them. If you didn't possess them you wouldn't desire them! As they say, as they say--"

"As they say?"

"About love. Some novelist does. To be conscious in any way toward it is to be fatally infected."

"What novelist?" Advena asked, with shining interest.

"Some novelist. I--I can't have invented it," he replied, somewhat confounded. He got up and walked to the window, where it stood open upon the verandah. "I don't write novels," he said.

"Perhaps you live them," suggested Advena. "I mean, of

course," she added, laughing, "the highest class of fiction."

"Heaven forbid!"

"Why Heaven forbid? You are sensitive to life, and a great deal of it comes into your scope. You can't see a thing truly without feeling it; you can't feel it without living it. I don't write novels either, but I experience--whole publishers' lists."

"That means," he said, smiling, "that your vision is up to date. You see the things, the kind of things that you read of next day. The modern moral sophistications--?"

"Don't make me out boastful," she replied. "I often do."

"Mine would be old-fashioned, I am afraid. Old stories of pain"--he looked out upon the lawn, white where the chestnut blossoms were dropping, and his eyes were just wistful enough to stir her adoration--"and of heroism that is quite dateless in the history of the human heart. At least one likes to hope so."

"I somehow think," she ventured timidly, "that yours would be classic."

Finlay withdrew his glance abruptly from the falling blossoms as if they had tempted him to an expansion he could not justify. He was impatient always of the personal note, and in his intercourse with Miss Murchison he seemed of late to be constantly sounding it.

"Oh, I don't know," he said, almost irritably. "I only meant that I see the obvious things, while you seem to have an eye for the subtle. There's reward, I suppose, in seeing anything. But about those more delicate appreciations of societies longer evolved, I sometimes think that you don't half realize, in a country like this, how much there is to make up."

"Is there anything really to make up?" she asked.

"Oh, so much! Freedom from old habits, inherited problems: look at the absurd difficulty they have in England in handling such a matter as education! Here you can't even conceive it--the schools have been on logical lines from the beginning, or almost. Political activity over there is half-strangled at this moment by the secular arm of religion; here it doesn't even impede the circulation! Conceive any Church, or the united Churches, for the matter of that, asking a place in the conduct of the common schools of Ontario! How would the people take it? With anger, or with laughter, but certainly with sense. 'By all means let the ministers serve education on the School Boards,' they would say, 'by election like other people'--an opportunity, by the way, which has just been offered to me. I'm nominated for East Elgin in place of Leverett, the tanner, who is leaving the town. I shall do my best to get in, too; there are several matters that want seeing to over there. The girls' playground, for one thing, is practically under water in the spring."

"You should get in without the least difficulty. Oh, yes there is something in a fresh start: we're on the straight road as a nation, in most respects; we haven't any picturesque old prescribed lanes to travel. So you think that makes up?"

"It's one thing. You might put down space--elbow-room."

"An empty horizon," Advena murmured.

"For faith and the future. An empty horizon is better than none. England has filled hers up. She has now--these," and he nodded at a window open to the yellow west. Advena looked with him.

"Oh, if you have a creative imagination," she said "like Wallingham's. But even then your vision must be only political economic, material. You can't conceive the--flowers--that will come out of all that. And if you could it wouldn't be like having them."

"And the scope of the individual, his chance of self-respect, unhampered by the traditions of class, which either deaden it or irritate it in England! His chance of significance and success! And the splendid, buoyant, unused air to breathe, and the simplicity of life, and the plenty of things!"

"I am to be consoled because apples are cheap."

"You are to be consoled for a hundred reasons. Doesn't it console you to feel under your very feet the forces that are working to the immense amelioration of a not altogether undeserving people?"

"No," said Advena, rebelliously; and indeed he had been a trifle didactic to her grievance. They laughed together, and then with a look at her in which observation seemed suddenly to awake, Finlay said--

"And those things aren't all, or nearly all. I sometimes think that the human spirit, as it is set free in these wide unblemished spaces, may be something more pure and sensitive, more sincerely curious about what is good and beautiful--"

He broke off, still gazing at her, as if she had been an idea and no more. How much more she was she showed him by a vivid and beautiful blush.

"I am glad you are so well satisfied," she said, and then, as if her words had carried beyond their intention, she blushed again.

Upon which Hugh Finlay saw his idea incarnate.

CHAPTER XV

If it were fair or adequate to so quote, I should be very much tempted to draw the history of Lorne Murchison's sojourn in England from his letters home. He put his whole heart into these, his discoveries and his recognitions and his young enthusiasm, all his claimed inheritance, all that he found to criticize and to love. His mother said, half-jealously when she read them, that he seemed tremendously taken up with the old country; and of course she expressed the thing exactly, as she always did: he was tremendously taken up with it. The old country fell into the lines of his imagination, from the towers of Westminster to the shops in the Strand; from the Right Hon. Fawcett Wallingham, who laid great issues before the public, to the man who sang melancholy hymns to the

same public up and down the benevolent streets. It was naturally London that filled his view; his business was in London and his time was short; the country he saw from the train, whence it made a low cloudy frame for London, with decorations of hedges and sheep. How he saw London, how he carried away all he did in the time and under the circumstances, may be thought a mystery; there are doubtless people who would consider his opportunities too limited to gather anything essential. Cruickshank was the only one of the deputation who had been "over" before; and they all followed him unquestioningly to the temperance hotel of his preference in Bloomsbury, where bedrooms were three and six and tea was understood as a solid meal and the last in the day. Bates would have voted for the Metropole, and McGill had been advised that you saw a good deal of life at the Cecil, but they bowed to Cruickshank's experience. None of them were total abstainers, but neither had any of them the wine habit; they were not inconvenienced, therefore, in taking advantage of the cheapness with which total abstinence made itself attractive, and they took it, though they were substantial men. As one of them put it, they weren't over there to make a splash, a thing that was pretty hard to do in London, anyhow; and home comforts came before anything. The conviction about the splash was perhaps a little the teaching of circumstances. They were influential fellows at home, who had lived for years in the atmosphere of appreciation that surrounds success; their movements were observed in the newspapers; their names stood for wide interests, big concerns. They had known the satisfaction of a positive importance, not only in their community but in their country; and they had come to England invested as well with the weight that is attached to a public mission. It may very well be that they looked for some echo of what they were accustomed to, and were a little dashed not to find it--to find the merest published announcement of their arrival, and their introduction by Lord Selkirk to the Colonial Secretary; and no heads turned in the temperance hotel when they came into the dining-room. It may very well be. It is even more certain, however that they took the lesson as they found it, with the quick eye for things as they are which seems to come of looking at things as they will be, and with just that humorous comment about the splash. It would be misleading to say that they were humbled; I doubt whether they even felt their relativity, whether they ever dropped consciously, there in the Bloomsbury hotel, into their places in the great scale of London. Observing the scale, recognizing it, they held themselves unaffected by it; they kept, in a curious, positive way, the integrity of what they were and what they had come for; they maintained their point of view. So much must be conceded. The Empire produces a family resemblance, but here and there, when oceans intervene, a different mould of the spirit.

Wallingham certainly invited them to dinner one Sunday, in a body, an occasion which gave one or two of them some anxiety until they found that it was not to be adorned by the ladies of the family. Tricorne was there, President of the Board of Trade, and Fleming, who held the purse-strings of the United Kingdom, two Ministers whom Wallingham had asked because they were supposed to have open minds--open, that is to say, for purposes of assimilation. Wallingham considered, and rightly, that he had done very well for the deputation in getting these two. There were other "colleagues" whose attendance he would have liked to compel; but one of them, deep in the country, was devoting his weekends to his new French

motor, and the other to the proofs of a book upon Neglected Periods of Mahomedan History, and both were at the breaking strain with overwork. Wallingham asked the deputation to dinner. Lord Selkirk, who took them to Wallingham, dined them too, and invited them to one of those garden parties for the sumptuous scale of which he was so justly famed; the occasion we have already heard about, upon which royalty was present in two generations. They travelled to it by special train, a circumstance which made them grave, receptive, and even slightly ceremonious with one another. Lord Selkirk, with royalty on his hands, naturally could not give them much of his time, and they moved about in a cluster, avoiding the ladies' trains and advising one another that it was a good thing the High Commissioner was a man of large private means; it wasn't everybody that could afford to take the job. Yet they were not wholly detached from the occasion; they looked at it, after they had taken it in, with an air half-amused, half-proprietary. All this had, in a manner, come out of Canada, and Canada was theirs. One of them--Bates it was--responding to a lady who was effusive about the strawberries, even took the modestly depreciatory attitude of the host. "They're a fair size for this country, ma'am, but if you want berries with a flavour we'll do better for you in the Niagara district."

It must be added that Cruickshank lunched with Wallingham at his club, and with Tricorne at his; and on both occasions the quiet and attentive young secretary went with him, for purposes of reference, his pocket bulging with memoranda. The young secretary felt a little embarrassed to justify his presence at Tricorne's lunch, as the Right Honourable gentleman seemed to have forgotten what his guests had come for beyond it, and talked exclusively and exhaustively about the new possibilities for fruit-farming in England. Cruickshank fairly shook himself into his overcoat with irritation afterward. "It's the sort of thing we must except," he said, as they merged upon Pall Mall. It was not the sort of thing Lorne expected; but we know him unsophisticated and a stranger to the heart of the Empire, which beats through such impediment of accumulated tissue. Nor was it the sort of thing they got from Wallingham, the keen-eyed and probing, whose skill in adjusting conflicting interests could astonish even their expectation, and whose vision of the essentials of the future could lift even their enthusiasm. One would like to linger over their touch with Wallingham, that fusion of energy with energy, that straight, satisfying, accomplishing dart. There is more drama here; no doubt, than in all the pages that are to come. But I am explaining now how little, not how much, the Cruickshank deputation, and especially Lorne Murchison, had the opportunity of feeling and learning in London, in order to show how wonderful it was that Lorne felt and learned so widely. That, what he absorbed and took back with him is, after all, what we have to do with; his actual adventures are of no great importance.

The deputation to urge improved communications within the Empire had few points of contact with the great world, but its members were drawn into engagements of their own, more, indeed, than some of them could conveniently overtake. Mr Bates never saw his niece in the post-office, and regrets it to this day. The engagements arose partly out of business relations. Poulton who was a dyspeptic, complained that nothing could be got through in London without eating and drinking; for his part he would concede a point any time not to eat and drink, but you could not do it; you just had to suffer. Poulton was a principal

in one of the railway companies that were competing to open up the country south of Hudson's Bay to the Pacific, but having dealt with that circumstance in the course of the day he desired only to be allowed to go to bed on bread and butter and a little stewed fruit. Bates, whose name was a nightmare to every other dry-goods man in Toronto, naturally had to see a good many of the wholesale people; he, too, complained of the number of courses and the variety of the wines, but only to disguise his gratification. McGill, of the Great Bear Line, had big proposals to make in connection with southern railway freights from Liverpool; and Cameron, for private reasons of magnitude, proposed to ascertain the real probability of a duty to foreigners on certain forms of manufactured leather--he turned out in Toronto a very good class of suitcase. Cruickshank had private connections to which they were all respectful. Nobody but Cruickshank found it expedient to look up the lost leader of the Canadian House of Commons, contributed to a cause still more completely lost in home politics; nobody but Cruickshank was likely to be asked to dine by a former Governor-General of the Dominion, an invitation which nobody but Cruickshank would be likely to refuse.

"It used to be a 'command' in Ottawa," said Cruickshank, who had got on badly with his sovereign's representative there, "but here it's only a privilege. There's no business in it, and I haven't time for pleasure."

The nobleman in question had, in effect, dropped back into the Lords. So far as the Empire was concerned, he was in the impressive rearguard, and this was a little company of fighting men.

The entertainments arising out of business were usually on a scale more or less sumptuous. They took place in big, well-known restaurants, and included a look at many of the people who seem to lend themselves so willingly to the great buzzing show that anybody can pay for in London, their names in the paper in the morning, their faces at Prince's in the evening, their personalities no doubt advantageously exposed in various places during the day. But there were others, humbler ones in Earl's Court Road or Maida Vale, where the members of the deputation had relatives whom it was natural to hunt up. Long years and many billows had rolled between, and more effective separations had arisen in the whole difference of life; still, it was natural to hunt them up, to seek in their eyes and their hands the old subtle bond of kin, and perhaps--such is our vanity in the new lands--to show them what the stock had come to overseas. They tended to be depressing these visits: the married sister was living in a small way; the first cousin seemed to have got into a rut; the uncle and aunt were failing, with a stooping, trembling, old-fashioned kind of decrepitude, a rigidity of body and mind, which somehow one didn't see much over home.

"England," said Poulton, the Canadian-born, "is a dangerous country to live in; you run such risks of growing old." They agreed, I fear, for more reasons than this that England was a good country to leave early; and you cannot blame them--there was not one of them who did not offer in his actual person proof of what he said. Their own dividing chance grew dramatic in their eyes.

"I was offered a clerkship with the Cunards the day before I sailed," said McGill. "Great Scott, if I'd taken that clerkship!" He saw all his glorious past, I suppose, in

a suburban aspect.

"I was kicked out," said Cameron, "and it was the kindest attention my father ever paid me;" and Bates remarked that it was worth coming out second-class, as he did, to go back in the best cabin in the ship.

The appearance and opinions of those they had left behind them prompted them to this kind of congratulation, with just a thought of compunction at the back of it for their own better fortunes. In the further spectacle of England most of them saw the repository of singularly old-fashioned ideas the storehouse of a good deal of money; and the market for unlimited produce. They looked cautiously at imperial sentiment; they were full of the terms of their bargain and had, as they would have said, little use for schemes that did not commend themselves on a basis of common profit. Cruickshank was the biggest and the best of them; but even Cruickshank submitted the common formulas; submitted them and submitted to them.

Only Lorne Murchison among them looked higher and further; only he was alive to the inrush of the essential; he only lifted up his heart.

CHAPTER XVI

Lorne was thus an atom in the surge of London. The members of the deputation, as their business progressed, began to feel less like atoms and more like a body exerting an influence, however obscurely hid in a temperance hotel, upon the tide of international affairs; but their secretary had naturally no initiative that appeared, no importance that was taken account of. In these respects, no less than in the others, he justified Mr Cruickshank's selection. He did his work as unobtrusively as he did it admirably well; and for the rest he was just washed about, carried, hither and thither, generally on the tops of omnibuses, receptive, absorbent, mostly silent. He did try once or twice to talk to the bus drivers--he had been told it was a thing to do if you wanted to get hold of the point of view of a particular class; but the thick London idiom defeated him, and he found they grew surly when he asked them too often to repeat their replies. He felt a little surly himself after a while, when they asked him, as they nearly always did, if he wasn't an American. "Yes," he would say in the end, "but not the United States kind," resenting the necessity of explaining to the Briton beside him that there were other kinds. The imperial idea goes so quickly from the heart to the head. He felt compelled, nevertheless, to mitigate his denial to the bus drivers.

"I expect it's the next best thing," he would say, "but it's only the next best."

It was as if he felt charged to vindicate the race, the whole of Anglo-Saxondom, there in his supreme moment, his splendid position, on the top of an omnibus lumbering west out of Trafalgar Square.

One introduction of his own he had. Mrs Milburn had got it for him from the rector, Mr Emmett, to his wife's brother, Mr Charles Chafe, who had interests in Chiswick and a house in Warwick Gardens. Lorne put off presenting the letter--did not know, indeed, quite how to present it, till his stay in London was half over. Finally he

presented himself with it, as the quickest way, at the office of Mr Chafe's works at Chiswick. He was cordially received, both there and in Warwick Gardens, where he met Mrs Chafe and the family, when he also met Mr Alfred Hesketh. Lorne went several times to the house in Warwick Gardens, and Hesketh--a nephew--was there on the very first occasion. It was an encounter interesting on both sides. He--Hesketh--was a young man with a good public school and a university behind him, where his very moderate degree, however, failed to represent the activity of his mind or the capacity of his energy. He had a little money of his own, and no present occupation; he belonged to the surplus. He was not content to belong to it; he cast about him a good deal for something to do. There was always the Bar, but only the best fellows get on there, and he was not quite one of the best fellows; he knew that. He had not money enough for politics or interest enough for the higher departments of the public service, nor had he those ready arts of expression that lead naturally into journalism. Anything involving further examinations he rejected on that account; and the future of glassware, in view of what they were doing in Germany, did not entice him to join his uncle in Chiswick. Still he was aware of enterprise, convinced that he had loafed long enough.

Lorne Murchison had never met anyone of Hesketh's age in Hesketh's condition before. Affluence and age he knew, in honourable retirement; poverty and youth he knew, embarked in the struggle; indolence and youth he also knew, as it cumbered the ground; but youth and a competence, equipped with education, industry, and vigour, searching vainly in fields empty of opportunity, was to him a new spectacle. He himself had intended to be a lawyer since he was fourteen. There never had been any impediment to his intention, any qualification to his desire. He was still under his father's roof, but that was for the general happiness; any time within the last eighteen months, if he had chosen to hurry fate, he might have selected another. He was younger than Hesketh by a year, yet we may say that he had arrived, while Hesketh was still fidgeting at the starting-point.

"Why don't you farm?" he asked once.

"Farming in England may pay in a quarter of a century, not before. I can't wait for it. Besides, why should I farm? Why didn't you?"

"Well," said Lorne, "in your case it seems about the only thing left. I? Oh it doesn't attract us over there. We're getting away from it--leaving it to the newcomers from this side. Curious circle, that: I wonder when our place gets overcrowded, where we shall go to plough?"

Hesketh's situation occupied them a good deal; but their great topic had a wider drift, embracing nothing less than the Empire, pausing nowhere short of the flag. The imperial idea was very much at the moment in the public mind; it hung heavily, like a banner, in every newspaper, it was filtering through the slow British consciousness, solidifying as it travelled. In the end it might be expected to arrive at a shape in which the British consciousness must either assimilate it or cast it forth. They were saying in the suburbs that they wanted it explained; at Hatfield they were saying, some of them, with folded arms, that it was self evident; other members of that great house, swinging their arms, called it blackness of darkness and ruin, so had a prophet divided

it against itself. Wallingham, still in the Cabinet, was going up and down the country trying not to explain too much. There was division in the Cabinet, sore travail among private members. The conception being ministerial, the Opposition applied itself to the task of abortion, fearing the worst if it should be presented to the country fully formed and featured, the smiling offspring of progress and imagination. Travellers to Greater Britain returned waving joyous torches in the insular fog; they shed a brilliance and infectious enthusiasm, but there were not enough to do more than make the fog visible. Many persons found such torches irritating. They pointed out that as England had groped to her present greatness she might be trusted to feel her way further. "Free trade," they said, "has made us what we are. Put out these lights!"

Mr Chafe was one of these. He was a cautious, heavy fellow, full of Burgundy and distrust. The basis of the imperial idea inspired him with suspicion and hostility. He could accept the American tariff on English manufactures; that was a plain position, simple damage, a blow full in the face, not to be dodged. But the offer of better business in the English colonies in exchange for a duty on the corn and meat of foreign countries--he could see too deep for that. The colonials might or might not be good customers; he knew how many decanters he sold in the United States, in spite of the tariff. He saw that the tax on food-stuffs was being commended to the working-man with the argument of higher wages. Higher wages, with the competition of foreign labour, spelt only one word to English manufacturers, and that was ruin. The bugbear of higher wages, immediate, threatening, near, the terror of the last thirty years, closed the prospect for Charles Chafe; he could see nothing beyond. He did not say so, but to him the prosperity of the British manufacturer was bound up in the indigence of the operative. Thriving workmen, doing well, and looking to do better, rose before him in terms of menace, though their prosperity might be rooted in his own. "Give them cheap food and keep them poor," was the sum of his advice. His opinions had the emphasis of the unexpected, the unnatural: he was one of the people whom Wallingham's scheme in its legitimate development of a tariff on foreign manufactures might be expected to enrich. This fact, which he constantly insisted on, did give them weight; it made him look like a cunning fellow not to be caught with chaff. He and his business had survived free trade--though he would not say this either--and he preferred to go on surviving it rather than take the chances of any zollverein. The name of the thing was enough for him, a word made in Germany, thick and mucky, like their tumblers. As to the colonies--Mr Chafe had been told of a certain spider who devoured her young ones. He reversed the figure and it stood, in the imperial connection, for all the argument he wanted.

Alfred Hesketh had lived always in the hearing of such doctrine; it had stood to him for political gospel by mere force of repetition. But he was young, with the curiosity and enterprise and impatience of dogma of youth; he belonged by temperament and situation to those plastic thousands in whom Wallingham hoped to find the leaven that should leaven the whole lump. His own blood stirred with the desire to accomplish, to carry further; and as the scope of the philanthropist did not attract him, he was vaguely conscious of having been born too late in England. The new political appeal of the colonies, clashing suddenly upon old insular harmonies, brought him a sense

of wider fields and chances; his own case he freely translated into his country's, and offered an open mind to politics that would help either of them. He looked at the new countries with interest, an interest evoked by their sudden dramatic leap into the forefront of public concern. He looked at them with what nature intended to be the eye of a practical businessman. He looked at Lorne Murchison, too, and listened to him, with steady critical attention. Lorne seemed in a way to sum it all up in his person, all the better opportunity a man had out there; and he handled large matters of the future with a confidence and a grip that quickened the circulation. Hesketh's open mind gradually became filled with the imperial view as he had the capacity to take it; and we need not be surprised if Lorne Murchison, gazing in the same direction, supposed that they saw the same thing.

Hesketh confessed, declared, that Murchison had brought him round; and Lorne surveyed this achievement with a thrill of the happiest triumph. Hesketh stood, to him, a product of that best which he was so occupied in admiring and pursuing. Perhaps he more properly represented the second best; but we must allow something for the confusion of early impressions. Hesketh had lived always in the presence of ideals disengaged in England as nowhere else in the world; in Oxford, Lorne knew, they clustered thick. There is no doubt that his manners were good, and his ideas unimpeachable in the letter; the young Canadian read the rest into him and loved him for what he might have been.

"As an Englishman," said Hesketh one evening as they walked together back from the Chafes' along Knightsbridge, talking of the policy urged by the Colonial representatives at the last Conference, "I could wish the idea were more our own--that we were pressing it on the colonies instead of the colonies pressing it on us."

"Doesn't there come a time in the history of most families," Lorne replied, "when the old folks look to the sons and daughters to keep them in touch with the times? Why shouldn't a vigorous policy of Empire be conceived by its younger nations--who have the ultimate resources to carry it out? We've got them and we know it--the iron and the coal and the gold, and the wheat-bearing areas. I dare say it makes us seem cheeky, but I tell you the last argument lies in the soil and what you can get out of it. What has this country got in comparison? A market of forty million people, whom she can't feed and is less and less able to find work for. Do you call that a resource? I call it an impediment--a penalty. It's something to exploit, for the immediate profit in it, something to bargain with; but even as a market it can't preponderate always, and I can't see why it should make such tremendous claims."

"England isn't superannuated yet, Murchison."

"Not yet. Please God she never will be. But she isn't as young as she was, and it does seem to me--"

"What seems to you?"

"Well, I'm no economist, and I don't know how far to trust my impressions, and you needn't tell me I'm a rank outsider, for I know that; but coming here as an outsider, it does seem to me that it's from the outside that any sort of helpful change in the conditions of this country has got to come. England still has military initiative,

though it's hard to see how she's going to keep that unless she does something to stop the degeneration of the class she draws her army from; but what other kind do we hear about? Company-promoting, bee-keeping, asparagus-growing, poultry-farming for ladies, the opening of a new Oriental Tea-Pot in Regent Street, with samisen-players between four and six, and Japanese attendants who take the change on their hands and knees. London's one great stomach--how many eating places have we passed in the last ten minutes? The place seems all taken up with inventing new ways of making rich people more comfortable and better-amused--I'm fed up with the sight of shiny carriages with cockaded flunkeys on 'em, wooden-smart, rolling about with an elderly woman and a parasol and a dog. England seems to have fallen back on itself, got content to spend the money there is in the country already; and about the only line of commercial activity the stranger sees is the onslaught on that accumulation. London isn't the headquarters for big new developing enterprises any more. If you take out Westminster and Wallingham, London is a collection of traditions and great houses, and newspaper offices, and shops. That sort of thing can't go on for ever. Already capital is drawing away to conditions it can find a profit in--steel works in Canada, woollen factories in Australia, jute mills in India. Do you know where the boots came from that shod the troops in South Africa? Cawnpore. The money will go, you know, and that's a fact; the money will go, and the people will go, anyhow. It's only a case of whether England sends them with blessing and profit and greater glory, or whether she lets them slip away in spite of her."

"I dare say it will," replied Hesketh; "I've got precious little, but what there is I'd take out fast enough, if I saw a decent chance of investing it. I sometimes think of trying my luck in the States. Two or three fellows in my year went over there and aren't making half a bad thing of it."

"Oh, come," said Lorne, half-swinging round upon the other, with his hands in his pockets, "it isn't exactly the time, is it, to talk about chucking the Empire?"

"Well, no, it isn't," Hesketh admitted. "One might do better to wait, I dare say. At all events, till we see what the country says to Wallingham."

They walked on for a moment or two in silence; then Lorne broke out again.

"I suppose it's unreasonable, but there's nothing I hate so much as to hear Englishmen talk of settling in the United States."

"It's risky, I admit. And I've never heard anybody yet say it was comfortable."

"In a few years, fifty maybe, it won't matter. Things will have taken their direction by then; but now it's a question of the lead. The Americans think they've got it, and unless we get imperial federation of course they have. It's their plain intention to capture England commercially."

"We're a long way from that," said Hesketh.

"Yes, but it's in the line of fate. Industrial energy is deserting this country; and you have no large movement,

no counter-advance, to make against the increasing forces that are driving this way from over there--nothing to oppose to assault. England is in a state of siege, and doesn't seem to know it. She's so great--Hesketh, it's pathetic!--she offers an undefended shore to attack, and a stupid confidence, a kindly blindness, above all to Americans, whom she patronizes in the gate."

"I believe we do patronize them," said Hesketh. "It's rotten bad form."

"Oh, form! I may be mad, but one seems to see in politics over here a lack of definition and purpose, a tendency to cling to the abstract and to precedent--'the mainstay of the mandarin' one of the papers calls it; that's a good word--that give one the feeling that this kingdom is beginning to be aware of some influence stronger than its own. It lies, of course, in the great West, where the corn and the cattle grow; and between Winnipeg and Chicago choose quickly, England!"

His companion laughed. "Oh, I'm with you," he said, "but you take a pessimistic view of this country, Murchison."

"It depends on what you call pessimism," Lorne rejoined. "I see England down the future the heart of the Empire, the conscience of the world. and the Mecca of the race."

CHAPTER XVII

The Cruickshank deputation returned across that North Atlantic which it was their desire to see so much more than ever the track of the flag, toward the middle of July. The shiny carriages were still rolling about in great numbers when they left; London's air of luxury had thickened with the advancing season and hung heavily in the streets; people had begun to picnic in the Park on Sundays. They had been from the beginning a source of wonder and of depression to Lorne Murchison, the people in the Park, those, I mean, who walked and sat and stood there for the refreshment of their lives, for whom the place has a lyrical value as real as it is unconscious. He noted them ranged on formal benches, quiet, respectable, absorptive, or gathered heavily, shoulder to shoulder, docile under the tutelage of policemen, listening to anyone who would lift a voice to speak to them. London, beating on all borders, hemmed them in; England outside seemed hardly to contain for them a wider space. Lorne, with his soul full of free airs and forest depths, never failed to respond to a note in the Park that left him heavy-hearted, longing for an automatic distributing system for the Empire. When he saw them bring their spirit-lamps and kettles and sit down in little companies on four square yards of turf, under the blackened branches, in the roar of the traffic, he went back to Bloomsbury to pack his trunk, glad that it was not his lot to live with that enduring spectacle.

They were all glad, every one of them, to turn their faces to the West again. The unready conception of things, the political concentration upon parish affairs, the cumbrous social machinery, oppressed them with its dull anachronism in a marching world; the problems of sluggish overpopulation clouded their eager outlook. These conditions might have been their inheritance. Perhaps Lorne Murchison was the only one who thanked Heaven consciously that it

was not so; but there was no man among them whose pulse did not mark a heart rejoiced as he paced the deck of the Allan liner the first morning out of Liverpool, because he had leave to refuse them. None dreamed of staying, of "settling," though such a course was practicable to any of them except Lorne. They were all rich enough to take the advantages that money brings in England, the comfort, the importance, the state; they had only to add their wealth to the sumptuous side of the dramatic contrast. I doubt whether the idea even presented itself. It is the American who takes up his appreciative residence in England. He comes as a foreigner, observant, amused, having disclaimed responsibility for a hundred years. His detachment is as complete as it would be in Italy, with the added pleasure of easy comprehension. But homecomers from Greater Britain have never been cut off, still feel their uneasy share in all that is, and draw a long breath of relief as they turn again to their life in the lands where they found wider scope and different opportunities, and that new quality in the blood which made them different men.

The deputation had accomplished a good deal; less, Cruickshank said, than he had hoped, but more than he had expected. They had obtained the promise of concessions for Atlantic services, both mail and certain classes of freight, by being able to demonstrate a generous policy on their own side. Pacific communications the home Government was more chary of; there were matters to be fought out with Australia. The Pacific was further away, as Cruickshank said, and you naturally can't get fellows who have never been there to see the country under the Selkirks and south of the Bay--any of them except Wallingham, who had never been there either, but whose imagination took views of the falcon. They were reinforced by news of a shipping combination in Montreal to lower freights to South Africa against the Americans; it wasn't news to them, some of them were in it; but it was to the public, and it helped the sentiment of their aim, the feather on the arrow. They had secured something, both financially and morally; what best pleased them, perhaps, was the extent to which they got their scheme discussed. Here Lorne had been invaluable; Murchison had done more with the newspapers, they agreed, than any of them with Cabinet Ministers. The journalist everywhere is perhaps more accessible to ideas, more susceptible to enthusiasm, than his fellows, and Lorne was charged with the object of his deputation in its most communicable, most captivating form. At all events, he came to excellent understanding, whether of agreement or opposition, with the newspapermen he met--Cruickshank knew a good many of them and these occasions were more fruitful than the official ones--and there is no doubt that the guarded approval of certain leading columns had fewer ifs and buts and other qualifications in consequence, while the disapproval of others was marked by a kind of unwilling sympathy and a freely accorded respect. Lorne found London editors surprisingly unbiased, London newspapers surprisingly untrammelled. They seemed to him to suffer from no dictated views, no interests in the background or special local circumstances. They had open minds, most of them, and when a cloud appeared it was seldom more than a prejudice. It was only his impression, and perhaps it would not stand cynical inquiry; but he had a grateful conviction that the English Press occupied in the main a lofty and impartial ground of opinion, from which it desired only a view of the facts in their true proportion. On his return he confided it to Horace Williams, who scoffed and ran the national politics of the Express in the local

interests of Fox County as hard as ever; but it had fallen in with Lorne's beautiful beliefs about England, and he clung to it for years.

The Williamses had come over the second evening following Lorne's arrival, after tea. Rawlins had gone to the station, just to see that the Express would make no mistake in announcing that Mr L. Murchison had "Returned to the Paternal Roof," and the Express had announced it, with due congratulation. Family feeling demanded that for the first twenty-four hours he should be left to his immediate circle, but people had been dropping in all the next day at the office, and now came the Williamses "trapesing," as Mrs Murchison said, across the grass, though she was too content to make it more than a private grievance, to where they all sat on the verandah.

"What I don't understand," Horace Williams said to Mr Murchison, "was why you didn't give him a blow on the whistle. You and Milburn and a few others might have got up quite a toot. You don't get the secretary to a deputation for tying up the Empire home every day."

"You did that for him in the Express," said John Murchison, smiling as he pressed down, with an accustomed thumb, the tobacco into his pipe.

"Oh, we said nothing at all! Wait till he's returned for South Fox," Williams responded jocularly.

"Why not the Imperial Council--of the future--at Westminster while you're about it?" remarked Lorne, flipping a pebble back upon the gravel path.

"That will keep, my son. But one of these days, you mark my words, Mr L. Murchison will travel to Elgin Station with flags on his engine and he'll be very much surprised to find the band there, and a large number of his fellow-citizens, all able-bodied shouting men, and every factory whistle in Elgin let off at once, to say nothing of kids with tin ones. And if the Murchison Stove and Furnace Works siren stands out of that occasion I'll break in and pull it myself."

"It won't stand out," Stella assured him. "I'll attend to it. Don't you worry."

"I suppose you had a lovely time, Mr Murchison?" said Mrs Williams, gently tilting to and fro in a rocking-chair, with her pretty feet in their American shoes well in evidence. It is a fact, or perhaps a parable, that should be interesting to political economists, the adaptability of Canadian feet to American shoes; but fortunately it is not our present business. Though I must add that the "rocker" was also American; and the hammock in which Stella reposed came from New York; and upon John Murchison's knee, with the local journal, lay a pink evening paper published in Buffalo.

"Better than I can tell you, Mrs Williams, in all sorts of ways. But it's good to be back, too. Very good!" Lorne threw up his head and drew in the pleasant evening air of midsummer with infinite relish while his eye travelled contentedly past the chestnuts on the lawn, down the vista of the quiet tree-bordered street. It lay empty in the solace of the evening, a blue hill crossed it in the distance, and gave it an unfettered look, the wind stirred in the maples. A pair of schoolgirls strolled up and down bareheaded; now and then a buggy passed.

"There's room here," he said.

"Find it kind of crowded up over there?" asked Mr Williams.
"Worse than New York?"

"Oh, yes. Crowded in a patient sort of way--it's enough to break your heart--that you don't see in New York! The poor of New York--well, they've got the idea of not being poor. In England they're resigned, they've got callous. My goodness! the fellows out of work over there--you can SEE they're used to it, see it in the way they slope along and the look in their eyes, poor dumb dogs. They don't understand it, but they've just got to take it! Crowded? Rather!"

"We don't say 'rather' in this country, mister," observed Stella.

"Well, you can say it now, kiddie."

They laughed at the little passage--the traveller's importation of one or two Britishisms had been the subject of skirmish before--but silence fell among them for a moment afterward. They all had in the blood the remembrance of what Lorne had seen.

"Well, you've been doing big business," said Horace Williams.

Lorne shook his head. "We haven't done any harm," he said, "but our scheme's away out of sight now. At least it ought to be."

"Lost in the bigger issue." said Williams, and Lorne nodded.

The bigger issue had indeed in the meantime obscured the political horizon, and was widely spreading. A mere colonial project might well disappear in it. England was absorbed in a single contemplation. Wallingham, though he still supported the disabilities of a right honourable evangelist with a gospel of his own, was making astonishing conversions; the edifice of the national economic creed seemed coming over at the top. It was a question of the resistance of the base, and the world was watching.

"Cruickshank says if the main question had been sprung a month ago we wouldn't have gone over. As it is, on several points we've got to wait. If they reject the preferential trade idea over there we shall have done a little good, for any government would be disposed to try to patch up something to take the place of imperial union in that case; and a few thousands more for shipping subsidies and cheap cablegrams would have a great look of strengthening the ties with the colonies. But if they commit themselves to a Zollverein with us and the rest of the family you won't hear much more about the need to foster communications. Communications will foster themselves."

"Just so," remarked John Murchison. "They'll save their money."

"I wouldn't think so before--I couldn't," Lorne went on, "but I'm afraid it's rather futile, the kind of thing we've been trying to do. It's fiddling at a superstructure without a foundation. What we want is the common interest. Common interest, common taxation for defence, common

representation, domestic management of domestic affairs, and you've got a working Empire."

"Just as easy as slippin' off a log," remarked Horace Williams.

"Common interest, yes," said his father; "common taxation, no, for defence or any other purpose. The colonies will never send money to be squandered by the London War Office. We'll defend ourselves, as soon as we can manage it, and buy our own guns and our own cruisers. We're better business people than they are, and we know it."

"I guess that's right, Mr Murchison," said Horace Williams. "Our own army and navy--in the sweet bye-and-bye. And let 'em understand they'll be welcome to the use of it, but quite in a family way--no sort of compulsion."

"Well," said Lorne, "that's compatible enough."

"And your domestic affairs must include the tariff," Mr Murchison went on. "There's no such possibility as a tariff that will go round. And tariffs are kittle cattle to shoo behind."

"Has anybody got a Scotch dictionary?" inquired Stella. "This conversation is making me tired."

"Suppose you run away and play with your hoop," suggested her brother. "I can't see that as an insuperable difficulty, Father. Tariffs could be made adaptable, relative to the common interest as well as to the individual one. We could do it if we liked."

"Your adaptability might easily lead to other things. What's to prevent retaliation among ourselves? There's a slump in textiles, and the home Government is forced to let in foreign wool cheaper. Up goes the Australian tax on the output of every mill in Lancashire. The last state of the Empire might be worse than the first."

"It wouldn't be serious. If I pinched Stella's leg as I'm going to in a minute, she will no doubt kick me; and her instincts are such that she will probably kick me with the leg I pinched, but that won't prevent our going to the football match together tomorrow and presenting a united front to the world."

They all laughed, and Stella pulled down her lengthening petticoats with an air of great offence, but John Murchison shook his head.

"If they manage it, they will be clever," he said.

"Talking of Lancashire," said Williams, "there are some funny fellows over there writing in the Press against a tax on foreign cotton because it's going to ruin Lancashire. And at this very minute thousands of looms are shut down in Lancashire because of the high price of cotton produced by an American combine--and worse coming, sevenpence a pound I hear they're going to have it, against the fourpence ha'penny they've got it up to already. That's the sort of thing they're afraid to discourage by a duty."

"Would a duty discourage it?" asked John Murchison.

"Why not--if they let British-grown cotton in free? They won't discourage the combine much--that form of enterprise has got to be tackled where it grows; but the Yankee

isn't the only person in the world that can get to understand it. What's to prevent preferential conditions creating British combines, to compete with the American article, and what's to prevent Lancashire getting cheaper cotton in consequence? Two combines are better than one monopoly any day."

"May be so. It would want looking into. We won't see a duty on cotton though, or wool either for that matter. The manufacturers would be pleased enough to get it on the stuff they make, but there would be a fine outcry against taxing the stuff they use."

"Did you see much of the aristocracy, Mr Murchison?" asked Mrs Williams.

"No," replied Lorne, "but I saw Wallingham."

"You saw the whole House of Lords," interposed Stella, "and you were introduced to three."

"Well, yes, that's so. Fine-looking set of old chaps they are, too. We're a little too funny over here about the Lords--we haven't had to make any."

"What were they doing the day you were there, Lorne?" asked Williams.

"Motorcar legislation," replied Lorne. "Considerably excited about it, too. One of them had had three dogs killed on his estate. I saw his letter about it in the Times."

"I don't see anything to laugh at in that," declared Stella. "Dogs are dogs."

"They are, sister, especially in England."

"Laundresses aren't washerwomen there," observed Mrs Murchison. "I'd like you to see the colour of the things he's brought home with him, Mrs Williams. Clean or dirty, to the laundry they go--weeks it will take to get them right again--ingrained London smut and nothing else."

"In this preference business they've got to lead the way," Williams reverted. "We're not so grown up but what grandma's got to march in front. Now, from your exhaustive observation of Great Britain, extending over a period of six weeks, is she going to?"

"My exhaustive observation," said Lorne, smiling, "enables me to tell you one thing with absolute accuracy; and that is that nobody knows. They adore Wallingham over there--he's pretty nearly a god--and they'd like to do as he tells them, and they're dead sick of theoretic politics; but they're afraid--oh, they're afraid!"

"They'll do well to ca' canny," said John Murchison.

"There's two things in the way, at a glance," Lorne went on. "The conservatism of the people--it isn't a name, it's a fact--the hostility and suspicion; natural enough: they know they're stupid, and they half suspect they're fair game. I suppose the Americans have taught them that. Slow--oh, slow! More interested in the back-garden fence than anything else. Pick up a paper, at the moment when things are being done, mind, all over the world, done against them--when their shipping is being captured, and their industries destroyed, and their goods undersold

beneath their very noses--and the thing they want to know is--Why Are the Swallows Late? I read it myself, in a ha'penny morning paper, too--that they think rather dangerously go-ahead--a whole column, headed, to inquire what's the matter with the swallows. The Times the same week had a useful leader on Alterations in the Church Service, and a special contribution on Prayers for the Dead. Lord, they need 'em! Those are the things they THINK about! The session's nearly over, and there's two Church Discipline Bills, and five Church Bills--bishoprics and benefices, and Lord knows what--still to get through. Lot of anxiety about 'em, apparently! As to a business view of politics, I expect the climate's against it. They'll see over a thing--they're fond of doing that--or under it, or round one side of it, but they don't seem to have any way of seeing THROUGH it. What they just love is a good round catchword; they've only got to hear themselves say it often enough, and they'll take it for gospel. They're convinced out of their own mouths. There was the driver of a bus I used to ride on pretty often, and if he felt like talking, he'd always begin, 'As I was a-saying of yesterday--' Well, that's the general idea--to repeat what they were a-sayin' of yesterday; and it doesn't matter two cents that the rest of the world has changed the subject. They've been a-sayin' a long time that they object to import duties of any sort or kind, and you won't get them to SEE the business in changing. If they do this it won't be because they want to, it will be because Wallingham wants them to."

"I guess that's so," said Williams. "And if Wallingham gets them to he ought to have a statue in every capital in the Empire. He will, too. Good cigar this, Lorne! Where'd you get it?"

"They are Indian cheroots--'Planters,' they call 'em--made in Madras. I got some through a man named Hesketh, who has friends out there, at a price you wouldn't believe for as decent a smoke. You can't buy 'em in London; but you will all right, and here, too, as soon as we've got the sense to favour British-grown tobacco."

"Lorne appreciates his family better than he did before," remarked his youngest sister, "because we're British grown."

"You were saying you noticed two things specially in the way?" said his father.

"Oh, the other's of course the awful poverty--the twelve millions that haven't got enough to do with. I expect it's an outside figure and it covers all sorts of qualifying circumstances; but it's the one the Free Fooders quote, and it's the one Wallingham will have to handle. They've muddled along until they've GOT twelve million people in that condition, and now they have to carry on with the handicap. We ask them to put a tax on foreign food to develop our wheat areas and cattle ranges. We say, 'Give us a chance and we'll feed you and take your surplus population.' What is to be done with the twelve million while we are growing the wheat? The colonies offer to create prosperity for everybody concerned at a certain outlay--we've got the raw materials--and they can't afford the investment because of the twelve millions, and what may happen meanwhile. They can't face the meanwhile--that's what it comes to."

"Fine old crop of catchwords in that situation," Mr Williams remarked; and his eye had the spark of the

practical politician. "Can't you hear 'em at it, eh?"

"It scares them out of everything but hand-to-mouth politics. Any other remedy is too heroic. They go on pointing out and contemplating and grieving, with their percentages of misery and degeneration; and they go on poulticing the cancer with benevolence--there are people over there who want the State to feed the school children! Oh, they're kind, good, big-hearted people; and they've got the idea that if they can only give enough away everything will come right. I was talking with a man one day, and I asked him whether the existence of any class justified governing a great country on the principle of an almshouse. He asked me who the almsgivers ought to be, in any country. Of course it was tampering with my figure--in an almshouse there aren't any; but that's the way it presents itself to the best of them. Another fellow was frantic at the idea of a tax on foreign food--he nearly cried--but would be very glad to see the Government do more to assist emigration to the colonies. I tried to show him it would be better to make it profitable to emigrate first, but I couldn't make him see it.

"Oh, and there's the old thing against them, of course--the handling of imperial and local affairs by one body. Anybody's good enough to attend to the Baghdad Railway, and nobody's too good to attend to the town pump. Is it any wonder the Germans beat them in their own shops and Russia walks into Thibet? The eternal marvel is that they stand where they do."

"At the top," said Mr Williams.

"Oh--at the top! Think of what you mean when you say 'England.'"

"I see that the demand for a tariff on manufactured goods is growing," Williams remarked, "even the anti-food-tax organs are beginning to shout for that."

"If they had put it on twenty years ago," said Lorne, "there would be no twelve million people making a problem for want of work. and it would be a good deal easier to do imperial business today."

"You'll find," said John Murchison, removing his pipe, "that protection'll have to come first over there. They'll put up a fence and save their trade--in their own good time, not next week or next year--and when they've done that they'll talk to us about our big ideas--not before. And if Wallingham hadn't frightened them with the imperial job, he never would have got them to take up the other. It's just his way of getting both done."

"I hope you're right, Father," said Lorne, with a covert glance at his watch. "Horace--Mrs Williams--I'll have to get you to excuse me. I have an engagement at eight."

He left them with a happy spring in his step, left them looking after him, talking of him, with pride and congratulation. Only Stella, with a severe lip and a disapproving eye, noted the direction he took as he left the house.

CHAPTER XVIII

Peter Macfarlane had carried the big Bible up the pulpit steps of Knox Church, and arranged the glass of water and the notices to be given out beside it, twice every Sunday for twenty years. He was a small spare man, with thin grey hair that fell back from the narrow dome of his forehead to his coat collar, decent and severe. He ascended the pulpit exactly three minutes before the minister did; and the dignity with which he put one foot before the other made his appearance a ceremonious feature of the service and a thing quoted. "I was there before Peter" was a triumphant evidence of punctuality. Dr Drummond would have liked to make it a test. It seemed to him no great thing to expect the people of Knox Church to be there before Peter.

Macfarlane was also in attendance in the vestry to help the minister off with his gown and hang it up. Dr Drummond's gown needed neither helping nor hanging; the Doctor was deftness and neatness and impatience itself, and would have it on the hook with his own hands, and never a fold crooked. After Mr Finlay, on the contrary, Peter would have to pick up and smooth out--ten to one the garment would be flung on a chair. Still, he was invariably standing by to see it flung, and to hand Mr Finlay his hat and stick. He was surprised and put about to find himself one Sunday evening too late for this attendance. The vestry was empty, the gown was on the floor. Peter gathered it up with as perturbed an air as if Mr Finlay had omitted a point of church observance. "I doubt they get into slack ways in these missions," said Peter. He had been unable, with Dr Drummond, to see the necessity for such extensions.

Meanwhile Hugh Finlay, in secular attire, had left the church by the vestry door, and was rapidly overtaking groups of his hearers as they walked homeward. He was unusually aware of his change of dress because of a letter in the inside pocket of his coat. The letter, in that intimate place, spread a region of consciousness round it which hastened his blood and his step. There was purpose in his whole bearing; Advena Murchison, looking back at some suggestion of Lorne's, caught it, and lost for a moment the meaning of what she said. When he overtook them, with plain intention, she walked beside the two men, withdrawn and silent, like a child. It was unexpected and overwhelming, his joining them after the service, accompanying them, as it were, in the flesh after having led them so far in the spirit; he had never done it before. She felt her heart confronted with a new, an immediate issue, and suddenly afraid. It shrank from the charge for which it longed, and would have fled; yet, paralysed with delight, it kept time with her sauntering feet.

They talked of the sermon, which had been strongly tinged with the issue of the day. Dreamer as he was by temperament, Finlay held to the wisdom of informing great public questions with the religious idea, vigorously disclaimed that it was anywhere inadmissible.

"You'll have to settle with the Doctor, Mr Finlay," Lorne warned him gaily, "if you talk politics in Knox Church. He thinks he never does."

"Do you think," said Finlay, "that he would object to--to one's going as far afield as I did tonight?"

"He oughtn't to," said Lorne. "You should have heard him when old Sir John Macdonald gerrymandered the electoral

districts and gave votes to the Moneida Indians. The way he put it, the Tories in the congregation couldn't say a word, but it was a treat for his fellow Grits."

Finlay smiled gravely. "Political convictions are a man's birthright," he said. "Any man or any minister is a poor creature without them. But of course there are limits beyond which pulpit influence should not go, and I am sure Dr Drummond has the clearest perception of them. He seems to have been a wonderful fellow, Macdonald, a man with extraordinary power of imaginative enterprise. I wonder whether he would have seen his way to linking up the Empire as he linked up your Provinces here?"

"He'd have hated uncommonly to be in opposition, but I don't see how he could have helped it," Lorne said. "He was the godfather of Canadian manufacturers, you know--the Tories have always been the industrial party. He couldn't have gone for letting English stuff in free, or cheap; and yet he was genuinely loyal and attached to England. He would discriminate against Manchester with tears in his eyes! Imperialist in his time spelled Conservative, now it spells Liberal. The Conservatives have always talked the loudest about the British bond, but when it lately came to doing we're on record on the right side, and they're on record on the wrong. But it must make the old man's ghost sick to see--"

"To see his court suit stolen," Advena finished for him. "As Disraeli said--wasn't it Disraeli?" She heard, and hated the note of constraint in her voice. "Am I reduced," she thought, indignantly, "to falsetto?" and chose, since she must choose, the betrayal of silence.

"It did one good to hear the question discussed on the higher level," said Lorne. "You would think, to read the papers, that all its merits could be put into dollars and cents."

"I've noticed some of them in terms of sentiment--affection for the mother country--"

"Yes, that's lugged in. But it doesn't cover the moral aspect," Lorne returned. "It's too easy and obvious, as well; it gives the enemy cause to offend."

"Well, there's a tremendous moral aspect," Finlay said, "tremendous moral potentialities hidden in the issue. England has more to lose than she dreams."

"That's just where I felt, as a practical politician, a little restless while you were preaching," said Lorne, laughing. "You seemed to think the advantage of imperialism was all with England. You mustn't press that view on us, you know. We shall get harder to bargain with. Besides, from the point of your sermon, it's all the other way."

"Oh, I don't agree! The younger nations can work out their own salvation unaided; but can England alone? Isn't she too heavily weighted?"

"Oh, materially, very likely! But morally, no," said Lorne, stoutly. "There, if you like, she has accumulations that won't depreciate. Money isn't the only capital the colonies offer investment for."

"I'm afraid I see it in the shadow of the degeneration of age and poverty," said Finlay, smiling--"or age and wealth, if you prefer it."

"And we in the disadvantage of youth and easy success," Lorne retorted. "We're all very well, but we're not the men our fathers were: we need a lot of licking into shape. Look at that disgraceful business of ours in the Ontario legislature the other day, and look at that fellow of yours walking out of office at Westminster last session because of a disastrous business connection which he was morally as clear of as you or I! I tell you we've got to hang on to the things that make us ashamed; and I guess we've got sense enough to know it. But this is my corner. I am going to look in at the Milburns', Advena. Good night, Mr Finlay."

Advena, walking on with Finlay, became suddenly aware that he had not once addressed her. She had the quick impression that Lorne left him bereft of a refuge; his plight heartened her.

"If the politicians on both sides were only as mutually appreciative," she said, "the Empire would soon be knit."

For a moment he did not answer. "I am afraid the economic situation is not quite analogous," he said, stiffly and absently, when the moment had passed.

"Why does your brother always call me 'Mr' Finlay?" he demanded presently. "It isn't friendly."

The note of irritation in his voice puzzled her. "I think the form is commoner with us," she said, "even among men who know each other fairly well." Her secret glance flashed over the gulf that nevertheless divided Finlay and her brother, that would always divide them. She saw it with something like pain, which struggled through her pride in both. "And then, you know--your calling--"

"I suppose it is that," he replied, ill content.

"I've noticed Dr Drummond's way," she told him, with rising spirits. "It's delightful. He drops the 'Mr' with fellow-ministers of his own denomination only--never with Wesleyans or Baptists, for a moment. He always comes back very genial from the General Assembly, and full of stories. 'I said to Grant,' or 'Macdonald said to me'--and he always calls you 'Finlay,'" she added shyly. "By the way, I suppose you know he's to be the new Moderator?"

"Is he, indeed? Yes--yes, of course, I knew! We couldn't have a better."

They walked on through the early autumn night. It was just not raining. The damp air was cool and pungent with the smell of fallen leaves, which lay thick under their feet. Advena speared the dropped horse chestnut husks with the point of her umbrella as they went along. She had picked up half a dozen when he spoke again. "I want to tell you--I have to tell you--something--about myself, Miss Murchison."

"I should like," said Advena steadily, "to hear."

"It is a matter that has, I am ashamed to confess, curiously gone out of my mind of late--I should say until lately. There was little until lately--I am so poor a letter writer--to remind me of it. I am engaged to be married!"

"But how interesting!" exclaimed Advena.

He looked at her taken aback. His own mood was heavy; it failed to answer this lightness from her. It is hard to know what he expected, what his unconscious blood expected for him; but it was not this. If he had little wisdom about the hearts of women, he had less about their behaviour. She said nothing more, but inclined her head in an angle of deference and expectation toward what he should further communicate.

"I don't know that I have ever told you much about my life in Scotland," he went on. "It has always seemed to me so remote and--disconnected with everything here. I could not suppose it would interest anyone. I was cared for and educated by my father's only sister, a good woman. It was as if she had whole charge of the part of my life that was not absorbed in work. I don't know that I can make you understand. She was identified with all the rest--I left it to her. Shortly before I sailed for Canada she spoke to me of marriage in connection with my work and--welfare, and with--a niece of her husband's who was staying with us at the time, a person suitable in every way. Apart from my aunt, I do not know--However, I owed everything to her, and I--took her advice in the matter. I left it to her. She is a managing woman; but she can nearly always prove herself right. Her mind ran a great deal, a little too much perhaps, upon creature comforts, and I suppose she thought that in emigrating a man might do well to companion himself."

"That was prudent of her," said Advena.

He turned a look upon her. "You are not--making a mock of it?" he said.

"I am not making a mock of it."

"My aunt now writes to me that Miss Christie's home has been broken up by the death of her mother, and that if it can be arranged she is willing to come to me here. My aunt talks of bringing her. I am to write."

He said the last words slowly, as if he weighed them. They had passed the turning to the Murchisons', walking on with the single consciousness of a path under them, and space before them. Once or twice before that had happened, but Advena had always been aware. This time she did not know.

"You are to write," she said. She sought in vain for more words; he also, throwing back his head, appeared to search the firmament for phrases without result. Silence seemed enforced between them, and walked with them, on into the murky landscape, over the fallen leaves. Passing a streetlamp, they quickened their steps, looking furtively at the light, which seemed leagued against them with silence.

"It seems so extraordinarily--far away," said Hugh Finlay, of Bross, Dumfries, at length.

"But it will come near," Advena replied.

"I don't think it ever can."

She looked at him with a sudden leap of the heart, a wild, sweet dismay.

"They, of course, will come. But the life of which they

are a part, and the man whom I remember to have been me--there is a gulf fixed--"

"It is only the Atlantic," Advena said. She had recovered her vision; in spite of the stone in her breast she could look. The weight and the hurt she would reckon with later. What was there, after all, to do? Meanwhile she could look, and already she saw with passion what had only begun to form itself in his consciousness, his strange, ironical, pitiful plight.

He shook his head. "It is not marked in any geography," he said, and gave her a troubled smile. "How can I make it clear to you? I have come here into a new world, of interests unknown and scope unguessed before. I know what you would say, but you have no way of learning the beauty and charm of mere vitality--you have always been so alive. One finds a physical freedom in which one's very soul seems to expand; one hears the happiest calls of fancy. And the most wonderful, most delightful thing of all is to discover that one is oneself, strangely enough, able to respond--"

The words reached the woman beside him like some cool dropping balm, healing, inconceivably precious. She knew her share in all this that he recounted. He might not dream of it, might well confound her with the general pulse; but she knew the sweet and separate subcurrent that her life had been in his, felt herself underlying all these new joys of his, could tell him how dear she was. But it seemed that he must not guess.

It came to her with force that his dim perception of his case was grotesque, that it humiliated him. She had a quick desire that he should at least know that civilized, sentient beings did not lend themselves to such outrageous comedies as this which he had confessed; it had somehow the air of a confession. She could not let him fall so lamentably short of man's dignity, of man's estate, for his own sake.

"It is a curious history," she said. "You are right in thinking I should not find it quite easy to understand. We make those--arrangements--so much more for ourselves over here. Perhaps we think them more important than they are."

"But they are of the highest importance." He stopped short, confounded.

"I shall try to consecrate my marriage," he said presently, more to himself than to Advena.

Her thought told him bitterly: "I am afraid it is the only thing you can do with it," but something else came to her lips.

"I have not congratulated you. I am not sure," she went on, with astonishing candour, "whether I can. But I wish you happiness with all my heart. Are you happy now?"

He turned his great dark eyes on her. "I am as happy, I dare say, as I have any need to be."

"But you are happier since your letter came?"

"No," he said. The simple word fell on her heart, and she forbore.

They went on again in silence until they arrived at a place from which they saw the gleam of the river and the line of the hills beyond. Advena stopped.

"We came here once before together--in the spring. Do you remember?" she asked.

"I remember very well." She had turned, and he with her. They stood together with darkness about them, through which they could just see each other's faces.

"It was spring then, and I went back alone. You are still living up that street? Good night, then, please. I wish again--to go back--alone."

He looked at her for an instant in dumb bewilderment, though her words were simple enough. Then as she made a step away from him he caught her hand.

"Advena," he faltered, "what has happened to us? This time I cannot let you."

CHAPTER XIX

"Lorne," said Dora Milburn, in her most animated manner, "who do you think is coming to Elgin? Your London friend, Mr Hesketh! He's going to stay with the Emmetts, and Mrs Emmett is perfectly distracted; she says he's accustomed to so much, she doesn't know how he will put up with their plain way of living. Though what she means by that, with late dinner and afternoon tea every day of her life, is more than I know."

"Why, that's splendid!" replied Lorne. "Good old Hesketh! I knew he thought of coming across this fall, but the brute hasn't written to me. We'll have to get him over to our place. When he gets tired of the Emmetts' plain ways he can try ours--they're plainer. You'll like Hesketh; he's a good fellow, and more go-ahead than most of them."

"I don't think I should ask him to stay if I were you, Lorne. Your mother will never consent to change her hours for meals. I wouldn't dream of asking an Englishman to stay if I couldn't give him late dinner; they think so much of it. It's the trial of Mother's life that Father will not submit to it. As a girl she was used to nothing else. Afternoon tea we do have, he can't prevent that, but Father kicks at anything but one o'clock dinner and meat tea at six, and I suppose he always will."

"Doesn't one tea spoil the other?" Lorne inquired. "I find it does when I go to your minister's and peck at a cress sandwich at five. You haven't any appetite for a reasonable meal at six. But I guess it won't matter to Hesketh; he's got a lot of sense about things of that sort. Why he served out in South Africa--volunteered. Mrs Emmett needn't worry. And if we find him pining for afternoon tea we can send him over here."

"Well, if he's nice. But I suppose he's pretty sure to be nice. Any friend of the Emmetts--What is he like, Lorne?"

"Oh, he's just a young man with a moustache! You seem to see a good many over there. They're all alike while they're at school in round coats, and after they leave

school they get moustaches, and then they're all alike again."

"I wish you wouldn't tease. How tall is he? Is he fair or dark? What colour are his eyes?"

Lorne buried his head in his hands in a pretended agony of recollection.

"So far as I remember, not exactly tall, but you wouldn't call him short. Complexion--well, don't you know?--that kind of middling complexion. Colour of his eyes--does anybody ever notice a thing like that? You needn't take my word for it, but I should say they were a kind of average coloured eyes."

"Lorne! You ARE--I suppose I'll just have to wait till I see him. But the girls are wild to know, and I said I'd ask you. He'll be here in about two weeks anyhow, and I dare say we won't find him so much to make a fuss about. The best sort of Englishmen don't come over such a very great deal, as you say. I expect they have a better time at home."

"Hesketh's a very good sort of Englishman," said Lorne.

"He's awfully well off, isn't he?"

"According to our ideas I suppose he is," said Lorne.
"Not according to English ideas."

"Still less according to New York ones, then," asserted Dora. "They wouldn't think much of it there even if he passed for rich in England." It was a little as if she resented Lorne's comparison of standards, and claimed the American one as at least cis-Atlantic.

"He has a settled income," said Lorne, "and he's never had to work for it, whatever luck there is in that. That's all I know. Dora--"

"Now, Lorne, you're not to be troublesome."

"Your mother hasn't come in at all this evening. Don't you think it's a good sign?"

"She isn't quite so silly as she was," remarked Dora. "Why I should not have the same freedom as other girls in entertaining my gentleman friends I never could quite see."

"I believe if we told her we had made up our minds it would be all right," he pleaded.

"I'm not so sure Lorne. Mother's so deep. You can't always tell just by what she DOES. She thinks Stephen Stuart likes me--it's too perfectly idiotic; we are the merest friends--and when it's any question of you and Stephen--well, she doesn't say anything, but she lets me see! She thinks such a lot of the Stuarts because Stephen's father was Ontario Premier once, and got knighted."

"I might try for that myself if you think it would please her," said the lover.

"Please her! And I should be Lady Murchison!" she let fall upon his ravished ears. "Why, Lorne, she'd just worship us both! But you'll never do it."

"Why not?"

Dora looked at him with pretty speculation. She had reasons for supposing that she did admire the young man.

"You're too nice," she said.

"That isn't good enough," he responded, and drew her nearer.

"Then why did you ask me?--No, Lorne, you are not to. Suppose Father came in?"

"I shouldn't mind--Father's on my side, I think."

"Father isn't on anybody's side," said his daughter, wisely.

"Dora, let me speak to him!"

Miss Milburn gave a clever imitation of a little scream of horror.

"INDEED I won't! Lorne, you are never, NEVER to do that! As if we were in a ridiculous English novel!"

"That's the part of an English novel I always like," said Lorne. "The going and asking. It must about scare the hero out of a year's growth; but it's a glorious thing to do--it would be next day, anyhow."

"It's just the sort of thing to please Mother," Dora meditated, "but she can't be indulged all the time. No, Lorne, you'll have to leave it to me--when there's anything to tell."

"There's everything to tell now," said he, who had indeed nothing to keep back.

"But you know what Mother is, Lorne. Suppose they hadn't any objection, she would never keep it to herself! She'd want to go announcing it all over the place; she'd think it was the proper thing to do."

"But, Dora, why not? If you knew how I want to announce it! I should like to publish it in the sunrise--and the wind--so that I couldn't go out of doors without seeing it myself."

"I shouldn't mind having it in Toronto Society, when the time comes. But not yet, Lorne--not for ages. I'm only twenty-two--nobody thinks of settling down nowadays before she's twenty-five at the very earliest. I don't know a single girl in this town that has--among my friends, anyway. That's three years off, and you CAN'T expect me to be engaged for three years."

"No." said Lorne, "engaged six months, married the rest of the time. Or the periods might run concurrently if you preferred--I shouldn't mind."

"An engaged girl has the very worst time. She gets hardly any attention, and as to dances--well, it's a good thing for her if the person she's engaged to CAN dance," she added, teasingly.

Lorne coloured. "You said I was improving, Dora," he said, and then laughed at the childish claim. "But that isn't really a thing that counts, is it? If our lives

only keep step it won't matter much about the 'Washington Post.' And so far as attention goes, you'll get it as long as you live, you little princess. Besides, isn't it better to wear the love of one man than the admiration of half a dozen?"

"And be teased and worried half out of your life by everybody you meet? Now, Lorne, you're getting serious and sentimental, and you know I hate that. It isn't any good either--Mother always used to say it made me more stubborn to appeal to me. Horrid nature to have, isn't it?"

Lorne's hand went to his waistcoat pocket and came back with a tiny packet. "It's come, Dora--by this morning's English mail."

Her eyes sparkled, and then rested with guarded excitement upon the little case. "Oh, Lorne!"

She said nothing more, but watched intently while he found the spring, and disclosed the ring within. Then she drew a long breath. "Lorne Murchison, what a lovely one!"

"Doesn't it look," said he, "just a little serious and sentimental?"

"But SUCH good style, too," he declared, bending over it. "And quite new--I haven't seen anything a bit like it. I do love a design when it's graceful. Solitaires are so old-fashioned."

He kept his eyes upon her face, feeding upon the delight in it. Exultation rose up in him: he knew the primitive guile of man, indifferent to such things, alluring with them the other creature. He did not stop to condone her weakness; rather he seized it in ecstasy; it was all part of the glad scheme to help the lover. He turned the diamonds so that they flashed and flashed again before her. Then, trusting his happy instinct, he sought for her hand. But she held that back. "I want to SEE it," she declared, and he was obliged to let her take the ring in her own way and examine it, and place it in every light, and compare it with others worn by her friends, and make little tentative charges of extravagance in his purchase of it, while he sat elated and adoring, the simple fellow.

Reluctantly at last she gave up her hand. "But it's only trying on--not putting on," she told him. He said nothing till it flashed upon her finger, and in her eyes he saw a spark from below of that instinctive cupidity toward jewels that man can never recognize as it deserves in woman, because of his desire to gratify it.

"You'll wear it, Dora?" he pleaded.

"Lorne, you are the dearest fellow! But how could I? Everybody would guess!"

Her gaze, nevertheless, rested fascinated on the ring, which she posed as it pleased her.

"Let them guess! I'd rather they knew, but--it does look well on your finger, dear."

She held it up once more to the light, then slipped it decisively off and gave it back to him. "I can't, you

know, Lorne. I didn't really say you might get it; and now you'll have to keep it till--till the time comes. But this much I will say--it's the sweetest thing, and you've shown the loveliest taste, and if it weren't such a dreadful give-away I'd like to wear it awfully."

They discussed it with argument, with endearment, with humour, and reproach, but her inflexible basis soon showed through their talk: she would not wear the ring. So far he prevailed, that it was she, not he, who kept it. Her insistence that he should take it back brought something like anger out of him; and in the surprise of this she yielded so much. She did it unwillingly at the time, but afterward, when she tried on the thing again in the privacy of her own room; she was rather satisfied to have it, safe under lock and key, a flashing, smiling mystery to visit when she liked and reveal when she would.

"Lorne could never get me such a beauty again if he lost it," she advised herself, "and he's awfully careless. And I'm not sure that I won't tell Eva Delarue, just to show it to her. She's as close as wax."

One feels a certain sorrow for the lover on his homeward way, squaring his shoulders against the foolish perversity of the feminine mind, resolutely guarding his heart from any hint of real reprobation. Through the sweetness of her lips and the affection of her pretty eyes, through all his half-possession of all her charms and graces, must have come dully the sense of his great occasion manque, that dear day of love when it leaves the mark of its claim. And in one's regret there is perhaps some alloy of pity, that less respectful thing. We know him elsewhere capable of essaying heights, yet we seem to look down upon the drama of his heart. It may be well to remember that the level is not everything in love. He who carefully adjusts an intellectual machine may descry a higher mark; he can construct nothing in a mistress; he is, therefore, able to see the facts and to discriminate the desirable. But Lorne loved with all his imagination. This way dares the imitation of the gods by which it improves the quality of the passion, so that such a love stands by itself to be considered, apart from the object, one may say. A strong and beautiful wave lifted Lorne Murchison along to his destiny, since it was the pulse of his own life, though Dora Milburn played moon to it.

CHAPTER XX

Alfred Hesketh had, after all, written to young Murchison about his immediate intention of sailing for Canada and visiting Elgin; the letter arrived a day or two later. It was brief and businesslike, but it gave Lorne to understand that since his departure the imperial idea had been steadily fermenting, not only in the national mind, but particularly in Hesketh's; that it produced in his case a condition only to be properly treated by personal experience. Hesketh was coming over to prove whatever advantage there was in seeing for yourself. That he was coming with the right bias Lorne might infer, he said, from the fact that he had waited a fortnight to get his passage by the only big line to New York that stood out for our mercantile supremacy against American combination.

"He needn't bother to bring any bias," Lorne remarked

when he had read this, "but he'll have to pay a lot of extra luggage on the one he takes back with him."

He felt a little irritation at being offered the testimony of the Cunard ticket. Back on his native soil, its independence ran again like sap in him: nobody wanted a present of good will; the matter stood on its merits.

He was glad, nevertheless, that Hesketh was coming, gratified that it would now be his turn to show prospects, and turn figures into facts, and make plain the imperial profit from the further side. Hesketh was such an intelligent fellow, there would be the keenest sort of pleasure in demonstrating things, big things, to him, little things, too, ways of living, differences of habit. Already in the happy exercise of his hospitable instinct he saw how Hesketh would get on with his mother, with Stella, with Dr Drummond. He saw Hesketh interested, domiciled, remaining--the ranch life this side of the Rockies, Lorne thought, would tempt him, or something new and sound in Winnipeg. He kept his eye open for chances, and noted one or two likely things. "We want labour mostly," he said to Advena, "but nobody is refused leave to land because he has a little money."

"I should think not, indeed," remarked Mrs Murchison, who was present. "I often wish your father and I had had a little more when we began. That whole Gregory block was going for three thousand dollars then. I wonder what it's worth now?"

"Yes, but you and Father are worth more, too," remarked Stella acutely.

"In fact, all the elder members of the family have approximated in value, Stella," said her brother, "and you may too, in time."

"I'll take my chance with the country," she retorted. They were all permeated with the question of the day; even Stella, after holding haughtily aloof for some time, had been obliged to get into step, as she described it, with the silly old Empire. Whatever it was in England, here it was a family affair; I mean in the town of Elgin, in the shops and the offices, up and down the tree-bordered streets as men went to and from their business, atomic creatures building the reef of the future, but conscious, and wanting to know what they were about. Political parties had long declared themselves, the Hampden Debating Society had had several grand field nights. Prospective lifelong friendships, male and female in every form of "the Collegiate," had been put to this touchstone, sometimes with shattering effect. If you would not serve with Wallingham the greatness of Britain you were held to favour going over to the United States; there was no middle course. It became a personal matter in the ward schools and small boys pursued small boys with hateful cries of "Annexationist!" The subject even trickled about the apple-barrels and potato-bags of the market square. Here it should have raged, pregnant as it was with bucolic blessing; but our agricultural friends expect nothing readily except adverse weather, least of all a measure of economic benefit to themselves. Those of Fox County thought it looked very well, but it was pretty sure to work out some other way. Elmore Crow failed heavily to catch a light even from Lorne Murchison.

"You keep your hair on, Lorne," he advised. "We ain't going to get such big changes yet. An' if we do the

blooming syndicates 'll spoil 'em for us."

There were even dissentients among the farmers. The voice of one was raised who had lived laborious years, and many of them in the hope of seeing his butter and cheese go unimpeded across the American line. It must be said, however, that still less attention was paid to him, and it was generally conceded that he would die without the sight.

It was the great topic. The day Wallingham went his defiant furthest in the House and every colonial newspaper set it up in acclaiming headlines, Horace Williams, enterprising fellow, remembered that Lorne had seen the great man under circumstances that would probably pan out, and send round Rawlins. Rawlins was to get something that would do to call "Wallingham in the Bosom of his Family," and as much as Lorne cared to pour into him about his own view of the probable issue. Rawlins failed to get the interview, came back to say that Lorne didn't seem to think himself a big enough boy for that, but he did not return empty-handed. Mr Murchison sent Mr Williams the promise of some contributions upon the question of the hour, which he had no objection to sign and which Horace should have for the good of the cause. Horace duly had them, the Express duly published them, and they were copied in full by the Dominion and several other leading journals, with an amount of comment which everyone but Mrs Murchison thought remarkable.

"I don't pretend to understand it," she said, "but anybody can see that he knows what he's talking about." John Murchison read them with a critical eye and a pursed-out lip.

"He takes too much for granted."

"What does he take for granted?" asked Mrs Murchison.

"Other folks being like himself," said the father.

That, no doubt, was succinct and true; nevertheless, the articles had competence as well as confidence. The writer treated facts with restraint and conditions with sympathy. He summoned ideas from the obscurity of men's minds, and marshalled them in the light, so that many recognized what they had been trying to think. He wrote with homeliness as well as force, wishing much more to make the issue recognizable than to create fine phrases, with the result that one or two of his sentences passed into the language of the discussion which, as any of its standard-bearers would have told you, had little use for rhetoric. The articles were competent: if you listened to Horace Williams you would have been obliged to accept them as the last, or latest, word of economic truth, though it must be left to history to endorse Mr Williams. It was their enthusiasm, however, that gave them the wing on which they travelled. People naturally took different views, even of this quality. "Young Murchison's working the imperial idea for all it's worth," was Walter Winter's; and Octavius Milburn humorously summed up the series as "tall talk."

Alfred Hesketh came, it was felt, rather opportunely into the midst of this. Plenty of people, the whole of Market Square and East Elgin, a good part, too, probably, of the Town Ward, were unaware of his arrival; but for the little world he penetrated he was clothed with all the interest of the great contingency. His decorous head in the Emmetts' pew on Sunday morning stood for a symbol as

well as for a stranger. The nation was on the eve of a great far-reaching transaction with the mother country, and thrilling with the terms of the bargain. Hesketh was regarded by people in Elgin who knew who he was with the mingled cordiality and distrust that might have met a principal. They did not perhaps say it, but it was in their minds. "There's one of them," was what they thought when they met him in the street. At any other time he would have been just an Englishman; now he was invested with the very romance of destiny. The perception was obscure, but it was there. Hesketh, on the other hand, found these good people a very well-dressed, well-conditioned, decent lot, rather sallower than he expected, perhaps, who seemed to live in a fair-sized town in a great deal of comfort, and was wholly unconscious of anything special in his relation to them or theirs to him.

He met Lorne just outside the office of Warner, Fulke, and Murchison the following day. They greeted heartily. "Now this IS good!" said Lorne, and he thought so. Hesketh confided his first impression. "It's not unlike an English country town," he said, "only the streets are wider, and the people don't look so much in earnest."

"Oh, they're just as much in earnest some of the time," Lorne laughed, "but maybe not all the time!"

The sun shone crisply round them; there was a brisk October market; on the other side of the road Elmore Crow dangled his long legs over a cart flap and chewed a cheroot. Elgin was abroad, doing business on its wide margin of opportunity. Lorne cast a backward glance at conditions he had seen.

"I know what you mean," he said. "Sharp of you to spot it so soon, old chap! You're staying with the English Church minister, aren't you--Mr Emmett? Some connection of yours, aren't they?"

"Mrs Emmett is Chafe's sister--Mrs Chafe, you know, is my aunt," Hesketh reminded him. "I say, Murchison, I left old Chafe wilder than ever. Wallingham's committee keep sending him leaflets and things. They take it for granted he's on the right side, since his interests are. The other day they asked him for a subscription! The old boy sent his reply to the Daily News and carried it about for a week. I think that gave him real satisfaction; but he hates the things by post."

Lorne laughed delightedly. "I expect he's snowed under with them. I sent him my own valuable views last week."

"I'm afraid they'll only stiffen him. That got to be his great argument after you left, the fact that you fellows over here want it. He doesn't approve of a bargain if the other side sees a profit. Curiously enough, his foremen and people out in Chiswick are all for it. I was talking to one of them just before I left--'Stands to reason, sir,' he said, 'we don't want to pay more for a loaf than we do now. But we'll do it, sir, if it means downing them Germans; he said.'"

Lorne's eyebrows half-perceptibly twitched. "They do 'sir' you a lot over there, don't they?" he said. "It was as much as I could do to get at what a fellow of that sort meant, tumbling over the 'sirs' he propped it up with. Well, all kinds of people, all kinds of argument, I suppose, when it comes to trying to get 'em solid! But

I was going to say we are all hoping you'll give us a part of your time while you're in Elgin. My family are looking forward to meeting you. Come along and let me introduce you to my father now--he's only round the corner."

"By all means!" said Hesketh, and they fell into step together. As Lorne said, it was only a short distance, but far enough to communicate a briskness, an alertness, from the step of one young man to that of the other. "I wish it were five miles," Hesketh said, all his stall-fed muscles responding to the new call of his heart and lungs. "Any good walks about here? I asked Emmett, but he didn't know--supposed you could walk to Clayfield if you didn't take the car. He seems to have lost his legs. I suppose parsons do."

"Not all of them," said Lorne. "There's a fellow that has a church over in East Elgin, Finlay his name is, that beats the record of anything around here. He just about ranges the county in the course of a week."

"The place is too big for one parish, no doubt," Hesketh remarked.

"Oh, he's a Presbyterian! The Episcopalians haven't got any hold to speak of over there. Here we are," said Lorne, and turned in at the door. The old wooden sign was long gone. "John Murchison and Sons" glittered instead in the plate-glass windows, but Hesketh did not see it.

"Why do you think he'll be in here?" he asked, on young Murchison's heels.

"Because he always is when he isn't over at the shop," replied Lorne. "It's his place of business--his store, you know. There he is! Hard luck--he's got a customer. We'll have to wait."

He went on ahead with his impetuous step; he did not perceive the instant's paralysis that seemed to overtake Hesketh's, whose foot dragged, however, no longer than that. It was an initiation; he had been told he might expect some. He checked his impulse to be amused, and guarded his look round, not to show unseemly curiosity. His face, when he was introduced to Alec, who was sorting some odd dozens of tablespoons, was neutral and pleasant. He reflected afterward that he had been quite equal to the occasion. He thought, too, that he had shown some adaptability. Alec was not a person of fluent discourse, and when he had inquired whether Hesketh was going to make a long stay, the conversation might have languished but for this.

"Is that Birmingham?" he asked, nodding kindly at the spoons.

"Came to us through a house in Liverpool," Alec responded. "I expect you had a stormy crossing, Mr Hesketh."

"It was a bit choppy. We had the fiddles on most of the time," Hesketh replied. "Most of the time. Now, how do you find the bicycle trade over here? Languishing, as it is with us?"

"Oh, it keeps up pretty well," said Alec, "but we sell more spoons. 'N' what do you think of this country, far as you've seen it?"

"Oh, come now, it's a little soon to ask, isn't it? Yes--I suppose bicycles go out of fashion, and spoons never do. I was thinking," added Hesketh, casting his eyes over a serried rank, "of buying a bicycle."

Alec had turned to put the spoons in their place on the shelves. "Better take your friend across to Cox's," he advised Lorne over his shoulder. "He'll be able to get a motorbike there," a suggestion which gave Mr Hesketh to reflect later that if that was the general idea of doing business it must be an easy country to make money in.

The customer was satisfied at last, and Mr Murchison walked sociably to the door with him; it was the secretary of the local Oddfellows' Lodge, who had come in about a furnace.

"Now's our chance," said Lorne. "Father, this is Mr Hesketh, from London--my father, Hesketh. He can tell you all you want to know about Canada--this part of it, anyway. Over thirty years, isn't it, Father, since you came out?"

"Glad to meet you," said John Murchison, "glad to meet you, Mr Hesketh. We've heard much about you."

"You must have been quite among the pioneers of Elgin, Mr Murchison," said Hesketh as they shook hands. Alec hadn't seemed to think of that; Hesketh put it down to the counter.

"Not quite," said John. "We'll say among the early arrivals."

"Have you ever been back in your native Scotland?" asked Hesketh.

"Aye, twice."

"But you prefer the land of your adoption?"

"I do. But I think by now it'll be kin," said Mr Murchison. "It was good to see the heather again, but a man lives best where he's taken root."

"Yes, yes. You seem to do a large business here, Mr Murchison."

"Pretty well for the size of the place. You must get Lorne to take you over Elgin. It's a fair sample of our rising manufacturing towns."

"I hope he will. I understand you manufacture to some extent yourself?"

"We make our own stoves and a few odd things."

"You don't send any across the Atlantic yet?" queried Hesketh jocularly.

"Not yet. No, sir!"

Then did Mr Hesketh show himself in true sympathy with the novel and independent conditions of the commonwealth he found himself in.

"I beg you won't use that form with me," he said, "I know it isn't the custom of the country, and I am a friend of

your son's, you see."

The iron merchant looked at him, just an instant's regard, in which astonishment struggled with the usual deliberation. Then his considering hand went to his chin.

"I see. I must remember," he said.

The son, Lorne, glanced in the pause beyond John Murchison's broad shoulders, through the store door and out into the moderate commerce of Main Street, which had carried the significance and the success of his father's life. His eye came back and moved over the contents of the place, taking stock of it, one might say, and adjusting the balance with pride. He had said very little since they had been in the store. Now he turned to Hesketh quietly.

"I wouldn't bother about that if I were you," he said. "My father spoke quite--colloquially."

"Oh!" said Hesketh.

They parted on the pavement outside. "I hope you understand," said Lorne, with an effort at heartiness, "how glad my parents will be to have you if you find yourself able to spare us any of your time?"

"Thanks very much," said Hesketh; "I shall certainly give myself the pleasure of calling as soon as possible."

CHAPTER XXI

"Dear me!" said Dr Drummond. "Dear me! Well! And what does Advena Murchison say to all this?"

He and Hugh Finlay were sitting in the Doctor's study, the pleasantest room in the house. It was lined with standard religious philosophy, standard poets, standard fiction, all that was standard, and nothing that was not; and the shelves included several volumes of the Doctor's own sermons, published in black morocco through a local firm that did business by the subscription method, with "Drummond" in gold letters on the back. There were more copies of these, perhaps, than it would be quite thoughtful to count, though a good many were annually disposed of at the church bazaar, where the Doctor presented them with a generous hand. A sumptuous desk, and luxurious leather-covered armchairs furnished the room; a beautiful little Parian copy of a famous Cupid and Psyche decorated the mantelpiece, and betrayed the touch of pagan in the Presbyterian. A bright fire burned in the grate, and there was not a speck of dust anywhere.

Dr Drummond, lost in his chair, with one knee dropped on the other, joined his fingers at the tips, and drew his forehead into a web of wrinkles. Over it his militant grey crest curled up; under it his eyes darted two shrewd points of interrogation.

"What does Miss Murchison say to it?" he repeated with craft and courage, as Finlay's eyes dropped and his face slowly flushed under the question. It was in this room that Dr Drummond examined "intending communicants" and cases likely to come before the Session; he never shirked a leading question. "Miss Murchison," said Finlay, after a moment, "was good enough to say that she thought her

father's house would be open to Miss--to my friends when they arrived; but I thought it would be more suitable to ask your hospitality, sir."

"Did she so?" asked Dr Drummond gravely. It was more a comment than an inquiry. "Did she so?" Infinite kindness was in it.

The young man assented with an awkward gesture, half-bend, half-nod, and neither for a moment spoke again. It was one of those silences with a character, conscious, tentative. Half-veiled, disavowed thoughts rose up in it, awakened by Advena's name, turning away their heads. The ticking of the Doctor's old-fashioned watch came through it from his waistcoat pocket. It was he who spoke first.

"I christened Advena Murchison," he said. "Her father was one of those who called me, as a young man, to this ministry. The names of both her parents are on my first communion roll. Ay!"...

The fire snapped and the watch went on ticking.

"So Advena thought well of it all. Did she so?"

The young man raised his heavy eyes and looked unflinchingly at Dr Drummond.

"Miss Murchison," he said, "is the only other person to whom I have confided the matter. I have written, fixing that date, with her approval--at her desire. Not immediately. I took time to--think it over. Then it seemed better to arrange for the ladies reception first, so before posting I have come to you."

"Then the letter has not gone?"

"It is in my pocket."

"Finlay, you will have a cigar? I don't smoke myself; my throat won't stand it; but I understand these are passable. Grant left them here. He's a chimney, that man Grant. At it day and night."

This was a sacrifice. Dr Drummond hated tobacco, the smell of it, the ash of it, the time consumed in it. There was no need at all to offer Finlay one of the Reverend Grant's cigars. Propitiation must indeed be desired when the incense is abhorred. But Finlay declined to smoke. The Doctor, with his hands buried deep in his trousers pockets, where something metallic clinked in them, began to pace and turn. His mouth had the set it wore when he handled a difficult motion in the General Assembly.

"I'm surprised to hear that, Finlay; though it may be well not to be surprised at what a woman will say--or won't say."

"Surprised?" said the younger man confusedly. "Why should anyone be surprised?"

"I know her well. I've watched her grow up. I remember her mother's trouble because she would scratch the paint on the pew in front of her with the nails in her little boots. John Murchison sang in the choir in those days. He had a fine bass voice; he has it still. And Mrs Murchison had to keep the family in order by herself. It

was sometimes as much as she could do, poor woman. They sat near the front, and many a good hard look I used to give them while I was preaching. Knox Church was a different place then. The choir sat in the back gallery, and we had a precentor, a fine fellow--he lost an arm at Ridgway in the Fenian raid. Well I mind him and the frown he would put on when he took up the fork. But, for that matter, every man Jack in the choir had a frown on in the singing, though the bass fellows would be the fiercest. We've been twice enlarged since, and the organist has long been a salaried professional. But I doubt whether the praise of God is any heartier than it was when it followed Peter Craig's tuning-fork. Aye. You'd always hear John Murchison's note in the finish."

Finlay was listening with the look of a charmed animal. Dr Drummond's voice was never more vibrant, more moving, more compelling than when he called up the past; and here to Finlay the past was itself enchanted.

"She always had those wonderful dark eyes. She's pale enough now, but as a child she was rosy. Taking her place of a winter evening, with the snow on her fur cap and her hair, I often thought her a picture. I liked to have her attention while I was preaching, even as a child; and when she was absent I missed her. It was through my ministrations that she saw her way to professing the Church of Christ, and under my heartfelt benediction that she first broke bread in her Father's house. I hold the girl in great affection, Finlay; and I grieve to hear this."

The other drew a long breath, and his hand tightened on the arm of his chair. He was, as we know, blind to many of the world's aspects, even to those in which he himself figured; and Dr Drummond's plain hypothesis of his relations with Advena came before him in forced illumination, flash by tragic flash. This kind of revelation is more discomfiting than darkness, since it carries the surprise of assault, and Finlay groped in it, helpless and silent.

"You are grieved, sir?" he said mechanically.

"Man, she loves you!" exclaimed the Doctor, in a tone that would no longer forbear.

Hugh Finlay seemed to take the words just where they were levelled, in his breast. He half leaped from his chair; the lower part of his face had the rigidity of iron.

"I am not obliged to discuss such a matter as that," he said hoarsely, "with you or with any man."

He looked confusedly about him for his hat, which he had left in the hall; and Dr Drummond profited by the instant. He stepped across and laid a hand on the younger man's shoulder. Had they both been standing the gesture would have been impossible to Dr Drummond with dignity; as it was, it had not only that, but benigance, a kind of tender good will, rare in expression with the minister, rare, for that matter, in feeling with him too, though the chord was always there to be sounded.

"Finlay," he said; "Finlay!"

Between two such temperaments the touch and the tone together made an extraordinary demonstration. Finlay, with an obvious effort, let it lie upon him. The tension

of his body relaxed, that of his soul he covered, leaning forward and burying his head in his hands.

"Will you say I have no claim to speak?" asked Dr Drummond, and met silence. "It is upon my lips to beg you not to send that letter, Finlay." He took his hand from the young man's shoulder, inserted a thumb in each of his waistcoat pockets, and resumed his walk.

"On my own account I must send it," said Finlay. "On Miss Murchison's--she bids me to. We have gone into the matter together."

"I can imagine what you made of it together. There's a good deal of her father in Advena. He would be the last man to say a word for himself. You told her this tale you have told me, and she told you to get Miss Christie out and marry her without delay, eh? And what would you expect her to tell you--a girl of that spirit?"

"I cannot see why pride should influence her."

"Then you know little about women. It was pride, pure and simple, Finlay, that made her tell you that--and she'll be a sorry woman if you act on it."

"No," said Finlay, suddenly looking up, "I may know little about women, but I know more about Advena Murchison than that. She advised me in the sense she thought right and honourable, and her advice was sincere. And, Dr Drummond, deeply as I feel the bearing of Miss Murchison's view of the matter, I could not, in any case, allow my decision to rest upon it. It must stand by itself."

"You mean that your decision to marry to oblige your aunt should not be influenced by the fact that it means the wrecking of your own happiness and that of another person. I can't agree, Finlay. I spoke first of Advena Murchison because her part and lot in it are most upon my heart. I feel, too, that someone should put her case. Her own father would never open his lips. If you're to be hauled over the coals about this I'm the only man to do it. And I'm going to."

A look of sharp determination came into the minister's eyes; he had the momentary air of a small Scotch terrier with a bidding. Finlay looked at him in startled recognition of another possible phase of his dilemma; he thought he knew it in every wretched aspect. It was a bold reference of Dr Drummond's; it threw down the last possibility of withdrawal for Finlay; they must have it out now, man to man, with a little, perhaps, even in that unlikely place, of penitent to confessor. It was an exigency, it helped Finlay to pull himself together, and there was something in his voice, when he spoke, like the vibration of relief.

"I am pained and distressed more than I have any way of telling you, sir," he said, "that--the state of feeling--between Miss Murchison and myself should have been so plain to you. It is incomprehensible to me that it should be so, since it is only very lately that I have understood it truly myself. I hope you will believe that it was the strangest, most unexpected, most sudden revelation."

He paused and looked timidly at the Doctor; he, the great fellow, in straining bondage to his heart, leaning forward with embarrassed tension in every muscle, Dr Drummond alert, poised, critical, balancing his little figure on

the hearthrug.

"I preach faith in miracles," he said. "I dare say between you and her it would be just that."

"I have been deeply culpable. Common sense, common knowledge of men and women should have warned me that there might be danger. But I looked upon the matter as our own--as between us only. I confess that I have not till now thought of that part of it, but surely--You cannot mean to tell me that what I have always supposed my sincere and devoted friendship for Miss Murchison has been in any way prejudicial--"

"To her in the ordinary sense? To her prospects of marriage and her standing in the eyes of the community? No, Finlay. No. I have not heard the matter much referred to. You seem to have taken none of the ordinary means--you have not distinguished her in the eyes of gossip. If you had it would be by no means the gravest thing to consider. Such tokens are quickly forgotten, especially here, where attentions of the kind often, I've noticed, lead to nothing. It is the fact, and not the appearance of it, that I speak of--that I am concerned with."

"The fact is beyond mending," said Finlay, dully.

"Aye, the fact is beyond mending. It is beyond mending that Advena Murchison belongs to you and you to her in no common sense. It's beyond mending that you cannot now be separated without such injury to you both as I would not like to look upon. It's beyond mending, Finlay, because it is one of those things that God has made. But it is not beyond marring, and I charge you to look well what you are about in connection with it."

A flash of happiness, of simple delight, lit the young man's sombre eyes as the phrases fell. To the minister they were mere forcible words; to Finlay they were soft rain in a famished land. Then he looked again heavily at the pattern of the carpet.

"Would you have me marry Advena Murchison?" he said, with a kind of shamed yielding to the words.

"I would--and no other. Man, I saw it from the beginning!" exclaimed the Doctor. "I don't say it isn't an awkward business. But at least there'll be no heartbreak in Scotland. I gather you never said a word to the Bross lady on the subject, and very few on any other. You tell me you left it all with that good woman, your aunt, to arrange after you left. Do you think a creature of any sentiment would have accepted you on those terms? Not she. So far as I can make out, Miss Cameron is just a sensible, wise woman that would be the first to see the folly in this business if she knew the rights of it. Come, Finlay, you're not such a great man with the ladies--you can't pretend she has any affection for you."

The note of raillery in the Doctor's voice drew Finlay's brows together.

"I don't know," he said, "whether I have to think of her affections, but I do know I have to think of her dignity, her confidence, and her belief in the honourable dealing of a man whom she met under the sanction of a trusted roof. The matter may look light here; it is serious there. She has her circle of friends; they are acquainted with her engagement. She has made all her arrangements to

carry it out; she has disposed of her life. I cannot ask her to reconsider her lot because I have found a happier adjustment for mine."

"Finlay," said Dr Drummond, "you will not be known in Bross or anywhere else as a man who has jilted a woman. Is that it?"

"I will not be a man who has jilted a woman."

"There is no sophist like pride. Look at the case on its merits. On the one side a disappointment for Miss Cameron. I don't doubt she's counting on coming, but at worst a worldly disappointment. And the very grievous humiliation for you of writing to tell her that you have made a mistake. You deserve that, Finlay. If you wouldn't be a man who has jilted a woman you have no business to lend yourself to such matters with the capacity of a blind kitten. That is the damage on the one side. On the other--"

"I know all that there is to be said," interrupted Finlay, "on the other."

"Then face it, man. Go home and write the whole truth to Bross. I'll do it for you--no, I won't, either. Stand up to it yourself. You must hurt one of two women; choose the one that will suffer only in her vanity. I tell you that Scotch entanglement of yours is pure cardboard farce--it won't stand examination. It's appalling to think that out of an extravagant, hypersensitive conception of honour, egged on by that poor girl, you could be capable of turning it into the reality of your life."

"I've taken all these points of view, sir, and I can't throw the woman over. The objection to it isn't in reason--it's somehow in the past and the blood. It would mean the sacrifice of all that I hold most valuable in myself. I should expect myself after that to stick at nothing--why should I?"

"There is one point of view that perhaps you have not taken," said Dr Drummond, in his gravest manner. "You are settled here in your charge. In all human probability you will remain here in East Elgin, as I have remained here, building and fortifying the place you have won for the Lord in the hearts of the people. Advena Murchison's life will also go on here--there is nothing to take it away. You have both strong natures. Are you prepared for that?"

"We are both prepared for it. We shall both be equal to it. I count upon her, and she counts upon me, to furnish in our friendship the greater part of whatever happiness life may have in store for us."

"Then you must be a pair of born lunatics!" said Dr Drummond, his jaw grim, his eyes snapping. "What you propose is little less than a crime, Finlay. It can come to nothing but grief, if no worse. And your wife, poor woman, whatever she deserves, it is better than that! My word, if she could choose her prospect, think you she would hesitate? Finlay, I entreat you as a matter of ordinary prudence, go home and break it off. Leave Advena out of it--you have no business to make this marriage whether or no. Leave other considerations to God and to the future. I beseech you, bring it to an end!"

Finlay got up and held out his hand. "I tell you from my heart it is impossible," he said.

"I can't move you?" said Dr Drummond. "Then let us see if the Lord can. You will not object, Finlay, to bring the matter before Him, here and now, in a few words of prayer? I should find it hard to let you go without them."

They went down upon their knees where they stood; and Dr Drummond did little less than order Divine interference; but the prayer that was inaudible was to the opposite purpose.

Ten minutes later the minister himself opened the door to let Finlay out into the night. "You will remember," he said as they shook hands, "that what I think of your position in this matter makes no difference whatever to the question of your aunt's coming here with Miss Cameron when they arrive. You will bring them to this house as a matter of course. I wish you could be guided to a different conclusion but, after all, it is your own conscience that must be satisfied. They will be better here than at the Murchisons'," he added with a last shaft of reproach, "and they will be very welcome."

It said much for Dr Drummond that Finlay was able to fall in with the arrangement. He went back to his boarding-house, and added a postscript embodying it to his letter to Bross. Then he walked out upon the midnight two feverish miles to the town, and posted the letter. The way back was longer and colder.

CHAPTER XXII

"Well, Winter," said Octavius Milburn, "I expect there's business in this for you."

Mr Milburn and Mr Winter had met in the act of unlocking their boxes at the post-office. Elgin had enjoyed postal delivery for several years, but not so much as to induce men of business to abandon the post-office box that had been the great convenience succeeding window inquiry. In time the boxes would go, but the habit of dropping in for your own noonday mail on the way home to dinner was deep-rooted, and undoubtedly you got it earlier. Moreover, it takes time to engender confidence in a postman when he is drawn from your midst, and when you know perfectly well that he would otherwise be driving the mere watering-cart, or delivering the mere ice, as he was last year.

"Looks like it," responded Mr Winter, cheerfully. "The boys have been round as usual. I told them they'd better try another shop this time, but they seemed to think the old reliable was good enough to go on with."

This exchange, to anyone in Elgin, would have been patently simple. On that day there was only one serious topic in Elgin, and there could have been only one reference to business for Walter Winter. The Dominion had come up the day before with the announcement that Mr Robert Farquharson who, for an aggregate of eleven years, had represented the Liberals of South Fox in the Canadian House of Commons, had been compelled under medical advice to withdraw from public life. The news was unexpected, and there was rather a feeling among Mr Farquharson's local support in Elgin that it shouldn't have come from Toronto. It will be gathered that Horace Williams, as he himself acknowledged,

was wild. The general feeling, and to some extent Mr Williams's, was appeased by the further information that Mr Farquharson had been obliged to go to Toronto to see a specialist, whose report he had naturally enough taken to party headquarters, whence the Dominion would get it, as Mr Williams said, by telephone or any quicker way there was. Williams, it should be added, was well ahead with the details, as considerate as was consistent with public enterprise, of the retiring member's malady, its duration, the date of the earliest symptoms, and the growth of anxiety in Mrs Farquharson, who had finally insisted--and how right she was!--on the visit to the specialist, upon which she had accompanied Mr Farquharson. He sent round Rawlins. So that Elgin was in possession of all the facts, and Walter Winter, who had every pretension to contest the seat again and every satisfaction that it wouldn't be against Farquharson, might naturally be expected to be taken up with them sufficiently to understand a man who slapped him on the shoulder in the post-office with the remark I have quoted.

"I guess they know what they're about," returned Mr Milburn. "It's a bad knock for the Grits, old Farquharson having to drop out. He's getting up in years, but he's got a great hold here. He'll be a dead loss in votes to his party. I always said our side wouldn't have a chance till the old man was out of the way."

Mr Winter twisted the watch-chain across his protuberant waistcoat, and his chin sank in reflective folds above his neck-tie. Above that again his nose drooped over his moustache, and his eyelids over his eyes, which sought the floor. Altogether he looked sunk, like an overfed bird, in deferential contemplation of what Mr Milburn was saying.

"They've nobody to touch him, certainly in either ability or experience," he replied, looking up to do it, with a handsome air of concession. "Now that Martin's dead, and Jim Fawkes come that howler over Pink River, they'll have their work cut out for them to find a man. I hear Fawkes takes it hard, after all he's done for 'em, not to get the nomination, but they won't hear of it. Quite right, too; he's let too many people in over that concession of his to be popular, even among his friends."

"I suppose he has. Dropped anything there yourself?--No? Nor I. When a thing gets to the boom stage I say let it alone, even if there's gold in it and you've got a School of Mines man to tell you so. Fawkes came out of it at the small end himself, I expect, but that doesn't help him any in the eyes of businessmen."

"I hear," said Walter Winter, stroking his nose, "that old man Parsons has come right over since the bosses at Ottawa have put so much money on preference trade with the old country. He says he was a Liberal once, and may be a Liberal again, but he doesn't see his way to voting to give his customers blankets cheaper than he can make them, and he'll wait till the clouds roll by."

"He won't be the only one, either," said Milburn. "Take my word for it, they'll be dead sick and sorry over this imperial craze in a year's time, every Government that's taken it up. The people won't have it. The Empire looks nice on the map, but when it comes to practical politics their bread and butter's in the home industries. There's a great principle at stake, Winter; I must say I envy you standing up for it under such favourable conditions."

Liberals like Young and Windle may talk big, but when it comes to the ballot-box you'll have the whole manufacturing interest of the place behind you, and nobody the wiser. It's a great thing to carry the standard on an issue above and beyond party politics--it's a purer air, my boy."

Walter Winter's nod confirmed the sagacity of this, and appreciated the highmindedness. It was a parting nod; Mr Winter had too much on hand that morning to waste time upon Octavius Milburn; but it was full of the qualities that ensure the success of a man's relation with his fellows. Consideration was in it, and understanding, and that kind of geniality that offers itself on a plain business footing, a commercial heartiness that has no nonsense about it. He had half a dozen casual chats like this with Mr Milburn on his way up Main Street, and his manner expanded in cordiality and respect with each, as if his growing confidence in himself increased his confidence in his fellow-men. The same assurance greeted him several times over. Every friend wanted to remind him of the enemy's exigency, and to assure him that the enemy's new policy was enough by itself to bring him romping in at last; and to every assurance he presented the same acceptable attitude of desiring for particular reasons to take special note of such valuable views. At the end he had neither elicited nor imparted a single opinion of any importance; nevertheless, he was quite entitled to his glow of satisfaction.

Among Mr Winter's qualifications for political life was his capacity to arrive at an estimate of the position of the enemy. He was never persuaded to his own advantage; he never stepped ahead of the facts. It was one of the things that made him popular with the other side, his readiness to do justice to their equipment, to acknowledge their chances. There is gratification of a special sort in hearing your points of vantage confessed by the foe; the vanity is soothed by his open admission that you are worthy of his steel. It makes you a little less keen somehow, about defeating him. It may be that Mr Winter had an instinct for this, or perhaps he thought such discourse more profitable, if less pleasant, than derisive talk in the opposite sense. At all events, he gained something and lost nothing by it, even in his own camp, where swagger might be expected to breed admiration. He was thought a level-headed fellow who didn't expect miracles; his forecast in most matters was quoted, and his defeats at the polls had been to some extent neutralized by his sagacity in computing the returns in advance.

So that we may safely follow Mr Winter to the conclusion that the Liberals of South Fox were somewhat put to it to select a successor to Robert Farquharson who could be depended upon to keep the party credit exactly where he found it. The need was unexpected, and the two men who would have stepped most naturally into Farquharson's shoes were disqualified as Winter described. The retirement came at a calculating moment. South Fox still declared itself with pride an unhealthy division for Conservatives; but new considerations had thrust themselves among Liberal counsels, and nobody yet knew what the country would say to them. The place was a "Grit" strong-hold, but its steady growth as an industrial centre would give a new significance to the figures of the next returns. The Conservative was the manufacturers' party, and had been ever since the veteran Sir John Macdonald declared for a protective "National Policy," and placed the plain issue before the country which divided the industrial

and the agricultural interests. A certain number of millowners--Mr Milburn mentioned Young and Windle--belonged to the Liberals, as if to illustrate the fact that you inherit your party in Canada as you inherit your "denomination," or your nose; it accompanies you, simply, to the grave. But they were exceptions, and there was no doubt that the other side had been considerably strengthened by the addition of two or three thriving and highly capitalized concerns during the past five years. Upon the top of this had come the possibility of a great and dramatic change of trade relations with Great Britain, which the Liberal Government at Ottawa had given every sign of willingness to adopt--had, indeed, initiated, and were bound by word and letter to follow up. Though the moment had not yet come, might never come, for its acceptance or rejection by the country as a whole, there could be no doubt that every by-election would be concerned with the policy involved, and that every Liberal candidate must be prepared to stand by it in so far as the leaders had conceived and pushed it. Party feeling was by no means unanimous in favour of the change; many Liberals saw commercial salvation closer in improved trade relations with the United States. On the other hand, the new policy, clothed as it was in the attractive sentiment of loyalty, and making for the solidarity of the British race, might be depended upon to capture votes which had been hitherto Conservative mainly because these professions were supposed to be an indissoluble part of Conservatism. It was a thing to split the vote sufficiently to bring an unusual amount of anxiety and calculation into Liberal counsels. The other side were in no doubt or difficulty: Walter Winter was good enough for them, and it was their cheerful conviction that Walter Winter would put a large number of people wise on the subject of preference trade bye-and-bye, who at present only knew enough to vote for it.

The great question was the practicability of the new idea and how much further it could safely be carried in a loyal Dominion which was just getting on its industrial legs. It was debated with anxiety at Ottawa, and made the subject of special instruction to South Fox, where the by-election would have all the importance of an early test. "It's a clear issue," wrote an influential person at Ottawa to the local party leaders at Elgin, "we don't want any tendency to hedge or double. It's straight business with us, the thing we want, and it will be till Wallingham either gets it through over there, or finds he can't deal with us. Meanwhile it might be as well to ascertain just how much there is in it for platform purposes in a safe spot like South Fox, and how much the fresh opposition will cost us where we can afford it. We can't lose the seat, and the returns will be worth anything in their bearing on the General Election next year. The objection to Carter is that he's only half-convinced; he couldn't talk straight if he wanted to, and that lecture tour of his in the United States ten years ago pushing reciprocity with the Americans would make awkward literature."

The rejection of Carter practically exhausted the list of men available whose standing in the town and experience of its suffrages brought them naturally into the field of selection; and at this point Cruickshank wrote to Farquharson suggesting the dramatic departure involved in the name of Lorne Murchison. Cruickshank wrote judiciously, leaving the main arguments in Lorne's favour to form themselves in Farquharson's mind, but countering the objections that would rise there by the suggestion

that after a long period of confidence and steady going, in fact of the orthodox and expected, the party should profit by the swing of the pendulum toward novelty and tentative, rather than bring forward a candidate who would represent, possibly misrepresent, the same beliefs and intentions on a lower personal level. As there was no first-rate man of the same sort to succeed Farquharson, Cruickshank suggested the undesirability of a second-rate man; and he did it so adroitly that the old fellow found himself in a good deal of sympathy with the idea. He had small opinion of the lot that was left for selection, and smaller relish for the prospect of turning his honourable activity over to any one of them. Force of habit and training made him smile at Cruickshank's proposition as impracticable, but he felt its attraction, even while he dismissed it to an inside pocket. Young Murchison's name would be so unlooked-for that if he, Farquharson, could succeed in imposing it upon the party it would be almost like making a personal choice of his successor, a grateful idea in abdication. Farquharson wished regretfully that Lorne had another five years to his credit in the Liberal record of South Fox. By the time the young fellow had earned them he, the retiring member, would be quite on the shelf, if in no completer oblivion; he could not expect much of a voice in any nomination five years hence. He sighed to think of it.

It was at that point of his meditations that Mr Farquharson met Squire Ormiston on the steps of the Bank of British North America, an old-fashioned building with an appearance of dignity and probity, a look of having been founded long ago upon principles which raised it above fluctuation, exactly the place in which Mr Farquharson and Squire Ormiston might be expected to meet. The two men, though politically opposed, were excellent friends; they greeted cordially.

"So you're ordered out of politics, Farquharson?" said the squire. "We're all sorry for that, you know."

"I'm afraid so; I'm afraid so. Thanks for your letter--very friendly of you, squire. I don't like it--no use pretending I do--but it seems I've got to take a rest if I want to be known as a going concern."

"A fellow with so much influence in committee ought to have more control of his nerve centres," Ormiston told him. The squire belonged to that order of elderly gentlemen who will have their little joke. "Well, have you and Bingham and Horace Williams made up your minds who's to have the seat?"

Farquharson shook his head. "I only know what I see in the papers," he said. "The Dominion is away out with Fawkes, and the Express is about as lukewarm with Carter as he is with federated trade."

"Your Government won't be obliged to you for Carter," said Mr Ormiston; "a more slack-kneed, double-jointed scoundrel was never offered a commission in a respectable cause. He'll be the first to rat if things begin to look queer for this new policy of yours and Wallingham's."

"He hasn't got it yet," Farquharson admitted, "and he won't with my good will. So you're with us for preference trade, Ormiston?"

"It's a thing I'd like to see. It's a thing I'm sorry we're not in a position to take up practically ourselves."

But you won't get it, you know. You'll be defeated by the senior partner. It's too much of a doctrine for the people of England. They're listening to Wallingham just now because they admire him, but they won't listen to you. I doubt whether it will ever come to an issue over there. This time next year Wallingham will be sucking his thumbs and thinking of something else. No, it's not a thing to worry about politically, for it won't come through."

The squire's words suggested so much relief in that conviction that Farquharson, sharp on the flair of the experienced nose for waverers, looked at him observantly.

"I'm not so sure it's a doctrine with a fine practical application for them as well as for us, if they can be got to see it, and they're bound to see it in time. It's a thing I never expected to live to believe, never thought would be practicable until lately, but now I think there's a very good chance of it. And, hang it all," he added, "it may be unreasonable, but the more I notice the Yankees making propositions to get us away from it, the more I want to see it come through."

"I have very much the same feeling," the squire acknowledged. "I've been turning the matter over a good deal since that last Conference showed which way the wind was blowing. And the fellows in your Government gave them a fine lead. But such a proposition was bound to come from your side. The whole political history of the country shows it. We're pledged to take care of the damned industries."

Farquharson smiled at the note of depression. "Well, we want a bigger market somewhere," he said with detachment "and it looks as if we could get it now Uncle Sam has had a fright. If the question comes to be fought out at the polls, I don't see how your party could do better than go in for a wide scheme of reciprocity with the Americans--in raw products, of course with a tariff to match theirs on manufactured goods. That would shut a pretty tight door on British connection though."

"They'll not get my vote if they do," said the squire, thrusting his hands fiercely into his breeches pockets.

"As you say, it's most important to put up a man who will show the constituency all the credit and benefit there is in it, anyhow," Farquharson observed. "I've had a letter this morning," he added, laughing, "from a fellow--one of the bosses, too--who wants us to nominate young Murchison."

"The Lawyer?"

"That's the man. He's too young, of course--not thirty. But he's well known in the country districts; I don't know a man of his age with a more useful service record. He's got a lot of friends, and he's come a good deal to the front lately through that inter-imperial communications business--we might do worse. And upon my word, we're in such a hole--"

"Farquharson," said old Squire Ormiston, the red creeping over features that had not lost in three generations the lines of the old breed, "I've voted in the Conservative interest for forty years, and my father before me. We were Whigs when we settled in Massachusetts, and Whigs when we pulled up stakes and came North rather than take

up arms against the King; but it seemed decent to support the Government that gave us a chance again under the flag, and my grandfather changed his politics. Now, confound it! the flag seems to be with the Whigs again, for fighting purposes, anyhow; and I don't seem to have any choice. I've been debating the thing for some time now, and your talk of making that fine young fellow your candidate settles it. If you can get your committee to accept young Murchison, you can count on my vote, and I don't want to brag, but I think you can count on Moneida too, though it's never sent in a Grit majority yet."

The men were standing on the steps of the bank, and the crisp air of autumn brought them both an agreeable tingle of enterprise. Farquharson's buggy was tied to the nearest maple.

"I'm going over to East Elgin to look at my brick-kilns," he said. "Get in with me, will you?"

As they drove up Main Street they encountered Walter Winter, who looked after them with a deeply considering eye.

"Old Ormiston always had the Imperial bee in his bonnet," said he.

CHAPTER XXIII

Alfred Hesketh was among the first to hear of Lorne's nomination to represent the constituency of South Fox in the Dominion Parliament. The Milburns told him; it was Dora who actually made the communication. The occasion was high tea; Miss Milburn's apprehension about Englishmen and late dinner had been dissipated in great amusement. Mr Hesketh liked nothing better than high tea, liked nothing so much. He came often to the Milburns' after Mrs Milburn said she hoped he would, and pleased her extremely by the alacrity with which he accepted her first invitation to stay to what she described as their very simple and unconventional meal. Later he won her approval entirely by saying boldly that he hoped he was going to be allowed to stay. It was only in good English society, Mrs Milburn declared, that you found such freedom and confidence; it reminded her of Mrs Emmett's saying that her sister-in-law in London was always at home to lunch. Mrs Milburn considered a vague project of informing a select number of her acquaintances that she was always at home to high tea, but on reflection dismissed it, in case an inconvenient number should come at once. She would never have gone into detail, but since a tin of sardines will only hold so many, I may say for her that it was the part of wisdom.

Mr Hesketh, however, wore the safe and attractive aspect of a single exceptional instance; there were always sardines enough for him. It will be imagined what pleasure Mrs Milburn and Miss Filkin took in his visits, how he propped up their standard of behaviour in all things unessential, which was too likely to be growing limp, so far from approved examples. I think it was a real aesthetic satisfaction; I know they would talk of it afterward for hours, with sighing comparisons of the "form" of the young men of Elgin, which they called beside Hesketh's quite outre. It was a favourite word with Mrs Milburn --outré. She used it like a lorgnette, and felt her

familiarity with it a differentiating mark. Mr Milburn, never so susceptible to delicate distinctions, looked upon the young Englishman with benevolent neutrality. Dora wished it to be understood that she reserved her opinion. He might be all that he seemed, and again he might not. Englishmen were so deep. They might have nice manners, but they didn't always act up to them, so far as she had noticed. There was that Honourable Somebody, who was in jail even then for trying to borrow money under false pretences from the Governor-General. Lorne, when she expressed these views to him, reassured her, but she continued to maintain a guarded attitude upon Mr Hesketh, to everybody except Mr Hesketh himself.

It was Dora, as I have said, who imparted the news. Lorne had come over with it in the afternoon, still a little dazed and unbelieving in the face of his tremendous luck, helped by finding her so readily credulous to thinking it reasonably possible himself. He could not have done better than come to Dora for a correction of any undue exaltation that he might have felt, however. She supplied it in ten minutes by reminding him of their wisdom in keeping the secret of their relations. His engagement to the daughter of a prominent Conservative would not indeed have told in his favour with his party, to say nothing of the anomaly of Mr Milburn's unyielding opposition to the new policy. "I never knew Father so nearly bitter about anything," Dora said, a statement which left her lover thoughtful, but undaunted.

"We'll bring him round," said Lorne, "when he sees that the British manufacturer can't possibly get the better of men on the spot, who know to a nut the local requirements."

To which she had responded, "Oh, Lorne, don't begin THAT again," and he had gone away hot-foot for the first step of preparation.

"It's exactly what I should have expected," said Hesketh, when she told him. "Murchison is the very man they want. He's cut out for a political success. I saw that when he was in England."

"You haven't been very long in the country, Mr Hesketh, or we shouldn't hear you saying that," said Mr Milburn, amicably. "It's a very remarkable thing with us, a political party putting forward so young a man. Now with you I expect a young fellow might get in on his rank or his wealth--your principle of nonpayment of members confines your selection more or less. I don't say you're not right, but over here we do pay, you see, and it makes a lot of difference in the competition. It isn't a greater honour, but it's more sought for. I expect there'll be a good many sore heads over this business."

"It's all the more creditable to Murchison," said Hesketh.

"Of course it is--a great feather in his cap. Oh, I don't say young Murchison isn't a rising fellow, but it's foolishness for his party--I can't think who is responsible for it. However, they've got a pretty foolish platform just now--they couldn't win this seat on it with any man. A lesson will be good for them."

"Father, don't you think Lorne will get in?" asked Dora, in a tone of injury and slight resentment.

"Not by a handful," said her father. "Mr Walter Winter

will represent South Fox in the next session of Parliament, if you ask my opinion."

"But, Father," returned his daughter with an outraged inflection, "you'll vote for Lorne?"

A smile went round the table, discreetest in Mrs Milburn.

"I'm afraid not," said Mr Milburn, "I'm afraid not. Sorry to disoblige, but principles are principles."

Dora perceptibly pouted. Mrs Milburn created a diversion with green-gage preserves. Under cover of it Hesketh asked, "Is he a great friend of yours?"

"One of my very greatest," Dora replied. "I know he'll expect Father to vote for him. It makes it awfully embarrassing for me."

"Oh, I fancy he'll understand!" said Hesketh, easily. "Political convictions are serious things, you know. Friendship isn't supposed to interfere with them. I wonder," he went on, meditatively, "whether I could be of any use to Murchison. Now that I've made up my mind to stop till after Christmas I'll be on hand for the fight. I've had some experience. I used to canvass now and then from Oxford; it was always a tremendous lark."

"Oh, Mr Hesketh, DO! Really and truly he is one of my oldest friends, and I should love to see him get in. I know his sister, too. They're a very clever family. Quite self-made, you know, but highly respected. Promise me you will."

"I promise with pleasure. And I wish it were something it would give me more trouble to perform. I like Murchison," said Hesketh.

All this transpiring while they were supposed to be eating green-gage preserves, and Mrs Milburn and Miss Filkin endeavoured to engage the head of the house in the kind of easy allusion to affairs of the moment to which Mr Hesketh would be accustomed as a form of conversation--the accident to the German Empress, the marriage of one of the Rothschilds. The ladies were compelled to supply most of the facts and all of the interest but they kept up a gallant line of attack; and the young man, taking gratified possession of Dora's eyes, was extremely obliged to them.

Hesketh lost no time in communicating his willingness to be of use to Murchison, and Lorne felt all his old friendliness rise up in him as he cordially accepted the offer. It was made with British heartiness, it was thoroughly meant. Lorne was half-ashamed in his recognition of its quality. A certain aloofness had grown in him against his will since Hesketh had prolonged his stay in the town, difficult to justify, impossible to define. Hesketh as Hesketh was worthily admirable as ever, wholesome and agreeable, as well turned out by his conscience as he was by his tailor; it was Hesketh in his relation to his new environment that seemed vaguely to come short. This in spite of an enthusiasm which was genuine enough; he found plenty of things to like about the country. It was perhaps in some manifestation of sensitiveness that he failed; he had the adaptability of the pioneer among rugged conditions, but he could not mingle quite immediately with the essence of them; he did not perceive the genius loci. Lorne had been conscious of this as a kind of undefined grievance; now he specified

it and put it down to Hesketh's isolation among ways that were different from the ways he knew. You were bound to notice that Hesketh as a stranger had his own point of view, his own training to retreat upon.

"I certainly liked him better over there," Lorne told Advena, "but then he was a part of it--he wasn't separated out as he is here. He was just one sort of fellow that you admired, and there were lots of sorts that you admired more. Over here you seem to see round him somehow."

"I shouldn't have thought it difficult," said his sister.

"Besides," Lorne confessed, "I expect it was easier to like him when you were inclined to like everybody. A person feels more critical of a visitor, especially when he's had advantages," he added honestly. "I expect we don't care about having to acknowledge 'em so very much--that's what it comes to."

"I don't see them," said Advena. "Mr Hesketh seems well enough in his way, fairly intelligent and anxious to be pleasant. But I can't say I find him a specially interesting or valuable type."

"Interesting, you wouldn't. But valuable--well, you see, you haven't been in England--you haven't seen them over there, crowds of 'em, piling up the national character. Hesketh's an average, and for an average he's high. Oh, he's a good sort--and he just SMELLS of England."

"He seems all right in his politics," said John Murchison, filling his pipe from the tobacco jar on the mantelpiece. "But I doubt whether you'll find him much assistance the way he talks of. Folks over here know their own business--they've had to learn it. I doubt if they'll take showing from Hesketh."

"They might be a good deal worse advised."

"That may be," said Mr Murchison, and settled down in his armchair behind the Dominion.

"I agree with Father," said Advena. "He won't be any good, Lorne."

"Advena prefers Scotch," remarked Stella.

"I don't know. He's full of the subject," said Lorne. "He can present it from the other side."

"The side of the British exporter?" inquired his father, looking over the top of the Dominion with unexpected humour.

"No, sir. Though there are places where we might talk cheap overcoats and tablecloths and a few odds and ends like that. The side of the all-British loaf and the lot of people there are to eat it," said Lorne. "That ought to make a friendly feeling. And if there's anything in the sentiment of the scheme," he added, "it shouldn't do any harm to have a good specimen of the English people advocating it. Hesketh ought to be an object-lesson."

"I wouldn't put too much faith in the object-lesson," said John Murchison.

"Neither would I," said Stella emphatically. "Mister Alfred Hesketh may pass in an English crowd, but over

here he's just an ignorant young man, and you'd better not have him talking with his mouth at any of your meetings. Tell him to go and play with Walter Winter."

"I heard he was asking at Volunteer Headquarters the other night," remarked Alec, "how long it would be before a man like himself, if he threw in his lot with the country, could expect to get nominated for a provincial seat."

"What did they tell him?" asked Mr Murchison, when they had finished their laugh.

"I heard they said it would depend a good deal on the size of the lot."

"And a little on the size of the man," remarked Advena.

"He said he would be willing to take a seat in a Legislature and work up," Alec went on. "Ontario for choice, because he thought the people of this Province more advanced."

"There's a representative committee being formed to give the inhabitants of the poor-house a turkey dinner on Thanksgiving Day," said Advena. "He might begin with that."

"I dare say he would if anybody told him. He's just dying to be taken into the public service," Alec said. "He's in dead earnest about it. He thinks this country's a great place because it gives a man the chance of a public career."

"Why is it," asked Advena "that when people have no capacity for private usefulness they should be so anxious to serve the public?"

"Oh, come," said Lorne, "Hesketh has an income of his own. Why should he sweat for his living? We needn't pride ourselves on being so taken up with getting ours. A man like that is in a position to do some good, and I hope Hesketh will get a chance if he stays over here. We'll soon see how he speaks. He's going to follow Farquharson at Jordanville on Thursday week."

"I wonder at Farquharson," said his father.

By this time the candidature of Mr Lorne Murchison was well in the public eye. The Express announced it in a burst of beaming headlines, with a biographical sketch and a "cut" of its young fellow-townsmen. Horace Williams, whose hand was plain in every line apologized for the brevity of the biography--quality rather than quantity, he said; it was all good, and time would make it better. This did not prevent the Mercury observing the next evening that the Liberal organ had omitted to state the age at which the new candidate was weaned. The Toronto papers commented according to their party bias, but so far as the candidate was concerned there was lack of the material of criticism. If he had achieved little for praise he had achieved nothing for detraction. There was no inconsistent public utterance, no doubtful transaction, no scandalous paper to bring forward to his detriment. When the fact that he was but twenty-eight years of age had been exhausted in elaborate ridicule, little more was available. The policy he championed, however, lent itself to the widest discussion, and it was instructive to note how the Opposition press, while continuing to approve the great principle involved, found material for

gravest criticism in the Government's projected application of it. Interest increased in the South Fox by-election as its first touchstone, and gathered almost romantically about Lorne Murchison as its spirited advocate. It was commonly said that whether he was returned or not on this occasion, his political future was assured; and his name was carried up and down the Dominion with every new wind of imperial doctrine that blew across the Atlantic. He himself felt splendidly that he rode upon the crest of a wave of history. However the event appeared which was hidden beyond the horizon, the great luck of that buoyant emotion, of that thrilling suspense, would be his in a very special way. He was exhilarated by the sense of crisis, and among all the conferences and calculations that armed him for his personal struggle, he would now and then breathe in his private soul, "Choose quickly, England," like a prayer.

Elgin rose to its liking for the fellow, and even his political enemies felt a half-humorous pride that the town had produced a candidate whose natural parts were held to eclipse the age and experience of party hacks. Plenty of them were found to declare that Lorne Murchison would poll more votes for the Grits than any other man they could lay their hands on, with the saving clause that neither he nor any other man could poll quite enough this time. They professed to be content to let the issue have it; meanwhile they congratulated Lorne on his chance, telling him that a knock or two wouldn't do him any harm at his age. Walter Winter, who hadn't been on speaking terms with Farquharson, made a point of shaking hands with Murchison in the publicity of the post-office, and assuring him that he, Winter, never went into a contest more confident of the straight thing on the part of the other side. Such cavilling as there was came from the organized support of his own party and had little importance because it did. The grumblers fell into line almost as soon as Horace Williams said they would; a little oil, one small appointment wrung from the Ontario Government--Fawkes, I believe, got it--and the machine was again in good working order. Lorne even profited, in the opinion of many, by the fact of his youth, with its promise of energy and initiative, since Mr Farquharson had lately been showing the defects as well as the qualities of age and experience, and the charge of servile timidity was already in the mouths of his critics.

The agricultural community took it, as usual, with phlegm; but there was a distinct tendency in the bar at Barker's, on market-days, to lay money on the colt.

CHAPTER XXIV

Mr Farquharson was to retain his seat until the early spring, for the double purpose of maintaining his influence upon an important commission of which he was chairman until the work should be done, and of giving the imperial departure championed by his successor as good a chance as possible of becoming understood in the constituency. It was understood that the new writ would issue for a date in March; Elgin referred all interest to that point, and prophesied for itself a lively winter. Another event, of importance less general, was arranged for the end of February--the arrival of Miss Cameron and Mrs Kilbannon from Scotland. Finlay had proposed an earlier date, but matters of business connected with her mother's estate

would delay Miss Cameron's departure. Her arrival would be the decisive point of another campaign. He and Advena faced it without misgiving, but there were moments when Finlay greatly wished the moment past.

Their intimacy had never been conspicuous, and their determination to make no change in it could be carried out without attracting attention. It was very dear to them, that determination. They saw it as a test, as an ideal. Last of all, perhaps, as an alleviation. They were both too much encumbered with ideas to move simply, quickly, on the impulse of passion. They looked at it through the wrong end of the glass, and thought they put it farther away. They believed that their relation comprised, would always comprise, the best of life. It was matter for discussion singularly attractive; they allowed themselves upon it wide scope in theory. They could speak of it in the heroic temper, without sadness or bitterness; the thing was to tear away the veil and look fate in the face. The great thing, perhaps, was to speak of it while still they could give themselves leave; a day would arrive, they acknowledged with averted eyes, when dumbness would be more becoming. Meanwhile, Mrs Murchison would have found it hard to sustain her charge against them that they talked of nothing but books and authors; the philosophy of life, as they were intensely creating it, was more entrancing than any book or any author. Simply and definitely, and to their own satisfaction, they had abandoned the natural demands of their state; they lived in its exaltation and were far from accidents. Deep in both of them was a kind of protective nobility; I will not say it cost them nothing, but it turned the scenes between them into comedy of the better sort, the kind that deserves the relief of stone or bronze. Advena, had she heard it, would have repelled Dr Drummond's warning with indignation. If it were so possible to keep their friendship on an unfaltering level then, with the latitude they had, what danger could attend them later, when the social law would support them, divide them, protect them? Dr Drummond, suspecting all, looked grimly on, and from November to March found no need to invite Mr Finlay to occupy the pulpit of Knox Church.

They had come to full knowledge that night of their long walk in the dark together; but even then, in the rush and shock and glory of it, they had held apart; and their broken avowals had crossed with difficulty from one to the other. The whole fabric of circumstance was between them, to realize and to explore; later surveys, as we know, had not reduced it. They gave it great credit as a barrier; I suppose because it kept them out of each other's arms. It had done that.

It was Advena, I fear, who insisted most that they should continue upon terms of happy debt to one another, the balance always changing, the account never closed and rendered. She no doubt felt that she might impose the terms; she had unconsciously the sense of greater sacrifice, and knew that she had been mistress of the situation long before he was aware of it. He agreed with joy and with misgiving; he saw with enthusiasm her high conception of their alliance, but sometimes wondered, poor fellow, whether he was right in letting it cover him. He came to the house as he had done before, as often as he could, and reproached himself that he could not, after all, come very often.

That they should discuss their relation as candidly as they sustained it was perhaps a little peculiar to them,

so I have laid stress on it; but it was not by any means their sole preoccupation. They talked like tried friends of their every-day affairs. Indeed, after the trouble and intoxication of their great understanding had spent itself, it was the small practical interests of life that seemed to hold them most. One might think that Nature, having made them her invitation upon the higher plane, abandoned them in the very scorn of her success to the warm human commonplaces that do her work well enough with the common type. Mrs Murchison would have thought better of them if she had chanced again to overhear.

"I wouldn't advise you to have it lined with fur," Advena was saying. The winter had sharply announced itself, and Finlay, to her reproach about his light overcoat, had declared his intention of ordering a buffalo-skin the following day. "And the buffaloes are all gone, you know--thirty years ago," she laughed. "You really are not modern in practical matters. Does it ever surprise you that you get no pemmican for dinner, and hardly ever meet an Indian in his feathers?"

He looked at her with delight in his sombre eyes. It was a new discovery, her capacity for happily chaffing him, only revealed since she had come out of her bonds to love; it was hard to say which of them took the greater pleasure in it.

"What is the use of living in Canada if you can't have fur on your clothes?" he demanded.

"You may have a little--astrakhan, I would--on the collar and cuffs," she said. "A fur lining is too hot if there happens to be a thaw, and then you would leave it off and take cold. You have all the look," she added, with a gravely considering glance at him, "of a person who ought to take care of his chest."

He withdrew his eyes hurriedly, and fixed them instead on his pipe. He always brought it with him, by her order, and Advena usually sewed. He thought as he watched her that it made the silences enjoyable.

"And expensive, I dare say, too," he said.

"Yes, more or less. Alec paid fifty dollars for his, and never liked it."

"Fifty dollars--ten pounds! No vair for me!" he declared. "By the way, Mrs Firmin is threatening to turn me out of house and home. A married daughter is coming to live with her, and she wants my rooms."

"When does she come--the married daughter?"

"Oh, not till the early spring! There's no immediate despair," said Finlay, "but it is dislocating. My books and I had just succeeded in making room for one another."

"But you will have to move, in any case, in the early spring."

"I suppose I will. I had--I might have remembered that."

"Have you found a house yet?" Advena asked him.

"No."

"Have you been looking?" It was a gentle, sensible

reminder.

"I'm afraid I haven't." He moved in his chair as if in physical discomfort. "Do you think I ought--so soon? There are always plenty of--houses, aren't there?"

"Not plenty of desirable ones. Do you think you must live in East Elgin?"

"It would be rather more convenient."

"Because there are two semidetached in River Street, just finished, that look very pretty and roomy. I thought when I saw them that one of them might be what you would like."

"Thank you," he said, and tried not to say it curtly.

"They belong to White, the grocer. River Street isn't East Elgin, but it is that way, and it would be a great deal pleasanter for--for her."

"I must consider that, of course. You haven't been in them? I should hope for a bright sitting-room, and a very private study."

If Advena was aware of any unconscious implication, the pair of eyes she turned upon him showed no trace of satisfaction in it.

"No, I haven't. But if I could be of any use I should be very glad to go over them with you, and--"

She stopped involuntarily, checked by the embarrassment in his face, though she had to wait for his words to explain it.

"I should be most grateful. But--but might it not be misunderstood?"

She bent her head over her work, and one of those instants passed between them which he had learned to dread. They were so completely the human pair as they sat together, withdrawn in comfort and shelter, absorbed in homely matters and in each other; it was easy to forget that they were only a picture, a sham, and that the reality lay further on, in the early spring. It must have been hard for him to hear without resentment that she was ready to help him to make a home for that reality. He was fast growing instructed in women, although by a post-graduate course.

Advena looked up. "Possibly," she said, calmly, and their agitation lay still between them. He was silently angry; the thing that stirred without their leave had been sweet.

"No," said Advena, "I can't go, I suppose. I'm sorry. I should have liked so much to be of use." She looked up at him appealingly, and sudden tears came and stood in her eyes, and would perhaps have undone his hurt but that he was staring into the fire.

"How can you be of use," he said, almost irritably, "in such ways as those? They are not important, and I am not sure that for us they are legitimate. If you were about to be--married"--he seemed to plunge at the word--"I should not wish either to hasten you or to house you. I should turn my back on it all. You should have nothing from me," he went on, with a forced smile, "but my blessing, delivered over my shoulder."

"I am sure they are not important," she said humbly--privately all unwilling to give up her martyrdom, "but surely they are legitimate. I would like to help you in every little way I can. Don't you like me in your life? You have said that I may stay."

"I believe you think that by taking strong measures one can exorcise things," he said. "That if we could only write out this history of ours in our hearts' blood it would somehow vanish."

"No," she said, "but I should like to do it all the same."

"You must bear with me if I refuse the heroic in little. It is even harder than the other." He broke off, leaning back and looking at her from under his shading hand as if that might protect him from too complete a vision. The firelight was warm on her cheek and hair, her needle once again completed the dear delusion: she sat there, his wife. This was an aspect he forbade, but it would return; here it was again.

"It is good to have you in my life," he said. "It is also good to recognize one's possibilities."

"How can you definitely lose me?" she asked, and he shook his head.

"I don't know. Now that I have found you it is as if you and I had been rocked together on the tide of that inconceivable ocean that casts us half-awake upon life," he said dreamily. "It isn't friendship of ideas, it's a friendship of spirit. Indeed, I hope and pray never wholly to lose that."

"You never will," she told him. "How many worlds one lives in as the day goes by with the different people one cares for--one beyond the other, concentric, ringing from the heart! Yours comprises all the others; it lies the farthest out--and alas! at present. the closest in," she added irresistibly to the asking of his eyes.

"But," she hurried on, taking high ground to remedy her indiscretion, "I look forward to the time when this--other feeling of ours will become just an idea, as it is now just an emotion, at which we should try to smile. It is the attitude of the gods."

"And therefore not becoming to men. Why should we, not being gods. borrow their attitude?" said Finlay.

"I could never kill it," she put her work in her lap to say, "by any sudden act of violence. It would seem a kind of suicide. While it rules it is like one's life--absolute. But to isolate it--to place it beyond the currents from the heart--to look at it, and realize it, and conquer it for what it is--I don't think it need take so very long. And then our friendship will be beautiful without reproach."

"I sometimes fear there may not be time enough in life," he said. "And if I find that I must simply go--to British Columbia, I think--those mining missions would give a man his chance against himself. There is splendid work to be done there, of a rough-and-ready kind that would make it puerile to spend time in self-questioning."

She smiled as if at a violent boy. "We can do it. We can do it here," she said. "May I quote another religion to

you? 'From purification there arises in the Yogi a thorough discernment of the cause and nature of the body, whereupon he loses that regard which others have for the bodily form.' Then, if he loves, he loves in spirit and in truth. I look forward to the time," she went on calmly, "when the best that I can give you or you can give me will ride upon a glance."

"I used to feel more drawn to the ascetic achievement and its rewards," he remarked thoughtfully, "than I do now."

"If I were not a Presbyterian in Canada," she told him, "I would be a Buddhist in Burma. But I have inherited the Shorter Catechism; I must remain without the Law."

Finlay smiled. "They are the simple," he said. "Our Law makes wise the simple."

Advena looked for a moment into the fire. She was listening, with admiration, to her heart; she would not be led to consider esoteric contrasts of East and West.

"Isn't there something that appeals to you," she said, "in the thought of just leaving it, all unsaid and all undone, a dear and tender projection upon the future that faded--a lovely thing we turned away from, until one day it was no longer there?"

"Charming," he said, averting his eyes so that she should not see the hunger in them. "Charming--literature!"

She smiled and sighed, and he wrenched his mind to the consideration of the Buddhism of Browning. She followed him obediently, but the lines they wanted did not come easily; they were compelled to search and verify. Something lately seemed lost to them of that kind of glad activity; he was more aware of it than she, since he was less occupied in the aesthetic ecstasy of self-torture. In the old time before the sun rose they had been so conscious of realms of idea lying just beyond the achievement of thought, approachable, visible by phrases, brokenly, realms which they could see closer when they essayed together. He constantly struggled to reach those enchanted areas again, but they seemed to have gone down behind the horizon; and the only inspiration that carried them far drew its impetus from the poetry of their plight. They looked for verses to prove that Browning's imagination carried him bravely through lives and lives to come, and found them to speculate whether in such chances they might hope to meet again.

And the talk came back to his difficulties with his Board of Management, and to her choice of a frame for the etching he had given her, by his friend the Glasgow impressionist, and to their opinion of a common acquaintance, and to Lorne and his prospects. He told her how little she resembled her brother, and where they diverged, and how; and she listened with submission and delight, enchanted to feel his hand upon her intimate nature. She lingered in the hall while he got into his overcoat, and saw that a glove was the worse for wear. "Would it be the heroic-in-little," she begged, "to let me mend that?"

As he went out alone into the winter streets he too drew upon a pagan for his admonition. "'What then art thou doing here, O imagination?" he groaned in his private heart. "'Go away, I entreat thee by the gods, for I want

thee not. But thou art come again according to thy old fashion. I am not angry with thee, only go away!"

CHAPTER XXV

Miss Milburn pressed her contention that the suspicion of his desire would be bad for her lover's political prospects till she made him feel his honest passion almost a form of treachery to his party. She also hinted that, for the time being, it did not make particularly for her own comfort in the family circle, Mr Milburn having grown by this time quite bitter. She herself drew the excitement of intrigue from the situation, which she hid behind her pretty, pale, decorous features, and never betrayed by the least of her graceful gestures. She told herself that she had never been so right about anything as about that affair of the ring--imagine, for an instant, if she had been wearing it now! She would have banished Lorne altogether if she could. As he insisted on an occasional meeting, she clothed it in mystery, appointing it for an evening when her mother and aunt were out, and answering his ring at the door herself. To her family she remarked with detachment that you saw hardly anything of Lorne Murchison now, he was so taken up with his old election; and to Hesketh she confided her fear that politics did interfere with friendship, whatever he might say. He said a good deal, he cited lofty examples; but the only agreement he could get from her was the hope that the estrangement wouldn't be permanent.

"But you are going to say something, Lorne," she insisted, talking of the Jordanville meeting.

"Not much," he told her. "It's the safest district we've got, and they adore old Farquharson. He'll do most of the talking--they wouldn't thank me for taking up the time. Farquharson is going to tell them I'm a first-class man, and they couldn't do better, and I've practically only to show my face and tell them I think so too."

"But Mr Hesketh will speak?"

"Yes; we thought it would be a good chance of testing him. He may interest them, and he can't do much harm, anyhow."

"Lorne, I should simply love to go. It's your first meeting."

"I'll take you."

"Mr Murchison, HAVE you taken leave of your senses? Really, you are--"

"All right, I'll send you. Farquharson and I are going out to the Crow place to supper, but Hesketh is driving straight there. He'll be delighted to bring you--who wouldn't?"

"I shouldn't be allowed to go with him alone," said Dora, thoughtfully.

"Well, no. I don't know that I'd approve of that myself," laughed the confident young man. "Hesketh is driving Mrs Farquharson, and the cutter will easily hold three. Isn't it lucky there's sleighing?"

"Mother couldn't object to that," said Dora. "Lorne, I always said you were the dearest fellow! I'll wear a thick veil, and not a soul will know me."

"Not a soul would in any case," said Lorne. "It'll be a Jordanville crowd, you know--nobody from Elgin."

"We don't visit much in Jordanville, certainly. Well, Mother mayn't object. She has a great idea of Mrs Farquharson, because she has attended eleven Drawing-Rooms at Ottawa, and one of them was given--held, I should say--by the Princess Louise."

"I won't promise you eleven," said Lorne, "but there seems to be a pretty fair chance of one or two."

At this she had a tale for him which charmed his ears. "I didn't know where to look," she said. "Aunt Emmie, you know, has a very bad trick of coming into my room without knocking. Well, in she walked last night, and found me before the glass PRACTISING MY CURTSEY! I could have killed her. Pretended she thought I was out."

"Dora, would you like ME to promise something?" he asked, with a mischievous look.

"Of course, I would. I don't care how much YOU promise. What?"

But already he repented of his daring, and sat beside her suddenly conscious and abashed. Nor could any teasing prevail to draw from him what had been on his audacious lips to say.

Social precedents are easily established in the country. The accident that sent the first Liberal canvasser for Jordanville votes to the Crow place for his supper would be hard to discover now; the fact remains that he has been going there ever since. It made a greater occasion than Mrs Crow would ever have dreamed of acknowledging. She saw to it that they had a good meal of victuals, and affected indifference to the rest; they must say their say, she supposed. If the occasion had one satisfaction which she came nearer to confessing than another, it was that the two or three substantial neighbours who usually came to meet the politicians left their wives at home, and that she herself, to avoid giving any offence on this score, never sat down with the men. Quite enough to do it was, she would explain later, for her and the hired girl to wait on them and to clear up after them. She and Bella had their bite afterward when the men had hitched up, and when they could exchange comments of proud congratulation upon the inroads on the johnny-cake or the pies. So there was no ill feeling, and Mrs Crow, having vindicated her dignity by shaking hands with the guests of the evening in the parlour, solaced it further by maintaining the masculine state of the occasion, in spite of protests or entreaties. To sit down opposite Mr Crow would have made it ordinary "company"; she passed the plates and turned it into a function.

She was waiting for them on the parlour sofa when Crow brought them in out of the nipping early dark of December, Elmore staying behind in the yard with the horses. She sat on the sofa in her best black dress with the bead trimming on the neck and sleeves, a good deal pushed up and wrinkled across the bosom, which had done all that would ever be required of it when it gave Elmore and Abe

their start in life. Her wiry hands were crossed in her lap in the moment of waiting: you could tell by the look of them that they were not often crossed there. They were strenuous hands; the whole worn figure was strenuous, and the narrow set mouth, and the eyes which had looked after so many matters for so long, and even the way the hair was drawn back into a knot in a fashion that would have given a phrenologist his opportunity. It was a different Mrs Crow from the one that sat in the midst of her poultry and garden-stuff in the Elgin market square; but it was even more the same Mrs Crow, the sum of a certain measure of opportunity and service, an imperial figure in her bead trimming, if the truth were known.

The room was heated to express the geniality that was harder to put in words. The window was shut; there was a smell of varnish and whatever was inside the "suite" of which Mrs Crow occupied the sofa. Enlarged photographs --very much enlarged--of Mr and Mrs Crow hung upon the walls, and one other of a young girl done in that process which tells you at once that she was an only daughter and that she is dead. There had been other bereavements; they were written upon the silver coffin-plates which, framed and glazed, also contributed to the decoration of the room; but you would have had to look close, and you might feel a delicacy.

Mrs Crow made her greetings with precision, and sat down again upon the sofa for a few minutes' conversation.

"I'm telling them," said her husband, "that the sleighin's just held out for them. If it 'ud been tomorrow they'd have had to come on wheels. Pretty soft travellin' as it was, some places, I guess."

"Snow's come early this year," said Mrs Crow. "It was an open fall, too."

"It has certainly," Mr Farquharson backed her up. "About as early as I remember it. I don't know how much you got out here; we had a good foot in Elgin."

"'Bout the same, 'bout the same," Mr Crow deliberated, "but it's been layin' light all along over Clayfield way--ain't had a pair of runners out, them folks."

"Makes a more cheerful winter, Mrs Crow, don't you think, when it comes early?" remarked Lorne. "Or would you rather not get it till after Christmas?"

"I don't know as it matters much, out here in the country. We don't get a great many folks passin', best of times. An' it's more of a job to take care of the stock."

"That's so," Mr Crow told them. "Chores come heavier when there's snow on the ground, a great sight, especially if there's drifts."

And for an instant, with his knotted hands hanging between his knees he pondered this unvarying aspect of his yearly experience. They all pondered it, sympathetic.

"Well, now, Mr Farquharson," Mrs Crow turned to him. "An' how reely BE ye? We've heard better, an' worse, an' middlin' --there's ben such contradictory reports."

"Oh, very well, Mrs Crow. Never better. I'm going to give a lot more trouble yet. I can't do it in politics, that's the worst of it. But here's the man that's going to do

it for me. Here's the man!"

The Crows looked at the pretendant, as in duty bound, but not any longer than they could help.

"Why, I guess you were at school with Elmore?" said Crow, as if the idea had just struck him.

"He may be right peart, for all that," said Elmore's mother, and Elmore, himself, entering with two leading Liberals of Jordanville, effected a diversion, under cover of which Mrs Crow escaped, to superintend, with Bella, the last touches to the supper in the kitchen.

Politics in and about Jordanville were accepted as a purely masculine interest. If you had asked Mrs Crow to take a hand in them she would have thanked you with sarcasm, and said she thought she had about enough to do as it was. The school-house, on the night of such a meeting as this, was recognized to be no place for ladies. It was a man's affair, left to the men, and the appearance there of the other sex would have been greeted with remark and levity. Elgin, as we know, was more sophisticated in every way, plenty of ladies attended political meetings in the Drill Shed, where seats as likely as not would be reserved for them; plenty of handkerchiefs waved there for the encouragement of the hero of the evening. They did not kiss him; British phlegm, so far, had stayed that demonstration at the southern border.

The ladies of Elgin, however, drew the line somewhere, drew it at country meetings. Mrs Farquharson went with her husband because, since his state of health had handed him over to her more than ever, she saw it a part of her wifely duty. His retirement had been decided upon for the spring, but she would be on hand to retire him at any earlier moment should the necessity arise. "We'll be the only female creatures there, my dear," she had said to Dora on the way out, and Hesketh had praised them both for public spirit. He didn't know, he said, how anybody would get elected in England without the ladies, especially in the villages, where the people were obliged to listen respectfully.

"I wonder you can afford to throw away all the influence you get in the rural districts with soup and blankets," he said; "but this is an extravagant country in many ways." Dora kept silence, not being sure of the social prestige bound up with the distribution of soup and blankets, but Mrs Farquharson set him sharply right.

"I guess we'd rather do without our influence if it came to that," she said.

Hesketh listened with deference to her account of the rural district which had as yet produced no Ladies Bountiful, made mental notes of several points, and placed her privately as a woman of more than ordinary intelligence. I have always claimed for Hesketh an open mind; he was filling it now, to its capacity, with care and satisfaction.

The school room was full and waiting when they arrived. Jordanville had been well billed, and the posters held, in addition to the conspicuous names of Farquharson and Murchison, that of Mr Alfred Hesketh (of London, England). There was a "send-off" to give to the retiring member, there was a critical inspection to make of the new candidate, and there was Mr Alfred Hesketh, of London, England, and whatever he might signify. They were big,

quiet, expectant fellows, with less sophistication and polemic than their American counterparts, less stolid aggressiveness than their parallels in England, if they have parallels there. They stood, indeed, for the development between the two; they came of the new country but not of the new light; they were democrats who had never thrown off the monarch--what harm did he do there overseas? They had the air of being prosperous, but not prosperous enough for theories and doctrines. The Liberal vote of South Fox had yet to be split by Socialism or Labour. Life was a decent rough business that required all their attention; there was time enough for sleep but not much for speculation. They sat leaning forward with their hats dropped between their knees, more with the air of big schoolboys expecting an entertainment than responsible electors come together to approve their party's choice. They had the uncomplaining bucolic look, but they wore it with a difference; the difference, by this time, was enough to mark them of another nation. Most of them had driven to the meeting; it was not an adjournment from the public house. Nor did the air hold any hint of beer. Where it had an alcoholic drift the flavour was of whisky; but the stimulant of the occasion had been tea or cider, and the room was full of patient good will.

The preliminaries were gone through with promptness; the Chair had supped with the speakers, and Mr Crow had given him a friendly hint that the boys wouldn't be expecting much in the way of trimmings from HIM. Stamping and clapping from the back benches greeted Mr Farquharson. It diminished, grew more subdued, as it reached the front. The young fellows were mostly at the back, and the power of demonstration had somehow ebbed in the old ones. The retiring member addressed his constituents for half an hour. He was standing before them as their representative for the last time, and it was natural to look back and note the milestones behind, the changes for the better with which he could fairly claim association. They were matters of Federal business chiefly, beyond the immediate horizon of Jordanville, but Farquharson made them a personal interest for that hour at all events, and there were one or two points of educational policy which he could illustrate by their own schoolhouse. He approached them, as he had always done, on the level of mutual friendly interest, and in the hope of doing mutual friendly business. "You know and I know," he said more than once; they and he knew a number of things together.

He was afraid, he said, that if the doctors hadn't chased him out of politics, he never would have gone. Now, however, that they gave him no choice, he was glad to think that though times had been pretty good for the farmers of South Fox all through the eleven years of his appearance in the political arena, he was leaving it at a moment when they promised to be better still. Already, he was sure, they were familiar with the main heads of that attractive prospect and, agreeable as the subject, great as the policy was to him, he would leave it to be further unfolded by the gentleman whom they all hoped to enlist in the cause, as his successor for this constituency, Mr Lorne Murchison, and by his friend from the old country, Mr Alfred Hesketh. He, Farquharson, would not take the words out of the mouths of these gentlemen, much as he envied them the opportunity of uttering them. The French Academy, he told them, that illustrious body of literary and scientific men, had a custom, on the death of a member and the selection of his successor, of appointing one of their number to eulogize the newcomer. The person upon

whom the task would most appropriately fall, did circumstances permit, would be the departing academician. In this case, he was happy to say, circumstances did permit--his political funeral was still far enough off to enable him to express his profound confidence in and his hearty admiration of the young and vigorous political heir whom the Liberals of South Fox had selected to stand in his shoes. Mr Farquharson proceeded to give his grounds for this confidence and admiration, reminding the Jordanville electors that they had met Mr Murchison as a Liberal standard-bearer in the last general election, when he, Farquharson, had to acknowledge very valuable services on Mr Murchison's part. The retiring member then thanked his audience for the kind attention and support they had given him for so many years, made a final cheerful joke about a Pagan divinity known as Anno Domini, and took his seat.

They applauded him, and it was plain that they regretted him, the tried friend, the man there was never any doubt about, whose convictions they had repeated, and whose speeches in Parliament they had read with a kind of proprietorship for so long. The Chair had to wait, before introducing Mr Alfred Hesketh, until the backbenchers had got through with a double rendering of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," which bolder spirits sent lustily forth from the anteroom where the little girls kept their hats and comforters, interspersed with whoops. Hesketh, it had been arranged, should speak next, and Lorne last.

Mr Hesketh left his wooden chair with smiling ease, the ease which is intended to level distinctions and put everybody concerned on the best of terms. He said that though he was no stranger to the work of political campaigns, this was the first time that he had had the privilege of addressing a colonial audience. "I consider," said he handsomely, "that it is a privilege." He clasped his hands behind his back and threw out his chest.

"Opinions have differed in England as to the value of the colonies, and the consequence of colonials. I say here with pride that I have ever been among those who insist that the value is very high and the consequence very great. The fault is common to humanity, but we are, I fear, in England, too prone to be led away by appearances, and to forget that under a rough unpolished exterior may beat virtues which are the brightest ornaments of civilization, that in the virgin fields of the possessions which the good swords of our ancestors wrung for us from the Algonquins and the--and the other savages--may be hidden the most glorious period of the British race."

Mr Hesketh paused and coughed. His audience neglected the opportunity for applause, but he had their undivided attention. They were looking at him and listening to him, these Canadian farmers, with curious interest in his attitude, his appearance, his inflection, his whole personality as it offered itself to them--it was a thing new and strange. Far out in the Northwest, where the emigrant trains had been unloading all the summer, Hesketh's would have been a voice from home; but here, in long-settled Ontario, men had forgotten the sound of it, with many other things. They listened in silence, weighing with folded arms, appraising with chin in hand; they were slow, equitable men.

"If we in England," Hesketh proceeded, "required a lesson--as perhaps we did--in the importance of the colonies, we had it; need I remind you? in the course of

the late protracted campaign in South Africa. Then did the mother country indeed prove the loyalty and devotion of her colonial sons. Then were envious nations compelled to see the spectacle of Canadians and Australians rallying about the common flag, eager to attest their affection for it with their life-blood, and to demonstrate that they, too, were worthy to add deeds to British traditions and victories to the British cause."

Still no mark of appreciation. Hesketh began to think them an unhandsome lot. He stood bravely, however, by the note he had sounded. He dilated on the pleasure and satisfaction it had been to the people of England to receive this mark of attachment from far-away dominions and dependencies, on the cementing of the bonds of brotherhood by the blood of the fallen, on the impossibility that the mother country should ever forget such voluntary sacrifices for her sake, when, unexpectedly and irrelevantly, from the direction of the cloakroom, came the expressive comment "Yah!"

Though brief, nothing could have been more to the purpose, and Hesketh sacrificed several effective points to hurry to the quotation--

What should they know of England
Who only England know?

which he could not, perhaps, have been expected to forbear. His audience, however, were plainly not in the vein for compliment. The same voice from the anteroom inquired ironically, "That so?" and the speaker felt advised to turn to more immediate considerations.

He said he had had the great pleasure on his arrival in this country to find a political party, the party in power, their Canadian Liberal party, taking initiative in a cause which he was sure they all had at heart--the strengthening of the bonds between the colonies and the mother country. He congratulated the Liberal party warmly upon having shown themselves capable of this great function --a point at which he was again interrupted; and he recapitulated some of the familiar arguments about the desirability of closer union from the point of view of the army, of the Admiralty, and from one which would come home, he knew, to all of them, the necessity of a dependable food supply for the mother country in time of war. Here he quoted a noble lord. He said that he believed no definite proposals had been made, and he did not understand how any definite proposals could be made; for his part, if the new arrangement was to be in the nature of a bargain, he would prefer to have nothing to do with it.

"England," he said, loftily, "has no wish to buy the loyalty of her colonies, nor, I hope, has any colony the desire to offer her allegiance at the price of preference in British markets. Even proposals for mutual commercial benefit may be underpinned, I am glad to say, by loftier principles than those of the market-place and the counting-house."

At this one of his hearers, unacquainted with the higher commercial plane, exclaimed, "How be ye goin' to get 'em kept to, then?"

Hesketh took up the question. He said a friend in the audience asked how they were to ensure that such arrangements would be adhered to. His answer was in the words of the Duke of Dartmoor, "By the mutual esteem,

the inherent integrity, and the willing compromise of the British race."

Here someone on the back benches, impatient, doubtless, at his own incapacity to follow this high doctrine, exclaimed intemperately, "Oh, shut up!" and the gathering, remembering that this, after all, was not what it had come for, began to hint that it had had enough in intermittent stamps and uncompromising shouts for "Murchison!"

Hesketh kept on his legs, however, a few minutes longer. He had a trenchant sentence to repeat to them which he thought they would take as a direct message from the distinguished nobleman who had uttered it. The Marquis of Aldeburgh was the father of the pithy thing, which he had presented, as it happened, to Hesketh himself. The audience received it with respect--Hesketh's own respect was so marked--but with misapprehension; there had been too many allusions to the nobility for a community so far removed from its soothing influence. "Had ye no friends among the commoners?" suddenly spoke up a dry old fellow, stroking a long white beard; and the roar that greeted this showed the sense of the meeting. Hesketh closed with assurances of the admiration and confidence he felt toward the candidate proposed to their suffrages by the Liberal party that were quite inaudible, and sought his yellow pinewood schoolroom chair with rather a forced smile. It had been used once before that day to isolate conspicuous stupidity.

They were at bottom a good-natured and a loyal crowd, and they had not, after all, come there to make trouble, or Mr Alfred Hesketh might have carried away a worse opinion of them. As it was, young Murchison, whose address occupied the rest of the evening, succeeded in making an impression upon them distinct enough, happily for his personal influence, to efface that of his friend. He did it by the simple expedient of talking business, and as high prices for produce and low ones for agricultural implements would be more interesting there than here, I will not report him. He and Mr Farquharson waited, after the meeting, for a personal word with a good many of those present, but it was suggested to Hesketh that the ladies might be tired, and that he had better get them home without unnecessary delay. Mrs Farquharson had less comment to offer during the drive home than Hesketh thought might be expected from a woman of her intelligence, but Miss Milburn was very enthusiastic. She said he had made a lovely speech, and she wished her father could have heard it.

A personal impression, during a time of political excitement, travels unexpectedly far. A week later Mr Hesketh was concernedly accosted in Main Street by a boy on a bicycle.

"Say, mister, how's the dook?"

"What duke?" asked Hesketh, puzzled.

"Oh, any dook," responded the boy, and bicycled cheerfully away.

Christmas came and went. Dr Drummond had long accepted the innovation of a service on Christmas Day, as he agreed to the anthem while the collection was being taken up, to flowers about the pulpit, and to the habit of sitting at prayer. He was a progressive by his business instinct, in everything but theology, where perhaps his business instinct also operated the other way, in favour of the sure thing. The Christmas Day service soon became one of those "special" occasions so dear to his heart, which made a demand upon him out of the ordinary way. He rose to these on the wing of the eagle, and his congregation never lacked the lesson that could be most dramatically drawn from them. His Christmas Day discourse gathered everything into it that could emphasize the anniversary, including a vigorous attack upon the saints' days and ceremonies of the Church of England calculated to correct the concession of the service, and pull up sharply any who thought that Presbyterianism was giving way to the spurious attractions of sentimentality or ritual. The special Easter service, with every appropriate feature of hymn and invocation, was apt to be marked by an unsparing denunciation of the pageants and practices of the Church of Rome. Balance was thus preserved, and principle relentlessly indicated.

Dr Drummond loved, as I have said, all that asked for notable comment; the poet and the tragedian in him caught at the opportunity, and revelled in it. Public events carried him far, especially if they were disastrous, but what he most profited by was the dealing of Providence with members of his own congregation. Of all the occasions that inspired him, the funeral sermon was his happiest opportunity, nor was it, in his hands, by any means unstinted eulogy. Candid was his summing-up, behind the decent veil, the accepted apology of death; he was not afraid to refer to the follies of youth or the weaknesses of age in terms as unmistakable as they were kindly.

"Grace," he said once, of an estimable plain spinster who had passed away, "did more for her than ever nature had done." He repeated it, too. "She was far more indebted, I say, to grace, than to nature," and before his sharp earnestness none were seen to smile. Nor could you forget the note in his voice when the loss he deplored was that of a youth of virtue and promise, or that of a personal friend. His very text would be a blow upon the heart; the eyes filled from the beginning. People would often say that they were "sorry for the family," sitting through Dr Drummond's celebration of their bereavement; and the sympathy was probably well founded. But how fine he was when he paid the last tribute to that upright man, his elder and office-bearer, David Davidson! How his words marched, sorrowing to the close! "Much I have said of him, and more than he would have had me say." Will it not stay with those who heard it till the very end, the trenchant, mournful fall of that "more than he would have had me say"?

It was a thing that Hugh Finlay could not abide in Dr Drummond.

As the winter passed, the little Doctor was hard put to it to keep his hands off the great political issue of the year, bound up as it was in the tenets of his own politics, which he held only less uncompromisingly than those of the Shorter Catechism. It was, unfortunately for him, a gradual and peaceful progress of opinion, marked by no dramatic incidents; and analogy was hard to find in either Testament for a change of fiscal policy

based on imperial advantage. Dr Drummond liked a pretty definite parallel; he had small opinion of the practice of drawing a pint out of a thimble, as he considered Finlay must have done when he preached the gospel of imperialism from Deuteronomy XXX, 14. "But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." Moreover, to preach politics in Knox Church was a liberty in Finlay.

The fact that Finlay had been beforehand with him operated perhaps to reconcile the Doctor to his difficulty; and the candidature of one of his own members in what was practically the imperial interest no doubt increased his embarrassment. Nevertheless, he would not lose sight of the matter for more than two or three weeks together. Many an odd blow he delivered for its furtherance by way of illustrating higher things, and he kept it always, so to speak, in the practical politics of the long prayer.

It was Sunday evening, and Abby and her husband, as usual, had come to tea. The family was complete with the exception of Lorne, who had driven out to Clayfield with Horace Williams, to talk over some urgent matters with persons whom he would meet at supper at the Metropole Hotel at Clayfield. It was a thing Mrs Murchison thought little short of scandalous--supper to talk business on the Sabbath day, and in a hotel, a place of which the smell about the door was enough to knock you down, even on a weekday. Mrs Murchison considered, and did not scruple to say so, that politics should be left alone on Sundays. Clayfield votes might be very important, but there were such things as commandments, she supposed. "It'll bring no blessing," she declared severely, eyeing Lorne's empty place.

The talk about the lamplit table was, nevertheless, all of the election, blessed or unblessed. It was not in human nature that it shouldn't be, as Mrs Murchison would have very quickly told you if you had found her inconsistent. There was reason in all things, as she frequently said.

"I hear," Alec had told them, "that Octavius Milburn is going around bragging he's got the Elgin Chamber of Commerce consolidated this time."

"Against us?" exclaimed Stella; and her brother said, "Of course!"

"Those Milburns," remarked Mrs Murchison, "are enough to make one's blood boil. I met Mrs Milburn in the market yesterday; she'd been pricing Mrs Crow's ducks, and they were just five cents too dear for her, and she stopped--wonderful thing for her--and had SUCH an amount to say about Lorne, and the honour it was, and the dear only knows what! Butter wouldn't melt in her mouth--and Octavius Milburn doing all he knew against him the whole time! That's the Milburns! I cut her remarkably short," Mrs Murchison added, with satisfaction, "and when she'd made up her mind she'd have to give that extra five cents for the ducks because there weren't any others to be had, she went back and found I'd bought them."

"Well done, Mother!" said Alec, and Oliver remarked that if those were today's ducks they were too good for the Milburn crowd, a lot.

"I expect she wanted them, too," remarked Stella. "They've got the only Mr Hesketh staying with them now. Miss

Filkin's in a great state of excitement."

"I guess we can spare them Hesketh," said John Murchison.

"He's a lobster," said Stella with fervour.

"He seems to bring a frost where he goes," continued Abby's husband, "in politics, anyhow. I hear Lorne wants to make a present of him to the other side, for use wherever they'll let him speak longest. Is it true he began his speech out at Jordanville--'Gentlemen--and those of you who are not gentlemen'?"

"Could he have meant Mrs Farquharson and Miss Milburn?" asked Mr Murchison quietly, when the derision subsided; and they laughed again.

"He told me," said Advena, "that he proposed to convert Mr Milburn to the imperial policy."

"He'll have his job cut out for him," said her father.

"For my part," Abby told them, "I think the Milburns are beneath contempt. You don't know exactly what it is, but there's something ABOUT them--not that we ever come in contact with them," she continued with dignity. "I believe they used to be patients of Dr Henry's till he got up in years, but they don't call in Harry."

"Maybe that's what there is about them," said Mr Murchison, innocently.

"Father's made up his mind," announced Dr Harry, and they waited, breathless. There could be only one point upon which Dr Henry could be dubitating at that moment.

"He's going to vote for Lorne."

"He's a lovely old darling!" cried Stella. "Good for Dr Henry Johnson! I knew he would."

The rest were silent with independence and gratification. Dr Henry's Conservatism had been supposed to be invincible. Dr Harry they thought a fair prey to Murchison influence. and he had capitulated early, but he had never promised to answer for his father.

"Yes, he's taken his time about it, and he's consulted about all the known authorities," said his son, humorously. "Went right back to the Manchester school to begin with--sat out on the verandah reading Cobden and Bright the whole summer; if anybody came for advice sent 'em in to me. I did a trade, I tell you! He thought they talked an awful lot of sense, those fellows--from the English point of view. 'D'ye mean to tell me,' he'd say, 'that a generation born and bred in political doctrine of that sort is going to hold on to the colonies at a sacrifice? They'd rather let 'em go at a sacrifice!' Well, then he got to reading the other side of the question, and old Ormiston lent him Parkin, and he lent old Ormiston Goldwin Smith, and then he subscribed to the Times for six months--the bill must have nearly bust him; and then the squire went over without waiting for him and without any assistance from the Times either; and finally--well, he says that if it's good enough business for the people of England it's good enough business for him. Only he keeps on worrying about the people of England, and whether they'll make enough by it to keep them contented, till he can't next month all right, he wants it to be distinctly

understood that family connection has nothing to do with it."

"Of course it hasn't," Advena said.

"But we're just as much obliged," remarked Stella.

"A lot of our church people are going to stay at home election day," declared Abby; "they won't vote for Lorne, and they won't vote against imperialism, so they'll just sulk. Silly, I call it."

"Good enough business for us," said Alec.

"Well, what I want to know is," said Mrs Murchison, "whether you are coming to the church you were born and brought up in, Abby, or not, tonight? There's the first bell."

"I'm not going to any church," said Abby. "I went this morning. I'm going home to my baby."

"Your father and mother," said Mrs Murchison, "can go twice a day, and be none the worse for it. By the way, Father, did you know old Mrs Parr was dead? Died this morning at four o'clock. They telephoned for Dr Drummond, and I think they had little to do, for he had been up with her half the night already, Mrs Forsyth told me."

"Did he go?" asked Mr Murchison.

"He did not, for the very good reason that he knew nothing about it. Mrs Forsyth answered the telephone, and told them he hadn't been two hours in his bed, and she wouldn't get him out again for an unconscious deathbed, and him with bronchitis on him and two sermons to preach today."

"I'll warrant Mrs Forsyth caught it in the morning," said John Murchison.

"That she did. The doctor was as cross as two sticks that she hadn't had him out to answer the phone. 'I just spoke up,' she said, 'and told him I didn't see how he was going to do any good to the poor soul over a telephone wire.' 'It isn't that,' he said, 'but I might have put them on to Peter Fratch for the funeral. We've never had an undertaker in the church before,' he said; 'he's just come, and he ought to be supported. Now I expect it's too late, they'll have gone to Liscombe.' He rang them up right away, but they had."

"Dr Drummond can't stand Liscombe," said Alec, as they all laughed a little at the Doctor's foible, all except Advena, who laughed a great deal. She laughed wildly, then weakly. "I wouldn't--think it a pleasure--to be buried by Liscombe myself!" she cried hysterically, and then laughed again until the tears ran down her face, and she lay back in her chair and moaned, still laughing.

Mr and Mrs Murchison, Alec, Stella, and Advena made up the family party; Oliver, for reasons of his own, would attend the River Avenue Methodist Church that evening. They slipped out presently into a crisp white winter night. The snow was banked on both sides of the street. Spreading garden fir trees huddled together weighted down with it; ragged icicles hung from the eaves or lay in long broken fingers on the trodden paths. The snow snapped and tore under their feet; there was a glorious moon that observed every tattered weed sticking up through the

whiteness, and etched it with its shadow. The town lay under the moon almost dramatic, almost mysterious, so withdrawn it was out of the cold, so turned in upon its own soul of the fireplace. It might have stood, in the snow and the silence, for a shell and a symbol of the humanity within, for angels or other strangers to mark with curiosity. Mr and Mrs Murchison were neither angels nor strangers; they looked at it and saw that the Peterson place was still standing empty, and that old Mr Fisher hadn't finished his new porch before zero weather came to stop him.

The young people were well ahead; Mrs Murchison, on her husband's arm, stepped along with the spring of an impetus undisclosed.

"Is it to be the Doctor tonight?" asked John Murchison. "He was so hoarse this morning I wouldn't be surprised to see Finlay in the pulpit. They're getting only morning services in East Elgin just now, while they're changing the lighting arrangements."

"Are they, indeed? Well, I hope they'll change them and be done with it, for I can't say I'm anxious for too much of their Mr Finlay in Knox Church."

"Oh, you like the man well enough for a change, Mother!" John assured her.

"I've nothing to say against his preaching. It's the fellow himself. And I hope we won't get him tonight for, the way I feel now, if I see him gawking up the pulpit steps it'll be as much as I can do to keep in my seat, and so I just tell you, John."

"You're a little out of patience with him, I see," said Mr Murchison.

"And it would be a good thing if more than me were out of patience with him. There's such a thing as too much patience, I've noticed."

"I dare say," replied her husband, cheerfully.

"If Advena were any daughter of mine she'd have less patience with him."

"She's not much like you," assented the father.

"I must say I like a girl to have a little spirit if a man has none. And before I'd have him coming to the house week after week the way he has, I'd see him far enough."

"He might as well come there as anywhere," Mr Murchison replied, ambiguously. "I suppose he has now and then time on his hands?"

"Well, he won't have it on his hands much longer."

"He won't, eh?"

"No, he won't," Mrs Murchison almost shook the arm she was attached to. "John, I think you might show a little interest! The man's going to be married."

"You don't say that?" John Murchison's tone expressed not only astonishment but concern. Mrs Murchison was almost mollified.

"But I do say it. His future wife is coming here to Elgin next month, she and her aunt, or her grandmother, or somebody, and they're to stay at Dr Drummond's and be married as soon as possible."

"Nonsense," said Mr Murchison, which was his way of expressing simple astonishment.

"There's no nonsense about it. Advena told me herself this afternoon."

"Did she seem put out about it?"

"She's not a girl to show it," Mrs Murchison hedged, "if she was. I just looked at her. 'Well,' I said, 'that's a piece of news. When did you hear it?' I said. 'Oh, I've known it all the winter!' says my lady. What I wanted to say was that for an engaged man he had been pretty liberal with his visits, but she had such a queer look in her eyes I couldn't express myself, somehow."

"It was just as well left unsaid," her husband told her, thoughtfully.

"I'm not so sure," Mrs Murchison retorted. "You're a great man, John, for letting everything alone. When he's been coming here regularly for more than a year, putting ideas into the girl's head--"

"He seems to have told her how things were."

"That's all very well--if he had kept himself to himself at the same time."

"Well, Mother, you know you never thought much of the prospect."

"No, I didn't," Mrs Murchison said. "It wouldn't be me that would be married to him, and I've always said so. But I'd got more or less used to it," she confessed. "The man's well enough in some ways. Dear knows there would be a pair of them--one's as much of a muddler as the other! And anybody can see with half an eye that Advena likes him. It hasn't turned out as I expected, that's a fact, John, and I'm just very much annoyed."

"I'm not best pleased about it myself," said John Murchison, expressing, as usual, a very small proportion of the regret that he felt, "but I suppose they know their own business."

Thus, in their different ways, did these elder ones also acknowledge their helplessness before the advancing event. They could talk of it in private and express their dissatisfaction with it, and that was all they could do. It would not be a matter much further turned over between them at best. They would be shy of any affair of sentiment in terms of speech, and from one that affected a member of the family, self-respect would help to pull them the other way. Mrs Murchison might remember it in the list of things which roused her vain indignation; John Murchison would put it away in the limbo of irremediabiles that were better forgotten. For the present they had reached the church door.

Mrs Murchison saw with relief that Dr Drummond occupied his own pulpit, but if her glance had gone the length of three pews behind her she would have discovered that Hugh Finlay made one of the congregation. Fortunately, perhaps,

for her enjoyment of the service, she did not look round. Dr Drummond was more observing, but his was a position of advantage. In the accustomed sea of faces two, heavy shadowed and obstinately facing fate, swam together before Dr Drummond, and after he had lifted his hands and closed his eyes for the long prayer he saw them still. So that these words occurred, near the end, in the long prayer--

"O Thou Searcher of hearts, who hast known man from the beginning, to whom his highest desires and his loftiest intentions are but as the desires and intentions of a little child, look with Thine own compassion, we beseech Thee, upon souls before Thee in any peculiar difficulty. Our mortal life is full of sin, it is also full of the misconception of virtue. Do Thou clear the understanding, O Lord, of such as would interpret Thy will to their own undoing; do Thou teach them that as happiness may reside in chastening, so chastening may reside in happiness. And though such stand fast to their hurt, do Thou grant to them in Thine own way, which may not be our way, a safe issue out of the dangers that beset them."

Dr Drummond had his own method of reconciling foreordination and free will. To Advena his supplication came with that mysterious double emphasis of chance words that fit. Her thought played upon them all through the sermon, rejecting and rejecting again their application and their argument and the spring of hope in them. She, too, knew that Finlay was in church and, half timidly, she looked back for him, as the congregation filed out again into the winter streets. But he, furious, and more resolved than ever, had gone home by another way.

CHAPTER XXVII

Octavius Milburn was not far beyond the facts when he said that the Elgin Chamber of Commerce was practically solid this time against the Liberal platform, though to what extent this state of things was due to his personal influence might be a matter of opinion. Mr Milburn was President of the Chamber of Commerce, and his name stood for one of the most thriving of Elgin's industries, but he was not a person of influence except as it might be represented in a draft on the Bank of British North America. He had never converted anybody to anything, and never would, possibly because the governing principle of his life was the terror of being converted to anything himself. If an important nonentity is an imaginable thing, perhaps it would stand for Mr Milburn; and he found it a more valuable combination than it may appear, since his importance gave him position and opportunity, and his nonentity saved him from their risks. Certainly he had not imposed his view upon his fellow-members--they would have blown it off like a feather--yet they found themselves much of his mind. Most of them were manufacturing men of the Conservative party, whose factories had been nursed by high duties upon the goods of outsiders, and few even of the Liberals among them felt inclined to abandon this immediate safeguard for a benefit more or less remote, and more or less disputable. John Murchison thought otherwise, and put it in few words as usual. He said he was more concerned to see big prices in British markets for Canadian crops than he was to put big prices on ironware he couldn't sell. He was more afraid of hard times among the farmers of Canada than he was of competition by the manufacturers of England. That is what he said

when he was asked if it didn't go against the grain a little to have to support a son who advocated low duties on British ranges; and when he was not asked he said nothing, disliking the discount that was naturally put upon his opinion. Parsons, of the Blanket Mills, bolted at the first hint of the new policy and justified it by reminding people that he always said he would if it ever looked like business.

"We give their woollen goods a pull of a third as it is," he said, "which is just a third more than I approve of. I don't propose to vote to make it any bigger--can't afford it."

He had some followers, but there were also some, like Young, of the Plough Works, and Windle, who made bicycles, who announced that there was no need to change their politics to defeat a measure that had no existence, and never would have. What sickened them, they declared, was to see young Murchison allowed to give it so much prominence as Liberal doctrine. The party had been strong enough to hold South Fox for the best part of the last twenty years on the old principles, and this British boot-licking feature wasn't going to do it any good. It was fool politics in the opinion of Mr Young and Mr Windle.

Then remained the retail trades, the professions, and the farmers. Both sides could leave out of their counsels the interests of the leisured class, since the leisured class in Elgin consisted almost entirely of persons who were too old to work, and therefore not influential. The landed proprietors were the farmers, when they weren't, alas! the banks. As to the retail men, the prosperity of the stores of Main Street and Market Street was bound up about equally with that of Fox County and the Elgin factories. The lawyers and doctors, the odd surveyors and engineers, were inclined, by their greater detachment, to theories and prejudices, delightful luxuries where a certain rigidity of opinion is dictated by considerations of bread and butter. They made a factor debatable, but small. The farmers had everything to win, nothing to lose. The prospect offered them more for what they had to sell, and less for what they had to buy, and most of them were Liberals already; but the rest had to be convinced, and a political change of heart in a bosom of South Fox was as difficult as any other. Industrial, commercial, professional, agricultural, Lorne Murchison scanned them all hopefully, but Walter Winter felt them his garnered sheaves.

It will be imagined how Mr Winter, as a practical politician, rejoiced in the aspect of things. The fundamental change, with its incalculable chances to play upon, the opening of the gate to admit plain detriment in the first instance for the sake of benefit, easily beclouded, in the second, the effective arm, in the hands of a satirist, of sentiment in politics--and if there was a weapon Mr Winter owned a weakness for it was satire--the whole situation, as he often confessed, suited him down to the ground. He professed himself, though no optimist under any circumstances very well pleased. Only in one other place, he declared, would he have preferred to conduct a campaign at the present moment on the issue involved, though he would have to change his politics to do it there, and that place was England. He cast an envious eye across the ocean at the trenchant argument of the dear loaf; he had no such straight road to the public stomach and grand arbitrator of the fate of empires. If the Liberals in England failed to turn out the Government

over this business, they would lose in his eyes all the respect he ever had for them, which wasn't much, he acknowledged. When his opponents twitted him with discrepancy here, since a bargain so bad for one side could hardly fail to favour the other, he poured all his contempt on the scheme as concocted by damned enthusiasts for the ruin of businessmen of both countries. Such persons, Mr Winter said, if they could have their way, would be happy and satisfied; but in his opinion neither England nor the colonies could afford to please them as much as that. He professed loud contempt for the opinions of the Conservative party organs at Toronto, and stood boldly for his own views. That was what would happen, he declared, in every manufacturing division in the country, if the issue came to be fought in a general election. He was against the scheme, root and branch.

Mr Winter was skilled, practised, and indefatigable. We need not follow him in all his ways and works; a good many of his arguments, I fear, must also escape us. The Elgin Mercury, if consulted, would produce them in daily disclosure; so would the Clayfield Standard. One of these offered a good deal of sympathy to Mayor Winter, the veteran of so many good fights, in being asked to contest South Fox with an opponent who had not so much as a village reeveship to his public credit. If the Conservative candidate felt the damage to his dignity, however, he concealed it.

In Elgin and Clayfield, where factory chimneys had also begun to point the way to enterprise, Winter had a clear field. Official reports gave him figures to prove the great and increasing prosperity of the country, astonishing figures of capital coming in, of emigrants landing, of new lands broken, new mineral regions exploited, new railways projected, of stocks and shares normal safe, assured. He could ask the manufacturers of Elgin to look no further than themselves, which they were quite willing to do, for illustration of the plenty and the promise which reigned in the land from one end to the other. He could tell them that in their own Province more than one hundred new industries had been established in the last year. He could ask them, and he did ask them, whether this was a state of things to disturb with an inrush from British looms and rolling mills, and they told him with applause that it was not.

Country audiences were not open to arguments like these; they were slow in the country, as the Mercury complained, to understand that agricultural prospects were bound up with the prosperity of the towns and cities; they had been especially slow in the country in England, as the Express ironically pointed out, to understand it. So Winter and his supporters asked the farmers of South Fox if they were prepared to believe all they heard of the good will of England to the colonies, with the flattering assumption that they were by no means prepared to believe it. Was it a likely thing, Mr Winter inquired, that the people of Great Britain were going to pay more for their flour and their bacon, their butter and their cheese, than they had any need to do, simply out of a desire to benefit countries which most of them had never seen, and never would see? No, said Mr Winter, they might take it from him, that was not the idea. But Mr Winter thought there was an idea, and that they and he together would not have much trouble in deciphering it. He did not claim to be longer-sighted in politics than any other man, but he thought the present British idea was pretty plain. It was, in two words, to secure the Canadian market for

British goods, and a handsome contribution from the Canadian taxpayer toward the expense of the British army and navy, in return for the offer of favours to food supplies from Canada. But this, as they all knew, was not the first time favours had been offered by the British Government to food supplies from Canada. Just sixty years ago the British Government had felt one of these spasms of benevolence to Canada, and there were men sitting before him who could remember the good will and the gratitude, the hope and the confidence, that greeted Stanley's bill of that year, which admitted Canadian wheat and flour at a nominal duty. Some could remember, and those who could not remember could read; how the farmers and the millers of Ontario took heart and laid out capital, and how money was easy and enterprise was everywhere, and how agricultural towns such as Elgin was at that time sent up streets of shops to accommodate the trade that was to pour in under the new and generous "preference" granted to the Dominion by the mother country. And how long, Mr Winter demanded, swinging round in that pivotal manner which seems assisted by thumbs in the armholes of the waistcoat, how long did the golden illusion last? Precisely three years. In precisely three years the British nation compelled the British Government to adopt the Free Trade Act of '46. The wheat of the world flowed into every port in England, and the hopes of Canada, especially the hopes of Ontario, based then, as now, on "preferential" treatment, were blasted to the root. Enterprise was laid flat, mortgages were foreclosed, shops were left empty, the milling and forwarding interests were temporarily ruined, and the Governor-General actually wrote to the Secretary of State in England that things were so bad that not a shilling could be raised on the credit of the Province.

Now Mr Winter did not blame the people of England for insisting on free food. It was the policy that suited their interests, and they had just as good a right to look after their interests, he conceded handsomely, as anybody else. But he did blame the British Government for holding out hopes, for making definite pledges, to a young and struggling nation, which they must have known they would not be able to redeem. He blamed their action then, and he would blame it now, if the opportunity were given to them to repeat it, for the opportunity would pass and the pledge would pass into the happy hunting ground of unrealizable politics, but not--and Mr Winter asked his listeners to mark this very carefully--not until Canada was committed to such relations of trade and taxes with the Imperial Government as would require the most heroic efforts--it might run to a war--to extricate herself from. In plain words, Mr Winter assured his country audiences, Great Britain had sold them before, and she would sell them again. He stood there before them as loyal to British connection as any man. He addressed a public as loyal to British connection as any public. BUT--once bitten twice shy.

Horace Williams might riddle such arguments from end to end in the next day's Express, but if there is a thing that we enjoy in the country, it is having the dodges of Government shown up with ignominy, and Mr Winter found his account in this historic parallel.

Nothing could have been more serious in public than his line of defence against the danger that menaced, but in friendly ears Mr Winter derided it as a practical possibility, like the Liberals, Young and Windle.

"It seems to me," he said, talking to Octavius Milburn, "that the important thing at present is the party attitude to the disposition of Crown lands and to Government-made railways. As for this racket of Wallingham's, it has about as much in it as an empty bun-bag. He's running round taking a lot of satisfaction blowing it out just now, and the swells over there are clapping like anything, but the first knock will show that it's just a bun-bag, with a hole in it."

"Folks in the old country are solid on the buns, though," said Milburn as they parted, and Alfred Hesketh, who was walking with his host, said--"It's bound in the end to get down to that, isn't it?"

Presently Hesketh came back to it.

"Quaint idea, that--describing Wallingham's policy as a bun-bag," he said, and laughed. "Winter is an amusing fellow."

"Wallingham's policy won't even be a bun-bag much longer," said Milburn. "It won't be anything at all. Imperial union is very nice to talk about, but when you come down to hard fact it's Australia for the Australians, Canada for the Canadians, Africa for the Africans, every time."

"Each for himself, and devil take the hindmost," said Hesketh; "and when the hindmost is England, as our friend Murchison declares it will be--"

"So much the worse for England," said Milburn, amiably. "But we should all be sorry to see it and, for my part, I don't believe such a thing is at all likely. And you may be certain of one thing," he continued, impressively: "No flag but the Union Jack will ever wave over Canada."

"Oh, I'm sure of that!" Hesketh responded. "Since I have heard more of your side of the question I am quite convinced that loyalty to England and complete commercial independence--I might say even commercial antagonism--may exist together in the colonies. It seems paradoxical, but it is true."

Mr Hesketh had naturally been hearing a good deal more of Mr Milburn's side of the question, staying as he was under Mr Milburn's hospitable roof. It had taken the least persuasion in the world to induce him to make the Milburns a visit. He found them delightful people. He described them in his letters home as the most typically Canadian family he had met, quite simple and unconventional, but thoroughly warm-hearted, and touchingly devoted to far-away England. Politically he could not see eye to eye with Mr Milburn, but he could quite perceive Mr Milburn's grounds for the view he held. One thing, he explained to his correspondents, you learned at once by visiting the colonies, and that was to make allowance for local conditions, both social and economic.

He and Mr Milburn had long serious discussions, staying behind in the dining-room to have them after tea, when the ladies took their fancy work into the drawing-room, and Dora's light touch was heard upon the piano. It may be supposed that Hesketh brought every argument forward in favour of the great departure that had been conceived in England; he certainly succeeded in interesting his host very deeply in the English point of view. He had, however, to encounter one that was made in Canada--it resided in Mr Milburn as a stone might reside in a bag

of wool. Mr Milburn wouldn't say that this preference trade idea, if practicable, might not work out for the benefit of the Empire as a whole. That was a thing he didn't pretend to know. But it wouldn't work out for his benefit that was a thing he did know. When a man was confronted with a big political change the question he naturally asked himself was, "Is it going to be worth my while?" and he acted on the answer to that question. He was able to explain to Hesketh, by a variety of facts and figures, of fascinating interest to the inquiring mind, just how and where such a concern as the Milburn Boiler Company would be "hit" by the new policy, after which he asked his guest fairly, "Now, if you were in my shoes, would you see your way to voting for any such thing?"

"If I were in your shoes," said Hesketh, thoughtfully, "I can't say I would."

On grounds of sentiment, Octavius assured him, they were absolutely at one, but in practical matters a man had to proceed on business principles. He went about at this time expressing great esteem for Hesketh's capacity to assimilate facts. His opportunity to assimilate them was not curtailed by any further demand for his services in the South Fox campaign. He was as willing as ever, he told Lorne Murchison, to enlist under the flag, and not for the first time; but Murchison and Farquharson, and that lot, while grateful for the offer, seemed never quite able to avail themselves of it: the fact was all the dates were pretty well taken up. No doubt, Hesketh acknowledged, the work could be done best by men familiar with the local conditions, but he could not avoid the conviction that this attitude toward proffered help was very like dangerous trifling. Possibly these circumstances gave him an added impartiality for Mr Milburn's facts. As the winter advanced his enthusiasm for the country increased with his intelligent appreciation of the possibilities of the Elgin boiler. The Elgin boiler was his object-lesson in the development of the colonies; he paid, several visits to the works to study it, and several times he thanked Mr Milburn for the opportunity of familiarizing himself with such an important and promising branch of Canadian industry.

"It looks," said Octavius one evening in early February, "as if the Grits were getting a little anxious about South Fox--high time, too. I see Cruickshank is down to speak at Clayfield on the seventh, and Tellier is to be here for the big meeting at the opera house on the eleventh."

"Tellier is Minister of Public Works, isn't he?" asked Hesketh.

"Yes--and Cruickshank is an ex-Minister," replied Mr Milburn. "Looks pretty shaky when they've got to take men like that away from their work in the middle of the session."

"I shall be glad," remarked his daughter Dora, "when this horrid election is over. It spoils everything."

She spoke a little fretfully. The election and the matters it involved did interfere a good deal with her interest in life. As an occupation it absorbed Lorne Murchison even more completely than she occasionally desired; and as a topic it took up a larger share of the attention of Mr Alfred Hesketh than she thought either reasonable or

pleasing. Between politics and boilers Miss Milburn almost felt at times that the world held a second place for her.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The progress of Mrs Kilbannon and Miss Christie Cameron up the river to Montreal, and so west to Elgin, was one series of surprises, most of them pleasant and instructive to such a pair of intelligent Scotchwomen, if we leave out the number of Roman Catholic churches that lift their special symbol along the banks of the St Lawrence and the fact that Hugh Finlay was not in Elgin to meet them upon their arrival. Dr Drummond, of course, was there at the station to explain. Finlay had been obliged to leave for Winnipeg only the day before, to attend a mission conference in place of a delegate who had been suddenly laid aside by serious illness. Finlay, he said, had been very loath to go, but there were many reasons why it was imperative that he should; Dr Drummond explained them all. "I insisted on it," he assured them, frankly. "I told him I would take the responsibility."

He seemed very capable of taking it, both the ladies must have thought, with his quick orders about the luggage and his waiting cab. Mrs Kilbannon said so. "I'm sure," she told him, "we are better off with you than with Hugh. He was always a daft dependence at a railway station."

They both--Mrs Kilbannon and Dr Drummond--looked out of the corners of their eyes, so to speak, at Christie, the only one who might be expected to show any sensitiveness; but Miss Cameron accepted the explanation with readiness. Indeed, she said, she would have been real vexed if Mr Finlay had stayed behind on her account--she showed herself well aware of the importance of a nomination, and the desirability of responding to it.

"It will just give me an opportunity of seeing the town," she said, looking at it through the cab windows as they drove; and Dr Drummond had to admit that she seemed a sensible creature. Other things being equal, Finlay might be doing very well for himself. As they talked of Scotland--it transpired that Dr Drummond knew all the braes about Bross as a boy--he found himself more than ever annoyed with Finlay about the inequality of other things; and when they passed Knox Church and Miss Cameron told him she hadn't realized it was so imposing an edifice, he felt downright sorry for the woman.

Dr Drummond had persuaded Finlay to go to Winnipeg with a vague hope that something, in the fortnight's grace thus provided, might be induced to happen. The form it oftenest took to his imagination was Miss Christie's announcement, when she set foot upon the station platform, that she had become engaged, on the way over, to somebody else, some fellow-traveller. Such things, Dr Drummond knew, did come about, usually bringing distress and discomfiture in their train. Why, then, should they not happen when all the consequences would be rejoicing?

It was plain enough, however, that nothing of the kind had come to pass. Miss Christie had arrived in Elgin, bringing her affections intact; they might have been in any one of her portmanteaux. She had come with definite calm intention, precisely in the guise in which she should have been expected. At the very hour, in the very clothes,

she was there. Robust and pleasant, with a practical eye on her promising future, she had arrived, the fulfilment of despair. Dr Drummond looked at her with acquiescence, half-cowed, half-comic, wondering at his own folly in dreaming of anything else. Miss Cameron brought the situation, as it were, with her; it had to be faced, and Dr Drummond faced it like a philosopher. She was the material necessity, the fact in the case, the substantiation of her own legend; and Dr Drummond promptly gave her all the consideration she demanded in this aspect. Already he heard himself pronouncing a blessing over the pair--and they would make the best of it. With characteristic dispatch he decided that the marriage should take place the first Monday after Finlay's return. That would give them time to take a day or two in Toronto, perhaps, and get back for Finlay's Wednesday prayer meeting. "Or I could take it off his hands," said Dr Drummond to himself. "That would free them till the end of the week." Solitude increased in him that the best should be made of it; after all, for a long time they had been making the worst. Mrs Forsyth, whom it had been necessary to inform when Mrs Kilbannon and Miss Cameron became actually imminent, saw plainly that the future Mrs Finlay had made a very good impression on the Doctor; and as nature, in Mrs Forsyth's case, was more powerful than grace, she became critical accordingly. Still, she was an honest soul: she found more fault with what she called Miss Cameron's "shirt-waists" than with Miss Cameron herself, whom she didn't doubt to be a good woman though she would never see thirty-five again. Time and observation would no doubt mend or remodel the shirt-waists; and meanwhile both they and Miss Cameron would do very well for East Elgin, Mrs Forsyth avowed. Mrs Kilbannon, definitely given over to caps and curls as they still wear them in Bross, Mrs Forsyth at once formed a great opinion of. She might be something, Mrs Forsyth thought, out of a novel by Mr Crockett, and made you long to go to Scotland, where presumably everyone was like her. On the whole the ladies from Bross profited rather than lost by the new frame they stepped into in the house of Dr Drummond, of Elgin, Ontario. Their special virtues, of dignity and solidity and frugality, stood out saliently against the ease and unconstraint about them; in the profusion of the table it was little less than edifying to hear Mrs Kilbannon, invited to preserves, say, "Thank you, I have butter." It was the pleasantest spectacle, happily common enough, of the world's greatest inheritance. We see it in immigrants of all degrees, and we may perceive it in Miss Cameron and Mrs Kilbannon. They come in couples and in companies from those little imperial islands, bringing the crusted qualities of the old blood bottled there so long, and sink with grateful absorption into the wide bountiful stretches of the further countries. They have much to take, but they give themselves; and so it comes about that the Empire is summed up in the race, and the flag flies for its ideals.

Mrs Forsyth had been told of the approaching event; but neither Dr Drummond, who was not fond of making communications he did not approve of, nor the Murchisons, who were shy of the matter as a queer business which Advena seemed too much mixed up with, had mentioned it to anyone else. Finlay himself had no intimates, and moved into his new house in River Street under little comment. His doings excited small surprise, because the town knew too little about him to expect him to do one thing more than another. He was very significant among his people, very important in their lives but not, somehow, at any expense to his private self. He knew them, but

they did not know him; and it is high praise of him that this was no grievance among them. They would tell you without resentment that the minister was a "very reserved" man; there might be even a touch of proper pride in it. The worshippers of Knox Church mission were rather a reserved lot themselves. It was different with the Methodists; plenty of expansion there.

Elgin, therefore, knew nothing, beyond the fact that Dr Drummond had two ladies from the old country staying with him, about whom particular curiosity would hardly be expected outside of Knox Church. In view of Finlay's absence, Dr Drummond, consulting with Mrs Kilbannon, decided that for the present Elgin need not be further informed. There was no need, they agreed, to give people occasion to talk; and it would just be a nuisance to have to make so many explanations. Both Mrs Kilbannon and her niece belonged to the race that takes great satisfaction in keeping its own counsel. Their situation gained for them the further interest that nothing need be said about it; and the added importance of caution was plainly to be discerned in their bearing, even toward one another. It was a portentous business, this of marrying a minister, under the most ordinary circumstances, not to be lightly dealt with, and even more of an undertaking in a far new country where the very wind blew differently, and the extraordinary freedom of conversation made it more than ever necessary to take heed to what you were saying. So far as Miss Cameron and Mrs Kilbannon were aware, the matter had not been "spoken of" elsewhere at all. Dr Drummond, remembering Advena Murchison's acquaintance with it, had felt the weight of a complication, and had discreetly held his tongue. Mrs Kilbannon approved her nephew in this connection. "Hugh," she said, "was never one to let on more than necessary." It was a fine secret between Hugh, in Winnipeg, whence he had written all that was lawful or desirable, and themselves at Dr Drummond's. Miss Cameron said it would give her more freedom to look about her.

In the midst of all this security, and on the very first day after their arrival, it was disconcerting to be told that a lady, whose name they had never heard before, had called to see Miss Cameron and Mrs Kilbannon. They had not even appeared at church, as they told one another with dubious glances. They had no reason whatever to expect visitors. Dr Drummond was in the cemetery burying a member; Mrs Forsyth was also abroad. "Now who in the world," asked Mrs Kilbannon of Miss Cameron, "is Miss Murchison?"

"They come to our church," said Sarah, in the door. "They've got the foundry. It's the oldest one. She teaches."

Sarah in the door was even more disconcerting than an unexpected visitor. Sarah invariably took them off their guard, in the door or anywhere. She freely invited their criticism, but they would not have known how to mend her. They looked at her now helplessly, and Mrs Kilbannon said, "Very well. We will be down directly."

"It may be just some friendly body," she said, as they descended the stairs together, "or it may be common curiosity. In that case we'll disappoint it."

Whatever they expected, therefore, it was not Advena. It was not a tall young woman with expressive eyes, a manner which was at once abrupt and easy, and rather a lounging

way of occupying the corner of a sofa. "When she sat down," as Mrs Kilbannon said afterward, "she seemed to untie and fling herself as you might a parcel." Neither Mrs Kilbannon nor Christie Cameron could possibly be untied or flung, so perhaps they gave this capacity in Advena more importance than it had. But it was only a part of what was to them a new human demonstration, something to inspect very carefully and accept very cautiously--the product, like themselves, yet so suspiciously different, of these free airs and these astonishingly large ideas. In some ways, as she sat there in her graceful dress and careless attitude, asking them direct smiling questions about their voyage, she imposed herself as of the class whom both these ladies of Bross would acknowledge unquestioningly to be "above" them; in others she seemed to be of no class at all; so far she came short of small standards of speech and behaviour. The ladies from Bross, more and more confused, grew more and more reticent, when suddenly, out of a simple remark of Miss Cameron's about missing in the train the hot-water cans they gave you "to your feet" in Scotland, reticence descended upon Miss Murchison also. She sat in an odd silence, looking at Miss Cameron, absorbed apparently in the need of looking at her, finding nothing to say, her flow of pleasant inquiry dried up, and all her soul at work, instead, to perceive the woman. Mrs Kilbannon was beginning to think better of her--it was so much more natural to be a little backward with strangers--when the moment passed. Their visitor drew herself out of it with almost a perceptible effort, and seemed to glance consideringly at them in their aloofness, their incommunicativeness, their plain odds with her. I don't know what she expected; but we may assume that she was there simply to offer herself up, and the impulse of sacrifice seldom considers whether or not it may be understood. It was to her a normal, natural thing that a friend of Hugh Finlay's should bring an early welcome to his bride; and to do the normal, natural thing at keen personal cost was to sound that depth, or rise to that height of the spirit where pain sustains. We know of Advena that she was prone to this form of exaltation. Those who feel themselves capable may pronounce whether she would have been better at home crying in her bedroom.

She decided badly--how could she decide well?--on what she would say to explain herself.

"I am so sorry," she told them, "that Mr Finlay is obliged to be away."

It was quite wrong; it assumed too much, her knowledge and their confidence, and the propriety of discussing Mr Finlay's absence. There was even an unconscious hint of another kind of assumption in it--a suggestion of apology for Mr Finlay. Advena was aware of it even as it left her lips, and the perception covered her with a damning blush. She had a sudden terrified misgiving that her role was too high for her, that she had already cracked her mask. But she looked quietly at Miss Cameron and smiled across the tide that surged in her as she added, "He was very distressed at having to go."

They looked at her in an instant's blank astonishment. Miss Cameron opened her lips and closed them again, glancing at Mrs Kilbannon. They fell back together, but not in disorder. This was something much more formidable than common curiosity. Just what it was they would consider later; meanwhile Mrs Kilbannon responded with what she would have called cool civility.

"Perhaps you have heard that Mr Finlay is my nephew?" she said.

"Indeed I have. Mr Finlay has told me a great deal about you, Mrs Kilbannon, and about his life at Bross," Advena replied. "And he has told me about you, too," she went on, turning to Christie Cameron.

"Indeed?" said she.

"Oh, a long time ago. He has been looking forward to your arrival for some months, hasn't he?"

"We took our passages in December," said Miss Cameron.

"And you are to be married almost immediately, are you not?" Miss Murchison continued, pleasantly.

Mrs Kilbannon had an inspiration. "Could he by any means have had the banns cried?" she demanded of Christie, who looked piercingly at their visitor for the answer.

"Oh, no," Advena laughed softly. "Presbyterians haven't that custom over here--does it still exist anywhere? Mr Finlay told me himself."

"Has he informed all his acquaintances?" asked Mrs Kilbannon. "We thought maybe his elders would be expecting to hear, or his Board of Management. Or he might have just dropped a word to his Sessions Clerk. But--"

Advena shook her head. "I think it unlikely," she said.

"Then why would he be telling you?" inquired the elder lady, bluntly.

"He told me, I suppose, because I have the honour to be a friend of his," Advena said, smiling. "But he is not a man, is he, who makes many friends? It is possible, I dare say, that he has mentioned it to no one else."

Poor Advena! She had indeed uttered her ideal to unsympathetic ears--brought her pig, as her father would have said, to the wrong market. She sat before the ladies from Bross, Hugh Finlay's only confidante. She sat handsome and upheld and not altogether penetrable, a kind of gipsy to their understanding, though indeed the Romany strain in her was beyond any divining of theirs. They, on their part, reposed in their clothes with all their bristles out--what else could have been expected of them?--convinced in their own minds that they had come not only to a growing but to a forward country.

Mrs Kilbannon was perhaps a little severe. "I wonder that we have not heard of you, Miss Murchison," said she, "but we are happy to make the acquaintance of any of my nephew's friends. You will have heard him preach, perhaps?"

"Often," said Advena, rising. "We have no one here who can compare with him in preaching. There was very little reason why you should have heard of me. I am--of no importance." She hesitated and fought for an instant with a trembling of the lip. "But now that you have been persuaded to be a part of our life here," she said to Christie, "I thought I would like to come and offer you my friendship because it is his already. I hope--so much--that you will be happy here. It is a nice little place. And I want you to let me help you--about your

house, and in every way that is possible. I am sure I can be of use." She paused and looked at their still half-hostile faces. "I hope," she faltered, "you don't mind my--having come?"

"Not at all," said Christie, and Mrs Kilbannon added, "I'm sure you mean it very kindly."

A flash of the comedy of it shot up in Advena's eyes. "Yes," she said, "I do. Good-bye."

If they had followed her departure they would have been further confounded to see her walk not quite steadily away; shaken with fantastic laughter. They looked instead at one another, as if to find the solution of the mystery where indeed it lay, in themselves.

"She doesn't even belong to his congregation," said Christie. "Just a friend," she said.

"I expect the friendship's mostly upon her side," remarked Mrs Kilbannon. "She seemed frank enough about it. But I would see no necessity for encouraging her friendship on my own account, if I were in your place, Christie."

"I think I'll manage without it," said Christie.

CHAPTER XXIX

The South Fox fight was almost over. Three days only remained before the polling booths would be open, and the voters of the towns of Elgin and Clayfield and the surrounding townships would once again be invited to make their choice between a Liberal and a Conservative representative of the district in the Dominion House of Commons. The ground had never been more completely covered, every inch of advantage more stubbornly held, by either side, in the political history of the riding. There was no doubt of the hope that sat behind the deprecation in Walter Winter's eye, nor of the anxiety that showed through the confidence freely expressed by the Liberal leaders. The issue would be no foregone conclusion, as it had been practically any time within the last eleven years; and as Horace Williams remarked to the select lot that met pretty frequently at the Express office for consultation and rally, they had "no use for any sort of carelessness."

It was undeniably felt that the new idea, the great idea whose putative fatherhood in Canada certainly lay at the door of the Liberal party, had drawn in fewer supporters than might have been expected. In England Wallingham, wearing it like a medal, seemed to be courting political excommunication with it, except that Wallingham was so hard to effectively curse. The ex-Minister deserved, clearly, any ban that could be put upon him. No sort of remonstrance could hold him from going about openly and persistently exhorting people to "think imperially," a liberty which, as is well known, the Holy Cobdenite Church, supreme in those islands, expressly forbids. Wallingham appeared to think that by teaching and explaining he could help his fellow-islanders to see further than the length of their fists, and exorcise from them the spirit, only a century and a quarter older and a trifle more sophisticated, that lost them the American colonies. But so far little had transpired to show that Wallingham

was stronger than nature and destiny. There had been Wallingham meetings of remarkable enthusiasm; his supporters called them epoch-making, as if epochs were made of cheers. But the workingman of Great Britain was declaring stolidly in the by-elections against any favour to colonial produce at his expense, thereby showing himself one of those humble instruments that Providence uses for the downfall of arrogant empires. It will be thus, no doubt, that the workingman will explain in the future his eminent usefulness to the government of his country, and it will be in these terms that the cost of educating him by means of the ballot will be demonstrated. Meanwhile we may look on and cultivate philosophy; or we may make war upon the gods with Mr Wallingham which is, perhaps, the better part.

That, to turn from recrimination, was what they saw in Canada looking across--the queerest thing of all was the recalcitrance of the farm labourer; they could only stare at that--and it may be that the spectacle was depressing to hopeful initiative. At all events, it was plain that the new policy was suffering from a certain flatness on the further side. As a ballon d'essai it lacked buoyancy; and no doubt Mr Farquharson was right in declaring that above all things it lacked actuality, business--the proposition, in good set terms, for men to turn over, to accept or reject. Nothing could be done with it, Mr Farquharson averred, as a mere prospect; it was useful only to its enemies. We of the young countries must be invited to deeds, not theories, of which we have a restless impatience; and this particular theory, though of golden promise, was beginning to recoil to some extent, upon the cause which had been confident enough to adopt it before it could be translated into action and its hard equivalent. The Elgin Mercury probably overstated the matter when it said that the Grits were dead sick of the preference they would never get; but Horace Williams was quite within the mark when he advised Lorne to stick to old Reform principles--clean administration, generous railway policy, sympathetic labour legislation, and freeze himself a little on imperial love and attachment.

"They're not so sweet on it in Ottawa as they were, by a long chalk," he said. "Look at the Premier's speech to the Chambers of Commerce in Montreal. Pretty plain statement that, of a few things the British Government needn't expect."

"Oh, I don't know," said Lorne. "He was talking to manufacturers, you know, a pretty skittish lot anywhere. It sounded independent, but if you look into it you won't find it gave the cause away any."

"The old man's got to think of Quebec, where his fat little majority lives," remarked Bingham, chairman of the most difficult subdivision in the town. "The Premier of this country drives a team, you know."

"Yes," said Lorne, "but he drives it tandem, and Johnny Francois is the second horse."

"Maybe so," returned Mr Williams, "but the organ's singing pretty small, too. Look at this." He picked up the Dominion from the office table and read aloud: "'If Great Britain wishes to do a deal with the colonies she will find them willing to meet her in a spirit of fairness and enthusiasm. But it is for her to decide, and Canada would be the last to force her bread down the throat of the British labourer at a higher price than he can afford to pay for it.' What's that, my boy? Is it high-mindedness? No, sir, it's

lukewarmness. "

"The Dominion makes me sick," said young Murchison. "It's so scared of the Tory source of the scheme in England that it's handing the whole boom of the biggest chance this country ever had over to the Tories here. If anything will help us to lose it that will. No Conservative Government in Canada can put through a cent of preference on English goods when it comes to the touch, and they know it. They're full of loyalty just now--baying the moon--but if anybody opens a window they'll turn tail fast enough."

"I guess the Dominion knows it, too," said Mr Williams. "When Great Britain is quite sure she's ready to do business on preference lines it's the Liberal party on this side she'll have to talk to. No use showing ourselves too anxious, you know. Besides, it might do harm over there. We're all right; we're on record. Wallingham knows as well as we do the lines we're open on--he's heard them from Canadian Liberals more than once. When they get good and ready they can let us know."

"Jolly them up with it at your meetings by all means," advised Bingham, "but use it as a kind of superfluous taffy; don't make it your main lay-out."

The Reform Association of South Fox had no more energetic officer than Bingham, though as he sat on the edge of the editorial table chewing portions of the margin of that afternoon's Express, and drawling out maxims to the Liberal candidate, you might not have thought so. He was explaining that he had been in this business for years, and had never had a job that gave him so much trouble.

"We'll win out," he said, "but the canvass isn't any Christmas joy--not this time. There's Jim Whelan," he told them. "We all know what Jim is--a Tory from way back, where they make 'em so they last, and a soaker from way back, too; one day on his job and two days sleepin' off his whiskey. Now we don't need Jim Whelan's vote, never did need it, but the boys have generally been able to see that one of those two days was election day. There's no necessity for Jim's putting in his paper--a character like that--no necessity at all--he'd much better be comfortable in bed. This time, I'm darned if the old boozier hasn't sworn off! Tells the boys he's on to their game, and there's no liquor in this town that's good enough to get him to lose his vote--wouldn't get drunk on champagne. He's held out for ten days already, and it looks like Winter'd take his cross all right on Thursday."

"I guess I'd let him have it, Bingham," said Lorne Murchison with a kind of tolerant deprecation, void of offence, the only manner in which he knew how to convey disapproval to the older man. "The boys in your division are a pretty tough lot, anyhow. We don't want the other side getting hold of any monkey tricks."

"It's necessary to win this election, young man," said Bingham, "lawfully. You won't have any trouble with my bunch."

It was not, as will be imagined, the first discussion, so late in the day, of the value of the preference trade argument to the Liberal campaign. They had all realized, after the first few weeks, that their young candidate was a trifle overbitten with it, though remonstrance had been a good deal curbed by Murchison's treatment of it.

When he had brought it forward at the late fall fairs and in the lonely country schoolhouses, his talk had been so trenchant, so vivid and pictorial, that the gathered farmers listened with open mouths, like children, pathetically used with life, to a grown-up fairy tale. As Horace Williams said, if a dead horse could be made to go this one would have brought Murchison romping in. And Lorne had taken heed to the counsel of his party leaders. At joint meetings, which offered the enemy his best opportunity for travesty and derision, he had left it in the background of debate, devoting himself to arguments of more immediate utility. In the literature of the campaign it glowed with prospective benefit, but vaguely, like a halo of Liberal conception and possible achievement, waiting for the word from overseas. The Express still approved it, but not in headlines, and wished the fact to be widely understood that while the imperial idea was a very big idea, the Liberals of South Fox were going to win this election without any assistance from it.

Lorne submitted. After all, victory was the thing. There could be no conquest for the idea without the party triumph first. He submitted, but his heart rebelled. He looked over the subdivisional reports with Williams and Farquharson, and gave ear to their warning interpretations; but his heart was an optimist, and turned always to the splendid projection upon the future that was so incomparably the title to success of those who would unite to further it. His mind accepted the old working formulas for dealing with an average electorate, but to his eager apprehending heart it seemed unbelievable that the great imperial possibility, the dramatic chance for the race that hung even now, in the history of the world, between the rising and the setting of the sun, should fail to be perceived and acknowledged as the paramount issue, the contingency which made the by-election of South Fox an extraordinary and momentous affair. He believed in the Idea; he saw it, with Wallingham, not only a glorious prospect, but an educative force; and never had he a moment of such despondency that it confounded him upon his horizon in the faded colours of some old Elizabethan mirage.

The opera house, the night of Mr Murchison's final address to the electors of South Fox, was packed from floor to ceiling, and a large and patient overflow made the best of the hearing accommodation of the corridors and the foyer. A Minister was to speak, Sir Matthew Tellier, who held the portfolio of Public Works; and for drawing a crowd in Elgin there was nothing to compare with a member of the Government. He was the sum of all ambition and the centre of all importance; he was held to have achieved in the loftiest sense, and probably because he deserved to; a kind of afflatus sat upon him. They paid him real deference and they flocked to hear him. Cruickshank was a second attraction; and Lorne himself, even at this stage of the proceedings, "drew" without abatement. They knew young Murchison well enough; he had gone in and out among them all his life; yet since he had come before them in this new capacity a curious interest had gathered about him. People looked at him as if he had developed something they did not understand, and perhaps he had; he was in touch with the Idea. They listened with an intense personal interest in him which, no doubt, went to obscure what he said: perhaps a less absorbing personality would have carried the Idea further. However, they did look and listen--that was the main point, and on their last opportunity they were in the opera house in great numbers.

Lorne faced them with an enviable security; the friendliness of the meeting was in the air. The gathering was almost entirely of one political complexion: the Conservatives of the town would have been glad enough to turn out to hear Minister Tellier; but the Liberals were of no mind to gratify them at the cost of having to stand themselves, and were on hand early to assert a prior moral claim to chairs. In the seated throng Lorne could pick out the fine head of his father, and his mother's face, bright with anticipation, beside. Advena was there, too, and Stella; and the boys would have a perch, not too conspicuous, somewhere in the gallery. Dr Drummond was in the second row, and a couple of strange ladies with him: he was chuckling with uncommon humour at some remark of the younger one when Lorne noted him. Old Sandy MacQuhot was in a good place; had been since six o'clock, and Peter Macfarlane, too, for that matter, though Peter sat away back as be seemed a modest functionary whose business was with the book and the bell. Altogether, as Horace Williams leaned over to tell him, it was like a Knox Church sociable--he could feel completely at home; and though the audience was by no means confined to Knox Church, Lorne did feel at home. Dora Milburn's countenance he might perhaps have missed, but Dora was absent by arrangement. Mr Milburn, as the fight went on, had shown himself so increasingly bitter, to the point of writing letters in the Mercury attacking Wallingham and the Liberal leaders of South Fox, that his daughter felt an insurmountable delicacy in attending even Lorne's "big meeting." Alfred Hesketh meant to have gone, but it was ten by the Milburns' drawing-room clock before he remembered. Miss Filkin actually did go, and brought home a great report of it. Miss Filkin would no more have missed a Minister than she would a bishop; but she was the only one.

Lorne had prepared for this occasion for a long time. It was certain to come, the day of the supreme effort, when he should make his final appeal under the most favourable circumstances that could be devised, when the harassing work of the campaign would be behind him, and nothing would remain but the luxury of one last strenuous call to arms. The glory of that anticipation had been with him from the beginning; and in the beginning he saw his great moment only in one character. For weeks, while he plodded through the details of the benefits South Fox had received and might expect to receive at the hands of the Liberal party, he privately stored argument on argument, piled phrase on phrase, still further to advance and defend the imperial unity of his vision on this certain and special opportunity. His jihad it would be, for the faith and purpose of his race; so he scanned it and heard it, with conviction hot in him, and impulse strong, and intention noble. Then uneasiness had arisen, as we know; and under steady pressure he had daily drawn himself from these high intentions, persuaded by Bingham and the rest that they were not yet "in shape" to talk about. So that his address on this memorable evening would have a different stamp from the one he designed in the early burning hours of his candidature. He had postponed those matters, under advice, to the hour of practical dealing, when a Government which it would be his privilege to support would consider and carry them. He put the notes of his original speech away in his office desk with solicitude--it was indeed very thorough, a grand marshalling of the facts and review of the principles involved--and pigeonholed it in the chambers of his mind, with the good hope to bring it forth another day. Then he

devoted his attention to the history of Liberalism in Fox County--both ridings were solid--and it was upon the history of Liberalism in Fox County, its triumphs and its fruits, that he embarked so easily and so assuredly, when he opened his address in the opera house that Tuesday night.

Who knows at what suggestion, or even precisely at what moment, the fabric of his sincere intention fell away? Bingham does not; Mr Farquharson has the vaguest idea; Dr Drummond declares that he expected it from the beginning, but is totally unable to say why. I can get nothing more out of them, though they were all there, though they all saw him, indeed a dramatic figure, standing for the youth and energy of the old blood, and heard him, as he slipped away into his great preoccupation, as he made what Bingham called his "bad break." His very confidence may have accounted for it; he was off guard against the enemy, and the more completely off guard against himself. The history of Liberalism in Fox County offered, no doubt, some inlet to the rush of the Idea; for suddenly, Mr Farquharson says, he was "off." Mr Farquharson was on the platform, and "I can tell you," said he, "I pricked up my ears." They all did; the Idea came in upon such a personal note.

"I claim it my great good fortune," the young man was suddenly telling them, in a note of curious gravity and concentration, "and however the fight goes, I shall always claim it my great good fortune to have been identified, at a critical moment, with the political principles that are ennobled in this country by the imperialistic aim. An intention, a great purpose in the endless construction and reconstruction of the world, will choose its own agency; and the imperial design in Canada has chosen the Liberal party, because the Liberal party in this country is the party of the soil, the land, the nation as it springs from that which makes it a nation; and imperialism is intensely and supremely a national affair. Ours is the policy of the fields. We stand for the wheat-belt and the stockyard, the forest and the mine, as the basic interests of the country. We stand for the principles that make for nation-building by the slow sweet processes of the earth, cultivating the individual rooted man who draws his essence and his tissues from the soil and so, by unhurried, natural, healthy growth, labour sweating his vices out of him, forms the character of the commonwealth, the foundation of the State. So the imperial idea seeks its Canadian home in Liberal councils. The imperial idea is far-sighted. England has outlived her own body. Apart from her heart and her history, England is an area where certain trades are carried on--still carried on. In the scrolls of the future it is already written that the centre of the Empire must shift--and where, if not to Canada?"

There was a half-comprehending burst of applause, Dr Drummond's the first clap. It was a curious change from the simple colloquial manner in which young Murchison had begun and to which the audience were accustomed; and on this account probably they stamped the harder. They applauded Lorne himself; something from him infected them; they applauded being made to feel like that. They would clap first and consider afterward. John Murchison smiled with pleasure, but shook his head. Bingham, doubled up and clapping like a repeating rifle, groaned aloud under cover of it to Horace Williams: "Oh, the darned kid!"

"A certain Liberal peer of blessed political memory," Lorne continued, with a humorous twist of his mouth, "on

one of those graceful, elegant, academic occasions which offer political peers such happy opportunities of getting in their work over there, had lately a vision which he described to his university audience of what might have happened if the American colonies had remained faithful to Great Britain--a vision of monarch and Ministers, Government and Parliament, departing solemnly for the other hemisphere. They did not so remain; so the noble peer may conjure up his vision or dismiss his nightmare as he chooses; and it is safe to prophesy that no port of the United States will see that entry. But, remembering that the greater half of the continent did remain faithful, the northern and strenuous half, destined to move with sure steps and steady mind to greater growth and higher place among the nations than any of us can now imagine--would it be as safe to prophesy that such a momentous sailing-day will never be more than the after-dinner fantasy of aristocratic rhetoric? Is it not at least as easy to imagine that even now, while the people of England send their viceroys to the ends of the earth, and vote careless millions for a reconstructed army, and sit in the wrecks of Cabinets disputing whether they will eat our bread or the stranger's, the sails may be filling, in the far harbour of time which will bear their descendants to a representative share of the duties and responsibilities of Empire in the capital of the Dominion of Canada?"

It was the boldest proposition, and the Liberal voters of the town of Elgin blinked a little, looking at it. Still they applauded, hurriedly, to get it over and hear what more might be coming. Bingham, on the platform, laughed heartily and conspicuously, as if anybody could see that it was all an excellent joke. Lorne half-turned to him with a gesture of protest. Then he went on--

"If that transport ever left the shores of England we would go far, some of us, to meet it; but for all the purposes that matter most it sailed long ago. British statesmen could bring us nothing better than the ideals of British government; and those we have had since we levied our first tax and made our first law. That precious cargo was our heritage, and we never threw it overboard, but chose rather to render what impost it brought; and there are those who say that the impost has been heavy, though never a dollar was paid."

He paused for an instant and seemed to review and take account of what he had said. He was hopelessly adrift from the subject he had proposed to himself, launched for better or for worse upon the theme that was subliminal in him and had flowed up, on which he was launched, and almost rudderless, without construction and without control. The speech of his first intention, orderly, developed, was as far from him as the history of Liberalism in Fox County. For an instant he hesitated; and then, under the suggestion, no doubt, of that ancient misbehaviour in Boston Harbour at which he had hinted, he took up another argument. I will quote him a little.

"Let us hold," he said simply, "to the Empire. Let us keep this patrimony that has been ours for three hundred years. Let us not forget the flag. We believe ourselves, at this moment, in no danger of forgetting it. The day after Paardeburg, that still winter day, did not our hearts rise within us to see it shaken out with its message everywhere, shaken out against the snow? How it spoke to us, and lifted us, the silent flag in the new fallen snow! Theirs--and ours... That was but a little while ago, and there is not a man here who will not bear

me out in saying that we were never more loyal, in word and deed, than we are now. And that very state of things has created for us an undermining alternative...

"So long as no force appeared to improve the trade relations between England and this country Canada sought in vain to make commercial bargains with the United States. They would have none of us or our produce; they kept their wall just as high against us as against the rest of the world: not a pine plank or a bushel of barley could we get over under a reciprocal arrangement. But the imperial trade idea has changed the attitude of our friends to the south. They have small liking for any scheme which will improve trade between Great Britain and Canada, because trade between Great Britain and Canada must be improved at their expense. And now you cannot take up an American paper without finding the report of some commercial association demanding closer trade relations with Canada, or an American magazine in which some far-sighted economist is not urging the same thing. They see us thinking about keeping the business in the family; with that hard American common sense that has made them what they are, they accept the situation; and at this moment they are ready to offer us better terms to keep our trade."

Bingham, Horace Williams, and Mr Farquharson applauded loudly. Their young man frowned a little and squared his chin. He was past hints of that kind.

"And that," he went on to say, "is, on the surface, a very satisfactory state of things. No doubt a bargain between the Americans and ourselves could be devised which would be a very good bargain on both sides. In the absence of certain pressing family affairs, it might be as well worth our consideration as we used to think it before we were invited to the family council. But if anyone imagines that any degree of reciprocity with the United States could be entered upon without killing the idea of British preference trade for all time, let him consider what Canada's attitude toward that idea would be today if the Americans had consented to our proposals twenty-five years ago, and we were invited to make an imperial sacrifice of the American trade that had prospered, as it would have prospered, for a quarter of a century! I doubt whether the proposition would even be made to us..."

"But the alternative before Canada is not a mere choice of markets; we are confronted with a much graver issue. In this matter of dealing with our neighbour our very existence is involved. If we would preserve ourselves as a nation, it has become our business, not only to reject American overtures in favour of the overtures of our own great England, but to keenly watch and actively resist American influence, as it already threatens us through the common channels of life and energy. We often say that we fear no invasion from the south, but the armies of the south have already crossed the border. American enterprise, American capital, is taking rapid possession of our mines and our water power, our oil areas and our timber limits. In today's Dominion, one paper alone, you may read of charters granted to five industrial concerns with headquarters in the United States. The trades unions of the two countries are already international. American settlers are pouring into the wheat-belt of the Northwest, and when the Dominion of Canada has paid the hundred million dollars she has just voted for a railway to open up the great lone northern lands between Quebec and the

Pacific, it will be the American farmer and the American capitalist who will reap the benefit. They approach us today with all the arts of peace, commercial missionaries to the ungathered harvests of neglected territories; but the day may come when they will menace our coasts to protect their markets--unless, by firm, resolved, whole-hearted action now, we keep our opportunities for our own people."

They cheered him promptly, and a gathered intensity came into his face at the note of praise.

"Nothing on earth can hold him now," said Bingham, as he crossed his arms upon a breast seething with practical politics, and waited for the worst.

"The question of the hour for us," said Lorne Murchison to his fellow-townsmen, curbing the strenuous note in his voice, "is deeper than any balance of trade can indicate, wider than any department of statistics can prove. We cannot calculate it in terms of pig-iron, or reduce it to any formula of consumption. The question that underlies this decision for Canada is that of the whole stamp and character of her future existence. Is that stamp and character to be impressed by the American Republic effacing"--he smiled a little--"the old Queen's head and the new King's oath? Or is it to be our own stamp and character, acquired in the rugged discipline of our colonial youth, and developed in the national usage of the British Empire?"...

Dr Drummond clapped alone; everybody else was listening.

"It is ours," he told them, "in this greater half of the continent, to evolve a nobler ideal. The Americans from the beginning went in a spirit of revolt; the seed of disaffection was in every Puritan bosom. We from the beginning went in a spirit of amity, forgetting nothing, disavowing nothing, to plant the flag with our fortunes. We took our very Constitution, our very chart of national life, from England--her laws, her liberty, her equity were good enough for us. We have lived by them, some of us have died by them...and, thank God, we were long poor..."

"And this Republic," he went on hotly, "this Republic that menaces our national life with commercial extinction, what past has she that is comparable? The daughter who left the old stock to be the light woman among nations, welcoming all comers, mingling her pure blood, polluting her lofty ideals until it is hard indeed to recognize the features and the aims of her honourable youth..."

Allowance will be made for the intemperance of his figure. He believed himself, you see, at the bar for the life of a nation.

"...Let us not hesitate to announce ourselves for the Empire, to throw all we are and all we have into the balance for that great decision. The seers of political economy tell us that if the stars continue to be propitious, it is certain that a day will come which will usher in a union of the Anglo-Saxon nations of the world. As between England and the United States the predominant partner in that firm will be the one that brings Canada. So that the imperial movement of the hour may mean even more than the future of the motherland, may reach even farther than the boundaries of Great Britain..."

Again he paused, and his eye ranged over their listening faces. He had them all with him, his words were vivid in their minds; the truth of them stood about him like an atmosphere. Even Bingham looked at him without reproach. But he had done.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, his voice dropping, with a hint of tiredness, to another level, "I have the honour to stand for your suffrages as candidate in the Liberal interest for the riding of South Fox in the Dominion House of Commons the day after tomorrow. I solicit your support, and I hereby pledge myself to justify it by every means in my power. But it would be idle to disguise from you that while I attach all importance to the immediate interests in charge of the Liberal party, and if elected shall use my best efforts to further them, the great task before that party, in my opinion, the overshadowing task to which, I shall hope, in my place and degree to stand committed from the beginning, is the one which I have endeavoured to bring before your consideration this evening."

They gave him a great appreciation, and Mr Cruickshank, following, spoke in complimentary terms of the eloquent appeal made by the "young and vigorous protagonist" of the imperial cause, but proceeded to a number of quite other and apparently more important grounds why he should be elected. The Hon. Mr Tellier's speech--the Minister was always kept to the last--was a defence of the recent dramatic development of the Government's railway policy, and a reminder of the generous treatment Elgin was receiving in the Estimates for the following year--thirty thousand dollars for a new Drill Hall, and fifteen thousand for improvements to the post-office. It was a telling speech, with the chink of hard cash in every sentence, a kind of audit by a chartered accountant of the Liberal books of South Fox, showing good sound reason why the Liberal candidate should be returned on Thursday, if only to keep the balance right. The audience listened with practical satisfaction. "That's Tellier all over," they said to one another...

The effect in committee of what, in spite of the Hon. Mr Tellier's participation, I must continue to call the speech of the evening, may be gathered from a brief colloquy between Mr Bingham and Mr Williams, in the act of separating at the door of the opera house.

"I don't know what it was worth to preference trade," said Bingham, "but it wasn't worth a hill o' beans to his own election."

"He had as soft a snap," returned Horace Williams, on the brink of tears--"as soft a snap as anybody ever had in this town. And he's monkeyed it all away. All away."

Both the local papers published the speech in full the following day. "If there's anything in Manchester or Birmingham that Mr Lorne Murchison would like," commented the Mercury editorially, "we understand he has only to call for it."

CHAPTER XXX

The Milburns' doorbell rang very early the morning of the election. The family and Alfred Hesketh were just

sitting down to breakfast. Mr Hesketh was again the guest of the house. He had taken a run out to Vancouver with Mr Milburn's partner, who had gone to settle a point or two in connection with the establishment of a branch there. The points had been settled and Hesketh, having learned more than ever, had returned to Elgin.

The maid came back into the room with a conscious air, and said something in a low voice to Dora, who flushed and frowned a little, and asked to be excused. As she left the room a glance of intelligence passed between her and her mother. While Miss Milburn was generally thought to be "most like" her father both in appearance and disposition, there were points upon which she could count on an excellent understanding with her other parent.

"Oh, Lorne," she said, having carefully closed the drawing-room door, "what in the world have you come here for? Today of all days! Did anybody see you?"

The young man, standing tall and broad-shouldered before the mantelpiece, had yet a look of expecting reproach.

"I don't know," he said humbly.

"I don't think Father would like it," Dora told him, "if he knew you were here. Why, we're having an early breakfast on purpose to let him get out and work for Winter. I never saw him so excited over an election. To think of your coming today!"

He made a step toward her. "I came because it is today," he said. "Only for a minute, dear. It's a great day for me, you know--whether we win or lose. I wanted you to be in it. I wanted you to wish me good luck."

"But you know I always do," she objected.

"Yes, I know. But a fellow likes to hear it, Dora--on the day, you know. And I've seen so little of you lately."

She looked at him measuringly. "You're looking awfully thin," she exclaimed, with sudden compunction. "I wish you had never gone into this horrid campaign. I wish they had nominated somebody else."

Lorne smiled half-bitterly. "I shouldn't wonder if a few other people wished the same thing," he said. "But I'm afraid they'll have to make the best of it now."

Dora had not sanctioned his visit by sitting down; and as he came nearer to her she drew a step away, moving by instinct from the capture of the lover. But he had made little of that, and almost as he spoke was at her side. She had to yield her hands to him.

"Well, you'll win it for them if anybody could," she assured him.

"Say 'win it for us,' dear."

She shook her head. "I'm not a Liberal--yet," she said, laughing.

"It's only a question of time."

"I'll never be converted to Grit politics."

"No, but you'll be converted to me," he told her, and

drew her nearer. "I'm going now, Dora. I dare say I shouldn't have come. Every minute counts today. Good-bye."

She could not withhold her face from his asking lips, and he had bent to take his privilege when a step in the hall threatened and divided them.

"It's only Mr Hesketh going upstairs," said Dora, with relief. "I thought it was Father. Oh, Lorne--fly!"

"Hesketh!" Young Murchison's face clouded. "Is he working for Winter, too?"

"Lorne! What a thing to ask when you know he believes in your ideas. But he's a Conservative at home, you see, so he says he's in an awkward position, and he has been taking perfectly neutral ground lately. He hasn't a vote, anyway."

"No," said Lorne. "He's of no consequence."

The familiar easy step in the house of his beloved, the house he was being entreated to leave with all speed, struck upon his heart and his nerves. She, with her dull surface to the more delicate vibrations of things, failed to perceive this, or perhaps she would have thought it worth while to find some word to bring back his peace. She disliked seeing people unhappy. When she was five years old and her kitten broke its leg, she had given it to a servant to drown.

He took his hat, making no further attempt to caress her, and opened the door. "I hope you WILL win, Lorne," she said, half-resentfully, and he, with forced cheerfulness, replied, "Oh, we'll have a shot at it." Then with a little silent nod at her which, notwithstanding her provocations, conveyed his love and trust, he went out into the struggle of the day.

In spite of Squire Ormiston's confident prediction, it was known that the fight would be hottest, among the townships, in Moneida Reservation. Elgin itself, of course, would lead the van for excitement, would be the real theatre for the arts of practical politics; but things would be pretty warm in Moneida, too. It was for that reason that Bingham and the rest strongly advised Lorne not to spend too much of the day in the town, but to get out to Moneida early, and drive around with Ormiston--stick to him like a fly to poison-paper.

"You leave Elgin to your friends," said Bingham. "Just show your face here and there wearing a smile of triumph, to encourage the crowd; but don't worry about the details--we'll attend to them."

"We can't have him upsettin' his own election by any interference with the boys," said Bingham to Horace Williams. "He's got too long a nose for all kinds of things to be comfortable in town today. He'll do a great deal less harm trotting round the Reserve braced up against old Ormiston."

So Elgin was left to the capable hands of the boys, for the furtherance of the Liberal interest and the sacred cause of imperialism. Mr Farquharson, whose experience was longer and whose nose presumably shorter than the candidate's, never abandoned the Town Ward. Bingham skirmished between the polling-booths and the committee room. Horace Williams was out all day--Rawlins edited

the paper. The returns wouldn't be ready in time for anything but an extra anyhow, and the "Stand to Arms, South Fox," leader had been written two days ago. The rest was millinery, or might be for all anybody would read of it. The other side had a better idea of the value of their candidate than to send him into the country. Walter Winter remained where he was most effective and most at home. He had a neat little livery outfit, and he seemed to spend the whole day in it accompanied by intimate personal friends who had never spoken to him, much less driven with him, before. Two or three strangers arrived the previous night at the leading hotels. Their business was various, but they had one point in common: they were very solicitous about their personal luggage. I should be sorry to assign their politics, and none of them seemed to know much about the merits of the candidates, so they are not perhaps very pertinent, except for the curiosity shown by the public at the spectacle of gentlemen carrying their own bags when there were porters to do it.

It was a day long remembered and long quoted. The weather was spring-like, sun after a week's thaw; it was pleasant to be abroad in the relaxed air and the drying streets, that here and there sent up threads of steam after the winter house-cleaning of their wooden sidewalks. Voting was a privilege never unappreciated in Elgin; and today the weather brought out every soul to the polls; the ladies of his family waiting, in many instances, on the verandah, with shawls over their heads, to hear the report of how the fight was going. Abby saw Dr Harry back in his consulting room, and Dr Henry safely off to vote, and then took the two children and went over to her father's house because she simply could not endure the suspense anywhere else. The adventurous Stella picketed herself at a corner near the empty grocery which served as a polling-booth for Subdivision Eleven, one of the most doubtful, but was forced to retire at the sight of the first carryall full of men from the Milburn Boiler Company flaunting a banner inscribed "We are Solid for W.W." Met in the hall by her sister, she protested that she hadn't cried till she got inside the gate, anyhow. Abby lectured her soundly on her want of proper pride: she was much too big a girl to be "seen around" on a day when her brother was "running," if it were only for school trustee. The other ladies of the family, having acquired proper pride kept in the back of the house so as not to be tempted to look out of the front windows. Mrs Murchison assumed a stoical demeanour and made a pudding; though there was no reason to help Eliza, who was sufficiently lacking in proper pride to ask the milkman whether Mr Lorne wasn't sure to be elected down there now. The milkman said he guessed the best man 'ud get in, but in a manner which roused general suspicion as to which he had himself favoured.

"We'll finish the month," said Mrs Murchison, "and then not another quart do we take from HIM--a gentleman that's so uncertain when he's asked a simple question."

The butcher came, and brought a jovial report without being asked for it; said he was the first man to hand in a paper at his place, but they were piling up there in great shape for Mr Murchison when he left.

"If he gets in, he gets in," said Mrs Murchison. "And if he doesn't it won't be because of not deserving to. Those were real nice cutlets yesterday, Mr Price, and you had better send us a sirloin for tomorrow, about six pounds; but it doesn't matter to an ounce. And you can save us

sweetbreads for Sunday; I like yours better than Luff's."

John Murchison, Alec, and Oliver came shortly up to dinner, bringing stirring tales from the field. There was the personator in Subdivision Six of a dead man--a dead Grit--wanted by the bloodhounds of the other side and tracked to the Reform committee room, where he was ostensibly and publicly taking refuge.

"Why did he go there?" asked Stella, breathlessly.

"Why, to make it look like a put-up job of ours, of course," said her brother. "And it was a put-up job, a good old Tory fake. But they didn't calculate on Bingham and Bingham's memory. Bingham happened to be in the committee room, and he recognized this fellow for a regular political tough from up Muskoka way, where they get six for a bottle of Canadian and ten if it's Scotch. 'Why, good morning,' says Bingham, 'thought you were in jail,' and just then he catches sight of a couple of trailers from the window. Well, Bingham isn't just lightning smart, but then he isn't SLOW, you know. 'Well,' he says, 'you can't stop here,' and in another second he was throwing the fellow out. Threw him out pretty hard, too. I guess; right down the stairs, and Bingham on top. Met Winter's men at the door. 'The next time you want information from the headquarters of this association, gentlemen,' Bingham said, 'send somebody respectable.' Bingham thought the man was just any kind of low spy at first, but when they claimed him for personation, Bingham just laughed. 'Don't be so hard on your friends; he said. I don't think we'll hear much more about that little racket."

"Can't anything be done to any of them?" asked Stella.
"Not today, of course, but when there's time."

"We'll have to see about it, Stella," said Alec. "When there's time."

"Talking about Bingham," Oliver told them; "you know Bingham's story about Jim Whelan keeping sober for two weeks, for the first time in twenty years, to vote for Winter? Wouldn't touch a thing--no, he was going to do it this time, if he died for it; it was disagreeable to refuse drinks, but it was going to be worth his while. Been boasting about the post-office janitorship Winter was to give him if he got in. Well, in he came to Number Eleven this morning all dressed up, with a clean collar, looking thirstier than any man you ever saw, and gets his paper. Young Charlie Bingham is deputy returning officer at Number Eleven. In a second back comes Whelan. 'This ballot's marked; he says; 'you don't fool me.' 'Is it?' says Charlie, taking it out of his hand. 'That's very wrong, Jim; you shouldn't have marked it,' and drops it into the ballot-box. Oh, Jim was wild! The paper had gone in blank, you see, and he'd lost all those good drunks and his vote too! He was going to have Charlie's blood right away. But there it was--done. He'd handed in his ballot--he couldn't have another."

They all laughed, I fear, at the unfortunate plight of the too suspicious Whelan. "Why did he think the ballot was marked?" asked Advena.

"Oh, there was a little smudge on it--a fly-spot or something, Charlie says. But you couldn't fool Whelan."

"I hope," said Stella meditatively, "that Lorne will get

in by more than one. He wouldn't like to owe his election to a low-down trick like that"

"Don't you be at all alarmed, you little girlish thing," replied her brother. "Lorne will get in by five hundred."

John Murchison had listened to their excited talk, mostly in silence, going on with his dinner as if that and nothing else were the important matter of the moment. Mrs Murchison had had this idiosyncrasy of his "to put up with" for over thirty years. She bore it now as long as she could.

"FATHER!" she exploded at last. "Do you think Lorne will get in by five hundred?"

Mr Murchison shook his head, and bestowed his whole attention upon the paring of an apple. If he kept his hopes to himself, he also kept his doubts. "That remains to be seen," he said.

"Well, considering it's your own son, I think you might show a little more confidence," said Mrs Murchison. "No thank you; no dessert for me. With a member of the family being elected--or not--for a seat in Parliament, I'm not the one to want dessert."

Between Mr Murchison and the milkman that morning, Mrs Murchison felt almost too much tried by the superior capacity for reticence.

It was seven in the evening before the ballot-boxes were all in the hands of the sheriff, and nine before that officer found it necessary to let the town know that it had piled up a majority of three hundred for Walter Winter. He was not a supporter of Walter Winter, and he preferred to wait until the returns began to come in from Clayfield and the townships, in the hope that they would make the serious difference that was required of them. The results were flashed one after the other to the total from the windows of the Express and the Mercury upon the cheering crowd that gathered in Market Square. There were moments of wild elation, moments of deep suspense upon both sides, but when the final addition and subtraction was made the enthusiastic voters of South Fox, including Jim Whelan, who had neglected no further opportunity, read, with yells and groans, hurrahs and catcalls, that they had elected Mr Lorne Murchison to the Dominion House of Commons by a majority of seventy.

Then the band began to play and all the tin whistles to rejoice. Young and Windle had the grace to blow their sirens, and across the excited darkness of the town came the long familiar boom of the Murchison Stove Works. Every Liberal in Elgin who had any means of making a noise made it. From the window of the Association committee room their young fellow-townsmen thanked them for the honour they had done him, while his mother sat in the cab he had brought her down in and applauded vigorously between tears, and his father took congratulations from a hundred friendly hands. They all went home in a torchlight procession, the band always playing, the tin whistles always performing; and it was two in the morning before the occasion could in any sense be said to be over.

Lights burned quite as late, however, in the Conservative committee room, where matters were being arranged to bark threateningly at the heels of victory next day. Victory looked like something that might be made to turn and

parley. A majority of seventy was too small for finality. Her attention was called without twenty-four hours' delay to a paragraph in the Elgin Mercury, plainly authoritative, to the effect that the election of Mr Murchison would be immediately challenged, on the ground of the infringement in the electoral district of Moneida of certain provisions of the Ontario Elections Act with the knowledge and consent of the candidate, whose claim to the contested seat, it was confidently expected, would be rendered within a very short time null and void.

CHAPTER XXXI

"You can never trust an Indian," said Mrs Murchison at the anxious family council. "Well do I remember them when you were a little thing, Advena, hanging round the town on a market-day; and the squaws coming to the back door with their tin pails of raspberries to sell, and just knowing English enough to ask a big price for them. But it was on the squaws we depended in those days, or go without raspberry preserves for the winter. Slovenly-looking things they were with their three or four coloured petticoats and their papooses on their backs. And for dirt--! But I thought they were all gone long ago."

"There are enough of them left to make trouble all right," said Alec. "They don't dress up like they used to, and I guess they send the papooses to kindergarten now; but you'll find plenty of them lying around any time there's nothing to do but vote and get drunk."

Allowing for the natural exaggeration of partisanship, the facts about the remaining red man of Moneida were much as Alec described them. On market-days he slid easily, unless you looked twice, into what the Express continues to call the farming community. Invariably, if you did look twice, you would note that his stiff felt hat was an inch taller in the crown than those worn generally by the farming community, the pathetic assertion, perhaps, of an old sovereignty; invariably, too his coat and trousers betrayed a form within, which, in the effort at adaptation, had become high-shouldered and lank of leg. And the brown skin was there to be noticed, though you might pass it by, and the high cheek-bones and the liquidly muddy eye. He had taken on the signs of civilization at the level which he occupied; the farming community had lent him its look of shrewdness in small bargains and its rakish sophistication in garments, nor could you always assume with certainty, except at Fox County fairs and elections, that he was intoxicated. So much Government had done for him in Fox County, where the "Reservation," nursing the dying fragment of his race, testified that there is such a thing as political compunction. Out in the wide spaces of the West he still protects his savagery; they know an Indian there today as far as they can see him, without a second glance.

And in Moneida, upon polling-days, he still, as Alec said, "made trouble." Perhaps it would be more to the fact to say that he presented the elements of which trouble is made. Civilization had given him a vote, not with his coat and trousers, but shortly after; and he had not yet learned to keep it anywhere but in his pocket, whence the transfer was easy, and could be made in different ways. The law contemplated only one, the straight drop into the ballot-box; but the "boys" had other views.

The law represented one level of political sentiment, the boys represented another; both parties represented the law, both parties were represented by the boys; and on the occasion of the South Fox election the boys had been active in Moneida. There are, as we know, two kinds of activity on these occasions, one being set to observe the other; and Walter Winter's boys, while presumably neglecting no legitimate opportunity of their own, claimed to have been highly successful in detecting the methods of the other side.

The Indians owed their holdings, their allowances, their school, and their protecting superintendent, Squire Ormiston, to a Conservative Government. It made a grateful bond of which a later Conservative Government was not, perhaps, unaware, when it added the ballot to its previous benefits. The Indians, therefore, on election-days, were supposed to "go solid" for the candidate in whom they had been taught to see good will. If they did not go quite solid, the other side might point to the evolution of the political idea in every dissentient--a gladdening spectacle, indeed, on which, however, the other side seldom showed any desire to dwell.

Hitherto the desires and intentions of the "Reserve" had been exemplified in its superintendent. Squire Ormiston had never led his wards to the polls--there were strong reasons against that. But the squire made no secret of his politics, either before or, unluckily, after he changed them. The Indians had always known that they were voting on the same side as "de boss." They were likely, the friends of Mr Winter thought, to know now that they were voting on a different side. This was the secret of Mr Winter's friends' unusual diligence on voting-day in Moneida. The mere indication of a wish on the part of the superintendent would constitute undue influence in the eye of the law. The squire was not the most discreet of men--often before it had been the joke of Conservative councils how near the old man had come to making a case for the Grits in connection with this chief or that. I will not say that he was acquainted with the famous letter from Queen Victoria, affectionately bidding her Indian children to vote for the Conservative candidate. But perhaps he had not adhered to the strictest interpretation of the law which gave him fatherly influence in everything pertaining to his red-skinned charges' interests temporal and spiritual, excepting only their sacred privilege of the ballot. He may even have held it in some genial derision, their sacred privilege; it would be natural, he had been there among them in unquestioned authority so long. Now it had assumed an importance. The squire looked at it with the ardour of a converted eye. When he told Mr Farquharson that he could bring Moneida with him to a Liberal victory, he thought and spoke of the farmers of the township not of his wards of the Reserve. Yet as the day approached these would infallibly become voters in his eyes, to swell or to diminish the sum of Moneida's loyalty to the Empire. They remembered all this in the committee room of his old party. "The squire," they said to one another, "will give himself away this time if ever he did." Then young Murchison hadn't known any better than to spend the best part of the day out there, and there were a dozen witnesses to swear that old Ormiston introduced him to three or four of the chiefs. That was basis enough for the boys detailed to watch Moneida, basis enough in the end for a petition constructed to travel to the High Court at Toronto for the purpose of rendering null and void the election of Mr Lorne Murchison, and transferring the South Fox seat to the candidate of

the opposite party.

That possibility had been promptly frustrated by a cross petition. There was enough evidence in Subdivision Eleven, according to Bingham, to void the Tory returns on six different counts; but the house-cat sold by Peter Finnigan to Mr Winter for five dollars would answer all practical purposes. It was a first-rate mouser, Bingham said, and it would settle Winter. They would have plenty of other charges "good and ready" if Finnigan's cat should fail them, but Bingham didn't think the court would get to anything else; he had great confidence in the cat.

The petitions had been lodged with promptness. "Evidence," as Mr Winter remarked, "is like a good many other things--better when it's hot, especially the kind you get on the Reserve." To which, when he heard it, Bingham observed sarcastically that the cat would keep. The necessary thousand dollars were ready on each side the day after the election, lodged in court the next. Counsel were as promptly engaged--the Liberals selected Cruickshank--and the suit against the elected candidate, beginning with charges against his agents in the town, was shortly in full hearing before the judges sent from Toronto to try it. Meanwhile the Elgin Mercury had shown enterprise in getting hold of Moneida evidence, and foolhardiness, as the Express pointed out, in publishing it before the matter was reached in court. There was no foolhardiness in printing what the Express knew about Finnigan's cat; it was just a common cat, and Walter Winter paid five dollars for it, Finnigan declaring that if Mr Winter hadn't filled him up with bad whiskey before the bargain, he wouldn't have let her go under ten, he was that fond of the creature. The Express pointed out that this was grasping of Finnigan, as the cat had never left him, and Mr Winter showed no intention of taking her away; but there was nothing sub judice about the cat. Finnigan, before he sobered up, had let her completely out of the bag. It was otherwise with the charges that were to be made, according to the Mercury, on the evidence of Chief Joseph Fry and another member of his tribe, to the effect that he and his Conservative friends had been instructed by Squire Ormiston and Mr Murchison to vote on this occasion for both the candidates, thereby producing, when the box was opened, eleven ballot-papers inscribed with two crosses instead of one, and valueless. Here, should the charges against a distinguished and highly respected Government official fail, as in the opinion of the Express they undoubtedly would fail of substantiation was a big libel case all dressed and ready and looking for the Mercury office. "Foolish--foolish," wrote Mr Williams at the close of his editorial comments. "Very ill-advised."

"They've made no case so far," Mr Murchison assured the family. "I saw Williams on my way up, and he says the evidence of that corner grocery fellow--what's his name?--went all to pieces this morning. Oliver was in court. He says one of the judges--Hooke--lost his patience all together."

"They won't do anything with the town charges," Alec said, "and they know it. They're saving themselves for Moneida and old man Ormiston."

"Well, I heartily wish," said Mrs Murchison, in a tone of grievance with the world at large, and if you were not responsible you might keep out of the way--"I heartily wish that Lorne had stayed at home that day and not got mixed up with old man Ormiston."

"They'll find it pretty hard to fix anything on Lorne," said Alec. "But I guess the Squire did go off his head a little."

"Have they anything more than Indian evidence?" asked Advena.

"We don't know what they've got," said her brother darkly "and we won't till Wednesday, when they expect to get round to it."

"Indian evidence will be a poor dependence in Cruickshank's hands," Mr Murchison told them, with a chuckle. "They say this Chief Joseph Fry is going about complaining that he always got three dollars for one vote before, and this time he expected six for two, and got nothing!"

"Chief Joseph Fry!" exclaimed Alec. "They make me tired with their Chief Josephs and Chief Henrys! White Clam Shell--that was the name he got when he wasn't christened."

"That's the name," remarked Advena, "that he probably votes under."

"Well," said Mrs Murchison, "it was very kind of Squire Ormiston to give Lorne his support, but it seems to me that as far as Moneida is concerned he would have done better alone."

"No, I guess he wouldn't, Mother," said Alec. "Moneida came right round with the Squire, outside the Reserve. If it hadn't been for the majority there we would have lost the election. The old man worked hard, and Lorne is grateful to him, and so he ought to be."

"If they carry the case against Lorne," said Stella, "he'll be disqualified for seven years."

"Only if they prove him personally mixed up in it," said the father. "And that," he added with a concentration of family sentiment in the emphasis of it, "they'll not do."

CHAPTER XXXII

It was late afternoon when the train from the West deposited Hugh Finlay upon the Elgin platform, the close of one of those wide, wet, uncertain February days when the call of spring is on the wind though spring is weeks away. The lights of the town flashed and glimmered down the streets under the bare swaying maple branches. The early evening was full of soft bluster; the air was conscious with an appeal of nature, vague yet poignant. The young man caught at the strange sympathy that seemed to be abroad for his spirit. He walked to his house, courting it, troubled by it. They were expecting him that evening at Dr Drummond's, and there it was his intention to go. But on his way he would call for a moment to see Advena Murchison. He had something to tell her. It would be news of interest at Dr Drummond's also; but it was of no consequence, within an hour or so, when they should receive it there, while it was of great consequence that Advena should hear it at the earliest opportunity, and from him. There is no weighing or analysing the burden of such a necessity as this. It simply is important: it makes its own weight; and those whom it concerns must

put aside other matters until it has been accomplished. He would tell her: they would accept it for a moment together, a moment during which he would also ascertain whether she was well and strong, with a good chance of happiness--God protect her--in the future that he should not know. Then he would go on to Dr Drummond's.

The wind had risen when he went out again; it blew a longer blast, and the trees made a steady sonorous rhythm in it. The sky was full of clouds that dashed upon the track of a failing moon; there was portent everywhere, and a hint of tumult at the end of the street. No two ways led from Finlay's house to his first destination. River Street made an angle with that on which the Murchisons lived--half a mile to the corner, and three-quarters the other way. Drops drove in his face as he strode along against the wind, stilling his unquiet heart, that leaped before him to that brief interview. As he took the single turning he came into the full blast of the veering, irresolute storm. The street was solitary and full of the sound of the blown trees, wild and uplifting. Far down the figure of a woman wavered before the wind across the zone of a blurred lamp-post. She was coming toward him. He bent his head and lowered his umbrella and lost sight of her as they approached, she with the storm behind her, driven with hardly more resistance than the last year's blackened leaves that blew with her, he assailed by it and making the best way he could. Certainly the wind was taking her part and his, when in another moment her skirt whipped against him and he saw her face glimmer out. A mere wreck of lines and shadows it seemed in the livid light, with suddenly perceiving eyes and lips that cried his name. She had on a hat and a cloak, but carried no umbrella, and her hands were bare and wet. Pitifully the storm blew her into his arms, a tossed and straying thing that could not speak for sobs; pitifully and with a rough incoherent sound he gathered and held her in that refuge. A rising fear and a great solicitude laid a finger upon his craving embrace of her; he had a sense of something strangely different in her, of the unknown irremediable. Yet she was there, in his arms, as she had never been before; her plight but made her in a manner sweeter; the storm that brought her barricaded them in the empty spaces of the street with a divinely entreating solitude. He had been prepared to meet her in the lighted decorum of her father's house and he knew what he should say. He was not prepared to take her out of the tempest, helpless and weeping and lost for the harbour of his heart, and nothing could he say. He locked his lips against all that came murmuring to them. But his arms tightened about her and he drew her into the shelter of a wall that jutted out in the irregular street; and there they stood and clung together in a long, close, broken silence that covered the downfall of her spirit. It was the moment of their great experience of one another; never again, in whatever crisis, could either know so deep, so wonderful a fathoming of the other soul. Once as it passed, Advena put up her hand and touched his cheek: There were tears on it, and she trembled, and wound her arm about his neck, and held up her face to his. "No," he muttered, and crushed it against his breast. There without complaint she let it lie; she was all submission to him: his blood leaped and his spirit groaned with the knowledge of it.

"Why did you come out? Why did you come, dear?" he said at last.

"I don't know. There was such a wind. I could not stay

in the house."

She spoke timidly, in a voice that should have been new to him, but that it was, above all, her voice.

"I was on my way to you."

"I know. I thought you might perhaps come. If you had not--I think I was on my way to you."

It seemed not unnatural.

"Did you find--any message from me when you came?" she asked presently, in a quieted, almost a contented tone.

It shot--the message--before his eyes, though he had seen it no message, in the preoccupation of his arrival.

"I found a rose on my dressing-table," he told her; and the rose stood for him in a wonder of tenderness, looking back.

"I smuggled it in," she confessed, "I knew your old servant--she used to be with us. The others--from Dr Drummond's--have been there all day making it warm and comfortable for you. I had no right to do anything like that, but I had the right, hadn't I, to bring the rose?"

"I don't know," he answered her, hard-pressed, "how we are to bear this."

She shrank away from him a little, as if at a glimpse of a surgeon's knife.

"We are not to bear it," she said eagerly. "The rose is to tell you that. I didn't mean it, when I left it, to be anything more--more than a rose; but now I do. I didn't even know when I came out tonight. But now I do. We aren't to bear it, Hugh. I don't want it so--now. I can't--can't have it so."

She came nearer to him again and caught with her two hands the lapels of his coat. He closed his own over them and looked down at her in that half-detachment, which still claimed and held her.

"Advena," he whispered, out of the sudden clamour in his mind, "she can't be--she isn't--nothing has happened to her?"

She smiled faintly, but her eyes were again full of fear at his implication of the only way.

"Oh, no!" she said. "But you have been away, and she has come. I have seen her; and oh! she won't care, Hugh--she won't care."

Her asking, straining face seemed to gather and reflect all the light there was in the shifting night about them. The rain had stopped, but the wind still hurtled past, whirling the leaves from one darkness to another. They were as isolated, as outlawed there in the wild wet wind as they were in the confusion of their own souls.

"We must care," he said helplessly, clinging to the sound and form of the words.

"Oh, no!" she cried. "No, no! Indeed I know now what is possible and what is not!"

For an instant her eyes searched the rigid lines of his face in astonishment. In their struggle to establish the impossible she had been so far ahead, so greatly the more confident and daring, had tempted him to such heights, scorning every dizzy verge, that now, when she turned quite back from their adventure, humbly confessing it too hard, she could not understand how he should continue to set himself doggedly toward it. Perhaps, too, she trusted unconsciously in her prerogative. He loved her, and she him: before she would not, now she would. Before she had preferred an ideal to the desire of her heart; now it lay about her; her strenuous heart had pulled it down to foolish ruin, and how should she lie abased with it and see him still erect and full of the deed they had to do?

"Come," he said, "let me take you home, dear," and at that and some accent in it that struck again at hope, she sank at his feet in a torrent of weeping, clasping them and entreating him, "Oh send her away! Send her away!"

He lifted her, and was obliged literally to support her. Her hat had fallen off; he stroked her hair and murmured such comfort to her as we have for children in their extremity, of which the burden is chiefly love and "Don't cry." She grew gradually quieter, drawing one knows not what restitution from the intrinsic in him; but there was no pride in her, and when she said "Let me go home now," it was the broken word of hapless defeat. They struggled together out into the boisterous street, and once or twice she failed and had to stop and turn. Then she would cling to a wall or a tree, putting his help aside with a gesture in which there was again some pitiful trace of renunciation. They went almost without a word, each treading upon the heart of the other toward the gulf that was to come. They reached it at the Murchisons' gate, and there they paused, as briefly as possible, since pause was torture, and he told her what he could not tell her before.

"I have accepted the charge of the White Water Mission Station in Alberta," he said. "I, too, learned very soon after I left you what was possible and what was not. I go as soon as--things can be set in order here. Good-bye, my dear love, and may God help us both."

She looked at him with a pitiful effort at a steady lip. "I must try to believe it," she said. "And afterward, when it comes true for you, remember this--I was ashamed."

Then he saw her pass into her father's house, and he took the road to his duty and Dr Drummond's.

His extremity was very great. Through it lines came to him from the beautiful archaic inheritance of his Church. He strode along hearing them again and again in the dying storm.

So, I do stretch my hands
To Thee my help alone;
Thou only understands
All my complaint and moan.

He listened to the prayer on the wind, which seemed to offer it for him, listened and was gravely touched. But he himself was far from the throes of supplication. He was looking for the forces of his soul; and by the time he reached Dr Drummond's door we may suppose that he had

found them.

Sarah who let him in, cried, "How wet you are, Mr Finlay!" and took his overcoat to dry in the kitchen. The Scotch ladies, she told him, and Mrs Forsyth, had gone out to tea, but they would be back right away, and meanwhile "the Doctor" was expecting him in the study--he knew the way.

Finlay did know the way but, as a matter of fact, there had been time for him to forget it; he had not crossed Dr Drummond's threshold since the night on which the Doctor had done all, as he would have said, that was humanly possible to bring him, Finlay, to reason upon the matter of his incredible entanglement in Bross. The door at the end of the passage was ajar however, as if impatient; and Dr Drummond himself, standing in it, heightened that appearance, with his "Come you in, Finlay. Come you in!"

The Doctor looked at the young man in a manner even more acute, more shrewd, and more kindly than was his wont. His eye searched Finlay thoroughly, and his smile seemed to broaden as his glance travelled.

"Man," he said, "you're shivering," and rolled him an armchair near the fire. ("The fellow came into the room," he would say, when he told the story afterward to the person most concerned, "as if he were going to the stake!") "This is extraordinary weather we are having, but I think the storm is passing over."

"I hope," said Finlay, "that my aunt and Miss Cameron are well. I understand they are out."

"Oh, very well--finely. They're out at present, but you'll see them bye-and-bye. An excellent voyage over they had--just the eight days. But we'll be doing it in less than that when the new fast line is running to Halifax. But four days of actual ocean travelling they say now it will take. Four days from imperial shore to shore! That should incorporate us--that should bring them out and take us home."

The Doctor had not taken a seat himself, but was pacing the study, his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets; and a touch of embarrassment seemed added to the inveterate habit.

"I hear the ladies had pleasant weather." Finlay remarked.

"Capital--capital! You won't smoke? I know nothing about these cigars; they're some Grant left behind him--a chimney, that man Grant. Well, Finlay"--he threw himself into the arm-chair on the other side of the hearth--"I don't know what to say to you."

"Surely," said Finlay restively, "it has all been said, sir."

"No, it has not all been said," Dr Drummond retorted. "No, it has not. There's more to be said, and you must hear it, Finlay, with such patience as you have. But I speak the truth when I say that I don't know how to begin."

The young man gave him opportunity, gazing silently into the fire. He was hardly aware that Dr Drummond had again left his seat when he started violently at a clap on the

shoulder.

"Finlay!" exclaimed the Doctor. "You won't be offended? No--you couldn't be offended!"

It was half-jocular, half-anxious, wholly inexplicable.

"At what," asked Hugh Finlay, "should I be offended?"

Again, with a deep sigh, the Doctor dropped into his chair. "I see I must begin at the beginning," he said. But Finlay, with sudden intuition, had risen and stood before him trembling, with a hand against the mantelpiece.

"No," he said, "if you have anything to tell me of importance, for God's sake begin at the end."

Some vibration in his voice went straight to the heart of the Doctor, banishing as it travelled, every irrelevant thing that it encountered.

"Then the end is this, Finlay," he said. "The young woman, Miss Christie Cameron, whom you were so wilfully bound and determined to marry, has thrown you over--that is, if you will give her back her word--has jilted you--that is, if you'll let her away. Has thought entirely better of the matter."

("He stared out of his great sockets of eyes as if the sky had fallen," Dr Drummond would say, recounting it.)

"For--for what reason?" asked Finlay, hardly yet able to distinguish between the sound of disaster and the sense that lay beneath.

"May I begin at the beginning?" asked the Doctor, and Hugh silently nodded.

("He sat there and never took his eyes off me, twisting his fingers. I might have been in a confession-box," Dr Drummond would explain to her.)

"She came here, Miss Cameron, with that good woman, Mrs Kilbannon, it will be three weeks next Monday," he said, with all the air of beginning a story that would be well worth hearing. "And I wasn't very well pleased to see her, for reasons that you know. However, that's neither here nor there. I met them both at the station, and I own to you that I thought when I made Miss Cameron's acquaintance that you were getting better than you deserved in the circumstances. You were a thousand miles away--now that was a fortunate thing!--and she and Mrs Kilbannon just stayed here and made themselves as comfortable as they could. And that was so comfortable that anyone could see with half an eye"--the Doctor's own eye twinkled--"so far as Miss Cameron was concerned, that she wasn't pining in any sense of the word. But I wasn't sorry for you, Finlay, on that account." He stopped to laugh enjoyingly, and Finlay blushed like a girl.

"I just let matters bide and went about my own business. Though after poor Mrs Forsyth here--a good woman enough, but the brains of a rabbit--it was pleasant to find these intelligent ladies at every meal, and wonderful how quick they were at picking up the differences between the points of Church administration here and at home. That was a thing I noticed particularly in Miss Cameron.

"Matters went smoothly enough--smoothly enough--till one

afternoon that foolish creature Advena Murchison"--Finlay started--"came here to pay a call on Miss Cameron and Mrs Kilbannon. It was well and kindly meant, but it was not a wise-like thing to do. I didn't exactly make it out, but it seems that she came all because of you and on account of you; and the ladies didn't understand it, and Mrs Kilbannon came to me. My word, but there was a woman to deal with! Who was this young lady, and what was she to you that she should go anywhere or do anything in your name? Without doubt"--he put up a staying hand--"it was foolish of Advena. And what sort of freedom, and how far, and why, and what way, and I tell you it was no easy matter, to quiet her. 'Is Miss Cameron distressed about it?' said I. 'Not a bit,' said she, 'but I am, and I must have the rights of this matter,' said she, 'if I have to put it to my nephew himself.'

"It was at that point, Finlay, that the idea--just then that the thought came into my mind--well I won't say absolutely, but practically for the first time--Why can't this matter be arranged on a basis to suit all parties? So I said to her, 'Mrs Kilbannon,' I said, 'if you had reasonable grounds for it, do you think you could persuade your niece not to marry Hugh Finlay?' Wait--patience!" He held up his hand, and Finlay gripped the arm of his chair again.

"She just stared at me. 'Are you gone clean daft, Dr Drummond?' she said. 'There could be no grounds serious enough for that. I will not believe that Hugh Finlay has compromised himself in any way.' I had to stop her; I was obliged to tell her there was nothing of the kind--nothing of the kind; and later on I'll have to settle with my conscience about that. 'I meant,' I said, the reasonable grounds of an alternative: 'An alternative?' said she. To cut a long story short," continued the Doctor, leaning forward, always with the finger in his waistcoat pocket to emphasize what he said, "I represented to Mrs Kilbannon that Miss Cameron was not in sentimental relations toward you, that she had some reason to suspect you of having placed your affections elsewhere, and that I myself was very much taken up with what I had seen of Miss Cameron. In brief, I said to Mrs Kilbannon that if Miss Cameron saw no objection to altering the arrangements to admit of it, I should be pleased to marry her myself. The thing was much more suitable in every way. I was fifty-three years of age last week, I told her, 'but' I said, 'Miss Cameron is thirty-six or seven, if she's a day, and Finlay there would be like nothing but a grown-up son to her. I can offer her a good home and the minister's pew in a church that any woman might be proud of--and though far be it from me,' I said, 'to depreciate mission work, either home or foreign, Miss Cameron in that field would be little less than thrown away. Think it over,' I said.

"Well, she was pleased, I could see that. But she didn't half like the idea of changing the original notion. It was leaving you to your own devices that weighed most with her against it; she'd set her heart on seeing you married with her approval. So I said to her, to make an end of it, 'Well, Mrs Kilbannon,' I said, 'suppose we say no more about it for the present. I think I see the finger of Providence in this matter; but you'll talk it over with Miss Cameron, and we'll all just make it, for the next few days, the subject of quiet and sober reflection. Maybe at the end of that time I'll think better of it myself, though that is not my expectation.'

"'I think,' she said, 'we'll just leave it to Christie.'"

As the Doctor went on with his tale, relaxation had stolen dumbly about Finlay's brow and lips. He dropped from the plane of his own absorption to the humorous common sense of the recital: it claimed and held him with infinite solace. His eyes had something like the light of laughter in them, flashing behind a cloud, as he fixed them on Dr Drummond, and said, "And did you?"

"We did," said Dr Drummond, getting up once more from his chair, and playing complacently with his watch-charms as he took another turn about the study. "We left it to Miss Cameron, and the result is"--the Doctor stopped sharply and wheeled round upon Finlay--"the result is--why, the upshot seems to be that I've cut you out, man!"

Finlay measured the little Doctor standing there twisting his watch-chain, beaming with achieved satisfaction, in a consuming desire to know how far chance had been kind to him, and how far he had to be simply, unspeakably, grateful. He stared in silence, occupied with his great debt; it was like him that that, and not his liberty, should be first in his mind. We who have not his opportunity may find it more difficult to decide; but from our private knowledge of Dr Drummond we may remember what poor Finlay probably forgot at the moment, that even when pitted against Providence, the Doctor was a man of great determination.

The young fellow got up, still speechless, and confronted Dr Drummond. He was troubled for something to say; the chambers of his brain seemed empty or reiterating foolish sounds. He pressed the hand the minister offered him and his lips quivered. Then a light came into his face, and he picked up his hat.

"And I'll say this for myself," chuckled Dr Drummond. "It was no hard matter."

Finlay looked at him and smiled. "It would not be, sir," he said lamely. Dr Drummond cast a shrewd glance at him and dropped the tone of banter.

"Aye--I know! It's no joking matter," he said, and with a hand behind the young man's elbow, he half pushed him to the door and took out his watch. He must always be starting somebody, something, in the right direction, the Doctor. "It's not much after half-past nine, Finlay," he said. "I notice the stars are out."

It had the feeling of a colloquial benediction, and Finlay carried it with him all the way.

It was nevertheless nearly ten when he reached her father's house, so late that the family had dispersed for the night. Yet he had the hardihood to ring, and the hour blessed them both, for Advena on the stair, catching who knows what of presage out of the sound, turned, and found him at the threshold herself.

CHAPTER XXXIII

"I understand how you must feel in the matter, Murchison," said Henry Cruickshank. "It's the most natural thing in the world that you should want to clear yourself definitely,

especially as you say, since the charges have been given such wide publicity. On the other hand, I think it quite possible that you exaggerate the inference that will be drawn from our consenting to saw off with the other side on the two principal counts."

"The inference will be," said Lorne "that there's not a pin to choose between Winter's political honesty and my own. I'm no Pharisee, but I don't think I can sit down under that. I can't impair my possible usefulness by accepting a slur upon my reputation at the very beginning."

"Politics are very impersonal. It wouldn't be remembered a year."

"Winter of course," said young Murchison moodily, "doesn't want to take any chances. He knows he's done for if we go on. Seven years for him would put him pretty well out of politics. And it would suit him down to the ground to fight it over again. There's nothing he would like better to see than another writ for South Fox."

"That's all right," the lawyer responded, "but Moneida doesn't look altogether pleasant, you know. We may have good grounds for supposing that the court will find you clear of that business; but Ormiston, so far as I can make out, was playing the fool down there for a week before polling-day, and there are three or four Yellow Dogs and Red Feathers only too anxious to pay back a grudge on him. We'll have to fight again, there's no doubt about that. The only question is whether we'll ruin Ormiston first or not. Have you seen Bingham?"

"I know what Bingham thinks," said Lorne, impatiently. "The Squire's position is a different consideration. I don't see how I can--However, I'll go across to the committee room now and talk it over."

It is doubtful whether young Murchison knew all that Bingham thought; Bingham so seldom told it all. There were matters in the back of Bingham's mind that prompted him to urge the course that Cruickshank had been empowered by the opposing counsel to suggest--party considerations that it would serve no useful purpose to talk over with Murchison. Bingham put it darkly when he said he had quite as much hay on his fork as he cared to tackle already, implying that the defence of indiscretions in Moneida was quite an unnecessary addition. Contingencies seemed probable, arising out of the Moneida charges that might affect the central organization of the party in South Fox to an extent wholly out of proportion with the mere necessity of a second election. Bingham talked it over with Horace Williams, and both of them with Farquharson; they were all there to urge the desirability of "sawing off" upon Lorne when he found them at headquarters. Their most potent argument was, of course, the Squire and the immediate dismissal that awaited him under the law if undue influence were proved against him. Other considerations found the newly elected member for South Fox obstinate and troublesome, but to that he was bound to listen, and before that he finally withdrew his objections. The election would come on again, as happened commonly enough. Bingham could point to the opening, in a few days, of a big flour-milling industry across the river, which would help; operations on the Drill Hall and the Post-Office would be hurried on at once, and the local party organization would be thoroughly overhauled. Bingham had good reason for believing that they could entirely regain their lost ground, and at the same time

dissipate the dangerous impression that South Fox was being undermined. Their candidate gave a reluctant ear to it all, and in the end agreed to everything.

So that Chief Joseph Fry--the White Clam Shell of his own lost fires--was never allowed the chance of making good the election losses of that year, as he had confidently expected to do when the charge came on; nor was it given to any of the Yellow Dogs and Red Feathers of Mr Cruickshank's citation to boast at the tribal dog-feasts of the future, of the occasion on which they had bested "de boss." Neither was any further part in public affairs, except by way of jocular reference, assigned to Finniigan's cat. The proceedings of the court abruptly terminated, the judges reported the desirability of a second contest, and the public accepted with a wink. The wink in any form was hateful to Lorne Murchison, but he had not to encounter it long.

The young man had changed in none of the aspects he presented to his fellow-citizens since the beginning of the campaign. In the public eye he wore the same virtues as he wore the same clothes; he summed up even a greater measure of success; his popularity was unimpaired. He went as keenly about the business of life, handling its details with the same capable old drawl. Only his mother, with the divination of mothers, declared that since the night of the opera house meeting Lorne had been "all worked up." She watched him with furtive anxious looks, was solicitous about his food, expressed relief when she knew him to be safely in bed and asleep. He himself observed himself with discontent, unable to fathom his extraordinary lapse from self-control on the night of his final address. He charged it to the strain of unavoidable office work on top of the business of the campaign, abused his nerves, talked of a few days' rest when they had settled Winter. He could think of nothing but the points he had forgotten when he had his great chance. "The flag should have come in at the end," he would say to himself, trying vainly to remember where it did come in. He was ill pleased with the issue of that occasion; and it was small compensation to be told by Stella that his speech gave her shivers up and down her back.

Meanwhile the theory of Empire coursed in his blood, fed by the revelation of the future of his country in every newspaper, by the calculated prophecies of American onlookers, and by the telegrams which repeated the trumpet notes of Wallingham's war upon the mandarin of Great Britain. It occupied him so that he began to measure and limit what he had to say about it, and to probe the casual eye for sympathy before he would give an inch of rope to his enthusiasm. He found it as hard as ever to understand that the public interest should be otherwise preoccupied, as it plainly was, that the party organ, terrified of Quebec, should shuffle away from the subject with perfunctory and noncommittal reference, that among the men he met in the street, nobody's blood seemed stirred, whatever the day's news was from England. He subscribed to the Toronto Post, the leading organ of the Tories, because of its fuller reports and more sympathetic treatment of the Idea, due to the fact that the Idea originated in a brain temporarily affiliated to the Conservative party. If the departure to imperial preference had any damage in it for Canadian interests, it would be for those which the Post made its special care; but the spirit of party draws the breath of expediency, and the Post flaunting the Union Jack every other day, put

secondary manufactures aside for future discussion, and tickled the wheat-growers with the two-shilling advantage they were coming into at the hands of the English Conservatives, until Liberal leaders began to be a little anxious about a possible loss of wheat-growing votes. It was, as John Murchison said, a queer position for everybody concerned; queer enough, no doubt, to admit a Tory journal into the house on sufferance and as a special matter; but he had a disapproving look for it as it lay on the hall floor, and seldom was the first to open it.

Nevertheless Lorne found more satisfaction in talking imperialism with his father than with anyone else. While the practical half of John Murchison was characteristically alive to the difficulties involved, the sentimental half of him was ready at any time to give out cautious sparks of sympathy with the splendour of Wallingham's scheme; and he liked the feeling that a son of his should hark back in his allegiance to the old land. There was a kind of chivalry in the placing of certain forms of beauty--political honour and public devotion, which blossomed best, it seemed, over there--above the material ease and margin of the new country, and even above the grand chance it offered for a man to make his mark. Mr Murchison was susceptible to this in anyone, and responsive to it in his son.

As to the local party leaders, they had little more than a shrug for the subject. So far as they were concerned, there was no Empire and no Idea; Wallingham might as well not have been born. It seemed to Lorne that they maintained toward him personally a special reticence about it. Reticence indeed characterized their behaviour generally during the period between the abandonment of the suits and the arrangement of the second Liberal convention. They had little advice for him about his political attitude, little advice about anything. He noticed that his presence on one or two occasions seemed to embarrass them, and that his arrival would sometimes have a disintegrating effect upon a group in the post-office or at a street corner. He added it, without thinking, to his general heaviness; they held it a good deal against him, he supposed, to have reduced their proud standing majority to a beggarly two figures; he didn't blame them.

I cannot think that the sum of these depressions alone would have been enough to overshadow so buoyant a soul as Lorne Murchison's. The characteristics of him I have tried to convey were grafted on an excellent fund of common sense. He was well aware of the proportions of things; he had no despair of the Idea, nor would he despair should the Idea etherealize and fly away. Neither had he, for his personal honour, any morbid desires toward White Clam Shell or Finnigan's cat. His luck had been a good deal better than it might have been; he recognized that as fully as any sensible young man could, and as for the Great Chance, and the queer grip it had on him, he would have argued that too if anyone had approached him curiously about it. There I think we might doubt his conclusions. There is nothing subtler, more elusive to trace than the intercurrents of the emotions. Politics and love are thought of at opposite poles, and Wallingham perhaps would have laughed to know that he owed an exalted allegiance in part to a half-broken heart. Yet the impulse that is beyond our calculation, the thing we know potential in the blood but not to be summoned or conditioned, lies always in the shadow of the ideal; and who can analyse that, and say, "Of this class is the will to believe in the integrity of the beloved and false; of that is the

desire to lift a nation to the level of its mountain-ranges"? Both dispositions have a tendency to overwork the heart; and it is easy to imagine that they might interact. Lorne Murchison's wish, which was indeed a burning longing and necessity, to believe in the Dora Milburn of his passion, had been under a strain since the night on which he brought her the pledge which she refused to wear. He had hardly been conscious of it in the beginning, but by constant suggestion it had grown into his knowledge, and for weeks he had taken poignant account of it. His election had brought him no nearer a settlement with her objection to letting the world know of their relations. The immediate announcement that it was to be disputed gave Dora another chance, and once again postponed the assurance that he longed for with a fever which was his own condemnation of her, if he could have read that sign. For months he had seen so little of her, had so altered his constant habit of going to the Milburns', that his family talked of it, wondering among themselves; and Stella indulged in hopeful speculations. They did not wonder or speculate at the Milburns'. It was an axiom there that it is well to do nothing rashly.

Lorne, in the office on Market Street, had been replying to Mr Fulke to the effect that the convention could hardly be much longer postponed, but that as yet he had no word of the date of it when the telephone bell rang and Mr Farquharson's voice at the other end asked him to come over to the committee room. "They've decided about it now, I imagine," he told his senior, putting on his hat; and something of the wonted fighting elation came upon him as he went down the stairs. He was right in his supposition. They had decided about it, and they were waiting, in a group that made every effort to look casual, to tell him when he arrived.

They had delegated what Horace Williams called "the job" to Mr Farquharson, and he was actually struggling with the preliminaries of it, when Bingham, uncomfortable under the curious quietude of the young fellow's attention, burst out with the whole thing.

"The fact is, Murchison, you can't poll the vote. There's no man in the Riding we'd be better pleased to send to the House; but we've got to win this election, and we can't win it with you."

"You think you can't?" said Lorne.

"You see, old man," Horace Williams put in, "you didn't get rid of that save-the-Empire-or-die scheme of yours soon enough. People got to think you meant something by it."

"I shall never get rid of it," Lorne returned simply, and the others looked at one another.

"The popular idea seems to be," said Mr Farquharson judiciously, "that you would not hesitate to put Canada to some material loss, or at least to postpone her development in various important directions, for the sake of the imperial connection."

"Wasn't that," Lorne asked him, "what, six months ago, you were all prepared to do?"

"Oh, no," said Bingham, with the air of repudiating for everybody concerned. "Not for a cent. We were willing at one time to work it for what it was worth, but it never

was worth that, and if you'd had a little more experience, Murchison, you'd have realized it."

"That's right, Lorne," contributed Horace Williams. "Experience--that's all you want. You've got everything else, and a darned sight more. We'll get you there, all in good time. But this time--"

"You want me to step down and out," said Lorne.

"That's for you to say," Bingham told him. "We can nominate you again all right, but we're afraid we can't get you the convention. Young and Windle have been working like moles for the past ten days--"

"For Carter?" interrupted Lorne: "Carter, of course."

They nodded. Carter stood the admitted fact.

"I'm sorry it's Carter," said Lorne thoughtfully. "However--" And he dropped, staring before him, into silence. The others eyed him from serious, underhung faces. Horace Williams, with an obvious effort, got up and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Brace up, old chap," he said. "You made a blame good fight for us, and we'll do the same for you another day."

"However, gentlemen," the young man gathered himself up to say, "I believe I understand the situation. You are my friends and this is your advice. We must save the seat. I'll see Carter. If I can get anything out of him to make me think he'll go straight on the scheme to save the Empire"--he smiled faintly--"when it comes to a vote, I'll withdraw in his favour at the convention. Horace here will think up something for me--any old lie will do, I suppose? In any case, of course, I withdraw."

He took his hat, and they all got up, startled a little at the quick and simple close of the difficult scene they had anticipated. Horace Williams offered his hand.

"Shake, Lorne," he said, and the other two, coming nearer, followed his example.

"Why, yes," said Lorne.

He left them with a brief excuse, and they stood together in a moment's silence, three practical politicians who had delivered themselves from a dangerous network involving higher things.

"Dash these heart-to-heart talks," said Bingham irritably, "it's the only thing to do, but why the devil didn't he want something out of it? I had that Registrarship in my inside pocket."

"If anybody likes to kick me round the room," remarked Horace Williams with depression, "I have no very strong objection."

"And now," Mr Farquharson said with a sigh, "we understand it's got to be Carter. I suppose I'm too old a man to do jockey for a three-year-old, but I own I've enjoyed the ride."

Lorne Murchison went out into the companionship of Main Street, the new check in his fortunes hanging before him. We may imagine that it hung heavily; we may suppose that

it cut off the view. As Bingham would have said, he was "up against it" and that, when one is confidently treading the straight path to accomplishment, is a dazing experience. He was up against it, yet already he had recoiled far enough to consider it; already he was adapting his heart, his nerves, and his future to it. His heart took it greatly, told him he had not yet force enough for the business he had aspired to, but gave him a secret assurance. Another time he would find more strength and show more cunning; he would not disdain the tools of diplomacy and desirability, he would dream no more of short cuts in great political departures. His heart bowed to its sorry education and took counsel with him, bidding him be of good courage and push on. He was up against it, but he would get round it, and there on the other side lay the same wide prospect, with the Idea shining high. At one point he faltered, but that was a matter of expediency rather than of courage. He searched and selected, as he went along the street, among phrases that would convey his disaster to Dora Milburn.

Just at that point, the turning to his own office, he felt it hard luck that Alfred Hesketh should meet and want a word with him. Hesketh had become tolerable only when other things were equal. Lorne had not seen him since the night of his election, when his felicitations had seemed to stand for very little one way or another. His manner now was more important charged with other considerations. Lorne waited on the word, uncomfortably putting off the necessity of coming out with his misfortune.

"I haven't come across you, Murchison, but you've had my sympathy, I needn't say, all this time. A man can't go into politics with gloves on, there's no doubt about that. Though mind you, I never for a moment believed that you let yourself in personally. I mean, I've held you all through, above the faintest suspicion."

"Have you?" said Lorne. "Well, I suppose I ought to be grateful."

"Oh, I have--I assure you! But give me a disputed election for the revelation of a rotten state of things--eh?"

"It does show up pretty low, doesn't it?"

"However, upon my word, I don't know whether it's any better in England. At bottom we've got a lower class to deal with, you know. I'm beginning to have a great respect for the electorate of this country, Murchison--not necessarily the methods, but the rank and file of the people. They know what they want, and they're going to have it."

"Yes," said Lorne, "I guess they are."

"And that brings me to my news, old man. I've given the matter a lot of time and a lot of consideration, and I've decided that I can't do better than drive in a stake for myself in this new country of yours."

"It isn't so very new," Lorne told him, in rather dull response, "but I expect that's a pretty good line to take. Why, yes--first rate."

"As to the line," Hesketh went on, weightily, leading the way through an encumbering group of farmers at a corner, "I've selected that, too. Traction-engines. Milburn has never built them yet, but he says the

opportunity is ripe--"

"Milburn!" Lorne wheeled sharply.

"My future partner. He was planning extensions just as I came along, a fortunate moment, I hope it will prove, for us both. I'd like to go into it with you, some time when you have leisure--it's a scheme of extraordinary promise. By the way, there's an idea in it that ought to appeal to you--driving the force that's to subdue this wilderness of yours."

"When you've lived here for a while," said Lorne, painfully preoccupied, "you'll think it quite civilized. So you're going in with Milburn?"

"Oh, I'm proud of it already! I shall make a good Canadian, I trust. And as good an imperialist," he added, "as is consistent with the claims of my adopted country."

"That seems to be the popular view," said Lorne.

"And a very reasonable view, too. But I'm not going to embark on that with you, old fellow--you shan't draw me in. I know where you are on that subject."

"So do I--I'm stranded. But it's all right--the subject isn't," Lorne said quietly; and Hesketh's exclamations and inquiries brought out the morning's reverse. The young Englishman was cordially sorry, full of concern and personal disappointment, abandoning his own absorbing affairs, and devoting his whole attention to the unfortunate exigency which Lorne dragged out of his breast, in pure manfulness, to lay before him.

However, they came to the end of it, arriving at the same time at the door which led up the stairs to the office of Fulke, Warner, and Murchison.

"Thank you," said Lorne. "'Thank you. Oh, I dare say it will come all right in the course of time. You return to England, I suppose--or do you?--before you go in with Milburn?"

"I sail next week," said Hesketh, and a great relief shot into the face of his companion. "I have a good deal to see to over there. I shan't get back much before June, I fancy. And--I must tell you--I am doing the thing very thoroughly. This business of naturalizing myself, I mean. I am going to marry that very charming girl--a great friend of yours, by the way, I know her to be--Miss Milburn."

For accepting the strokes of fate we have curiously trivial demonstrations. Lorne met Hesketh's eye with the steadiness of a lion's in his own; the unusual thing he did was to take his hands out of his pockets and let his arms hang loosely by his side. It was as tragic a gesture of helplessness as if he had flung them above his head.

"Dora is going to marry you?"

"I believe she will do me that honour. And I consider it an honour. Miss Milburn will compare with any English girl I ever met. But I half expected you to congratulate me. I know she wrote to you this morning--you were one of the first."

"I shall probably find the letter," said Lorne mechanically,

"when I go home."

He still eyed Hesketh narrowly, as if he had somewhere concealed about him the explanation of this final bitter circumstance. He had a desire not to leave him, to stand and parley--to go upstairs to the office would be to plunge into the gulf. He held back from that and leaned against the door frame, crossing his arms and looking over into the market-place for subjects to postpone Hesketh's departure. They talked of various matters in sight, Hesketh showing the zest of his newly determined citizenship in every observation--the extension of the electric tramway, the pulling down of the old Fire Hall. In one consciousness Lorne made concise and relevant remarks; in another he sat in a spinning dark world and waited for the crash.

It seemed to come when Hesketh said, preparing to go, "I'll tell Miss Milburn I saw you. I suppose this change in your political prospects won't affect your professional plans in any way you'll stick on here, at the Bar?"

It was the very shock of calamity, and for the instant he could see nothing in the night of it but one far avenue of escape, a possibility he had never thought of seriously until that moment. The conception seemed to form itself on his lips, to be involuntary.

"I don't know. A college friend has been pressing me for some time to join him in Milwaukee. He offers me plenty of work, and I am thinking seriously of closing with him."

"Go over to the United States? You can't mean that!"

"Oh yes--it's the next best thing!"

Hesketh's face assumed a gravity, a look of feeling and of remonstrance. He came a step nearer and put a hand on his companion's arm.

"Come now, Murchison," he said, "I ask you--is this a time to be thinking of chucking the Empire?"

Lorne moved farther into the passage with an abruptness which left his interlocutor staring. He stood there for a moment in silence, and then turned to mount the stair with a reply which a passing dray happily prevented from reaching Hesketh's ears.

"No, damn you," he said. "It's not!"

I cannot let him finish on that uncontrolled phrase, though it will be acknowledged that his provocation was great. Nor must we leave him in heavy captivity to the thought of oblivion in the unregarding welter of the near republic, of plunging into more strenuous activities and abandoning his ideal, in queer inverted analogy to the refuging of weak women in a convent. We know that his ideal was strong enough to reassert itself, under a keen irony of suggestion, in the very depth of his overwhelming; and the thing that could rise in him at that black moment may be trusted, perhaps, to reclaim his fortitude and reconsecrate his energy when these things come again into the full current of his life. The illness that, after two or three lagging days, brought him its merciful physical distraction was laid in the general understanding at the door of his political disappointment; and, among a crowd of sympathizers confined to no party, Horace

Williams, as his wife expressed it, was pretty nearly wild during its progress. The power of the press is regrettably small in such emergencies, but what restoration it had Horace anxiously administered; the Express published a daily bulletin. The second election passed only half-noticed by the Murchison family; Carter very nearly re-established the Liberal majority. The Dominion dwelt upon this repeated demonstration of the strength of Reform principles in South Fox, and Mrs Murchison said they were welcome to Carter.

Many will sympathize with Mrs Murchison at this point, I hope, and regret to abandon her in such equivocal approval of the circumstances which have arisen round her. Too anxiously occupied at home to take her share in the general pleasant sensation of Dr Drummond's marriage, she was compelled to give it a hurried consideration and a sanction which was practically wrested from her. She could not be clear as to the course of events that led to it, nor entirely satisfied, as she said, about the ins and outs of the affair; this although she felt she could be clearer, and possibly had better grounds for being satisfied, than other people. As to Advena's simple statement that Miss Cameron had made a second choice of the Doctor, changing her mind, as far as Mrs Murchison could see, without rhyme or reason, that Mrs Murchison took leave to find a very poor explanation. Advena's own behaviour toward the rejection is one of the things which her mother declares, probably truly, that she never will understand. To pick up a man in the actual fling of being thrown over, will never, in Mrs Murchison's eyes, constitute a decorous proceeding. I suppose she thinks the creature might have been made to wait at least until he had found his feet. She professes to cherish no antagonism to her future son-in-law on this account, although, as she says, it's a queer way to come into a family; and she makes no secret of her belief that Miss Cameron showed excellent judgement in doing as she did, however that far-seeing woman came to have the opportunity.

Hesketh had sailed before Lorne left his room, to return in June to those privileges and prospects of citizenship which he so eminently deserves to enjoy. When her brother's convalescence and departure for Florida had untied her tongue, Stella widely proclaimed her opinion that Mr Hesketh's engagement to Miss Milburn was the most suitable thing that could be imagined or desired. We know the youngest Miss Murchison to be inclined to impulsive views; but it would be safe, I think, to follow her here. Now that the question no longer circles in the actual vortex of Elgin politics Mr Octavius Milburn's attitude toward the conditions of imperial connection has become almost as mellow as ever. Circumstances may arise any day, however, to stir up that latent bitterness which is so potential in him: and then I fear there will be no restraining him from again attacking Wallingham in the papers.

Henry Cruickshank, growing old in his eminence and less secure, perhaps, in the increasing conflict of loud voices, of his own grasp of the ultimate best, fearing too, no doubt, the approach of that cynicism which, moral or immoral, is the real hoar of age, wrote to young Murchison while he was still examining the problems of the United States with the half-heart of the alien, and offered him a partnership. The terms were so simple and advantageous as only to be explicable on the grounds I have mentioned, though no phrase suggested them in the brief formulas of the letter, in which one is tempted to

find the individual parallel of certain propositions of a great government also growing old. The offer was accepted, not without emotion, and there, too, it would be good to trace the parallel, were we permitted; but for that it is too soon, or perhaps it is too late. Here, for Lorne and for his country, we lose the thread of destiny. The shuttles fly, weaving the will of the nations, with a skein for ever dipped again; and he goes forth to his share in the task among those by whose hand and direction the pattern and the colours will be made.

END