

wheeling sharp right about face; yet, as Bellew watched him go, he noticed that the soldier's step was heavy, and slow, and it seemed that, for once, the Sergeant had even forgotten to put on his imaginary spurs.

CHAPTER XV

In which Adam explains

“ ADAM! ”

“ Yes, Miss Anthea. ”

“ How much money did Mr. Bellew give you to — buy the furniture? ”

Miss Anthea was sitting in her great elbow chair, leaning forward with her chin in her hand, looking at him in the way which always seemed to Adam as though she could see into the verimost recesses of his mind. Therefore Adam twisted his hat in his hands, and stared at the ceiling, and the floor, and the table before Miss Anthea, and the wall behind Miss Anthea — anywhere but at Miss Anthea.

“ You ax me — how much it were, Miss Anthea? ”

“ Yes, Adam. ”

“ Well, — it were a goodish sum. ”

“ Was it — fifty pounds? ”

“ Fifty pound! ” repeated Adam, in a tone of lofty disdain, “ no, Miss Anthea, it were *not* fifty pound. ”

“ Do you mean it was — more? ”

"Ah!" nodded Adam, "I mean as it were a sight more. If you was to take the fifty pound you mention, add twenty more, and then another twenty to that, and then come ten more to that, — why then — you'd be a bit nigher the figure —"

"A hundred pounds!" exclaimed Anthea, aghast.

"Ah! a hundred pound!" nodded Adam, rolling the words upon his tongue with great gusto, — "one — hundred — pound, were the sum, Miss Anthea."

"Oh, Adam!"

"Lord love you, Miss Anthea! — that weren't nothing, — that were only a flea-bite, as you might say, — he give more — ah! nigh double as much as that for the side-board."

"Nonsense, Adam!"

"It be gospel true, Miss Anthea. That there sideboard were the plum o' the sale, so to speak, an' old Grimes had set 'is 'eart on it, d'ye see. Well, it were bid up to eighty-six pound, an' then Old Grimes 'e goes twenty more, making it a hundred an' six. Then — jest as I thought it were all over, an' jest as that there Old Grimes were beginning to swell hissself up wi' triumph, an' get that red in the face as 'e were a sight to behold, — Mr. Belloo,

who'd been lightin' 'is pipe all this time, up and sez, — 'Fifty up!' 'e sez in his quiet way, making it a hundred an' fifty-six pound, Miss Anthea, — which were too much for Grimes, — Lord! I thought as that there man were going to burst, Miss Anthea!" and Adam gave vent to his great laugh at the mere recollection. But Anthea was grave enough, and the troubled look in her eyes quickly sobered him.

"A hundred and fifty-six pounds!" she repeated in an awed voice, "but it — it is awful!"

"Steepish!" admitted Adam, "pretty steepish for a old sideboard, I'll allow, Miss Anthea, — but you see it were a personal matter betwixt Grimes an' Mr. Belloo. I began to think as they never would ha' left off biddin', an' by George! — I don't believe as Mr. Belloo ever would have left off biddin'. Ye see, there's summ'at about Mr. Belloo, — whether it be his voice, or his eye, or his chin, — I don't know, — but there be summ'at about him as says, very distinct that if so be 'e should 'appen to set 'is mind on a thing, — why 'e's a-going to get it, an' 'e ain't a-going to give in till 'e do get it. Ye see, Miss Anthea, 'e's so very quiet in 'is ways, an' speaks so soft, an' gentle, —

p'raps that's it. Say, for instance, 'e were to ax you for summ'at, an' you said ' No ' — well, 'e wouldn't make no fuss about it, — not 'im, — he'd jest — take it, that's what he'd do. As for that there sideboard he'd a sat there a bidding and a bidding all night I do believe."

" But, Adam, why did he do it? Why did he buy — all that furniture? "

" Well, — to keep it from being took away, p'raps! "

" Oh, Adam! — what am I to do? "

" Do, Miss Anthea? "

" The mortgage must be paid off — dreadfully soon — you know that, and — I can't — Oh, I can't give the money back — "

" Why — give it back! — No, a course not, Miss Anthea! "

" But I — can't — keep it! "

" Can't keep it, Miss Anthea mam, — an' why not? "

" Because I'm very sure he doesn't want all those things, — the idea is quite — absurd! And yet, — even if the hops do well, the money they bring will hardly be enough by itself, and so — I was selling my furniture to make it up, and — now — Oh! what am I to do? " and she leaned her head wearily upon her hand.

Now, seeing her distress, Adam all sturdy

loyalty that he was, must needs sigh in sympathy, and fell, once more, to twisting his hat until he had fairly wrung it out of all semblance to its kind, twisting and screwing it between his strong hands as though he would fain wring out of it some solution to the problem that so perplexed his mistress. Then, all at once, the frown vanished from his brow, his grip loosened upon his unfortunate hat, and his eye brightened with a sudden gleam.

" Miss Anthea," said he, drawing a step nearer, and lowering his voice mysteriously, " supposing as I was to tell you that 'e did want that furnitur', — ah! an' wanted it bad? "

" Now how can he, Adam? It isn't as though he lived in England," said Anthea, shaking her head, " his home is thousands of miles away, — he is an American, and besides — "

" Ah! — but then — even a American — may get married, Miss Anthea, mam! " said Adam.

" Married! " she repeated, glancing up very quickly, " Adam — what do you mean? "

" Why you must know," began Adam, wringing at his hat again, " ever since the day I found him asleep in your hay, Miss Anthea,

mam, Mr. Belloo has been very kind, and—friendly like. Mr. Belloo an' me 'ave smoked a good many sociable pipes together, an' when men smoke together, Miss Anthea, they likewise talk together."

"Yes?—Well?" said Anthea, rather breathlessly, and taking up a pencil that happened to be lying near to hand.

"And Mr. Belloo," continued Adam, heavily, "Mr. Belloo has done me—the—the honour," here Adam paused to give an extra twist to his hat,—“the—honour, Miss Anthea—”

"Yes, Adam."

"Of con-fiding to me 'is 'opes—" said Adam slowly, finding it much harder to frame his well-meaning falsehood than he had supposed, "his—H-O-P-E-S—'opes, Miss Anthea, of settling down very soon, an' of marryin' a fine young lady as 'e 'as 'ad 'is eye on a goodish time,—'aving knowed her from childhood's hour, Miss Anthea, and as lives up to Lonnon—”

"Yes—Adam!"

"Consequently—'e bought all your furnitur' to set up 'ousekeepin', don't ye see."

"Yes,—I see, Adam!" Her voice was low, soft and gentle as ever, but the pencil was

tracing meaningless scrawls in her shaking fingers.

"So you don't 'ave to be no-wise back-ard about keepin' the money, Miss Anthea."

"Oh no,—no, of course not, I—I understand, it was—just a—business transaction."

"Ah!—that's it,—a business transaction!" nodded Adam, "So you'll put the money a one side to help pay off the mortgage, eh, Miss Anthea?"

"Yes."

"If the 'ops comes up to what they promise to come up to,—you'll be able to get rid of Old Grimes—for good an' all, Miss Anthea."

"Yes, Adam."

"An' you be quite easy in your mind, now, Miss Anthea—about keepin' the money?"

"Quite!—Thank you, Adam—for—telling me. You can go now."

"Why then—Good-night! Miss Anthea, mam,—the mortgage is as good as paid,—there ain't no such 'ops nowhere near so good as our'n be. An'—you're quite free o' care, an' 'appy 'earted, Miss Anthea?"

"Quite—Oh quite, Adam!"

But when Adam's heavy tread had died away,—when she was all alone, she behaved rather strangely for one so free of care, and

happy-hearted. Something bright and glistening splashed upon the paper before her, the pencil slipped from her fingers, and, with a sudden, choking cry, she swayed forward, and hid her face in her hands.

CHAPTER XVI

In which Adam proposes a game

“To be, or not to be!” Bellew leaned against the mighty bole of “King Arthur,” and stared up at the moon with knitted brows. “That is the question!—whether I shall brave the slings, and arrows and things, and—speak to-night, and have done with it—one way or another, or live on, a while, secure in this uncertainty? To wait? Whether I shall, at this so early stage, pit all my chances of happiness against the chances of—losing her, and with her—Small Porges, bless him! and all the quaint, and lovable beings of this wonderful Arcadia of mine. For, if her answer be ‘No,’—what recourse have I,—what is there left me but to go wandering forth again, following the wind, and with the gates of Arcadia shut upon me for ever? ‘To be, or not to be,—that is the question!’”

“Be that you, Mr. Belloo, sir?”

“Even so, Adam. Come sit ye a while, good knave, and gaze upon Dian’s loveliness, and smoke, and let us converse of dead kings.”

"Why, kings ain't much in my line, sir, — living or dead uns, — me never 'aving seen any — except a pic'ter, — and that tore, though very life-like. But why I were a lookin' for you was to ax you to back me up, — an' to — play the game, Mr. Belloo sir."

"Why — as to that, my good Adam, — my gentle Daphnis, — my rugged Euphemio, — you may rely upon me to the uttermost. Are you in trouble? Is it counsel you need, or only money? Fill your pipe, and, while you smoke, confide your cares to me, — put me wise, or, as your French cousins would say, — make me 'au fait.'"

"Well," began Adam, when his pipe was well alight, "in the first place, Mr. Belloo sir, I begs to remind you, as Miss Anthea sold her furnitur' to raise enough money as with what the 'ops will bring, might go to pay off the mortgage, — for good an' all, sir."

"Yes."

"Well, to-night, sir, Miss Anthea calls me into the parlour to ax, — or as you might say, — en-quire as to the why, an' likewise the wherefore of you a buyin' all that furnitur'."

"Did she, Adam?"

"Ah! — 'why did 'e do it?' says she — 'well, to keep it from bein' took away, p'raps,' says I — sharp as any gimblet, sir."

"Good!" nodded Bellew.

"Ah! — but it weren't no good, sir," returned Adam, "because she sez as 'ow your 'ome being in America, you couldn't really need the furnitur', — nor yet want the furnitur', — an' blest if she wasn't talkin' of handing you the money back again."

"Hum!" said Bellew.

"Seeing which, sir, an' because she must have that money if she 'opes to keep the roof of Dapplemere over 'er 'ead, I, there an' then, made up, — or as you might say, — con-cocted a story, a anecdote, or a yarn, — upon the spot, Mr. Belloo sir."

"Most excellent Machiavelli! — proceed!"

"I told her, sir, as you bought that furnitur' on account of you being wishful to settle down, — whereat she starts, an' looks at me wi' her eyes big, an' surprised-like. I told 'er, likewise, as you had told me on the quiet, — or as you might say, — con-fi-dential, that you bought that furnitur' to set up 'ouse-keeping on account o' you being on the p'int o' marry-ing a fine young lady up to Lonnon, — "

"What!" Bellew didn't move, nor did he raise his voice, — nevertheless Adam started back, and instinctively threw up his arm.

"You — told her — that?"

"I did sir."

"But you knew it was a — confounded lie."

"Aye, — I knowed it. But I'd tell a hundred, — ah! thousands o' lies, con-founded, or otherwise, — to save Miss Anthea."

"To save her?"

"From ruination, sir! From losing Dapplemere Farm, an' every thing she has in the world. Lord love ye! — the 'ops can never bring in by theirselves all the three thousand pounds as is owing, — it ain't to be expected, — but if that three thousand pound ain't paid over to that dirty Grimes by next Saturday week as ever was, that dirty Grimes turns Miss Anthea out o' Dapplemere, wi' Master Georgy, an' poor little Miss Priscilla, — An' what'll become o' them then, — I don't know. Lord! when I think of it the 'Old Adam' do rise up in me to that extent as I'm minded to take a pitch-fork and go and skewer that there Grimes to his own chimbley corner. Ye see Mr. Belloo sir," he went on, seeing Bellew was silent still, "Miss Anthea be that proud, an' independent that she'd never ha' took your money, sir, if I hadn't told her that there lie, — so that's why I did tell her that here lie."

"I see," nodded Bellew, "I see! — yes, — you did quite right. You acted for the best, and

you — did quite right, Adam, — yes, quite right."

"Thankee sir!"

"And so — this is the game I am to play, is it?"

"That's it, sir; if she ax's you, — 'are you goin' to get married?' — you'll tell her 'yes, — to a lady as you've knowed from your childhood's hour, — living in Lon'non,' — that's all, sir."

"That's all is it, Adam!" said Bellew slowly, turning to look up at the moon again. "It doesn't sound very much, does it? Well, I'll play your game, — Adam, — yes, you may depend upon me."

"Thankee, Mr. Belloo sir, — thankee sir! — though I do 'ope as you'll excuse me for taking such liberties, an' making so free wi' your 'eart, and your affections, sir?"

"Oh certainly, Adam! — the cause excuses — everything."

"Then, good-night, sir!"

"Good-night, Adam!"

So this good, well-meaning Adam strode away, proud on the whole of his night's work, leaving Bellew to frown up at the moon with teeth clenched tight upon his pipe-stem.

CHAPTER XVII

How Bellew began the game

Now in this life of ours, there be games of many, and divers, sorts, and all are calculated to try the nerve, courage, or skill of the player, as the case may be. Bellew had played many kinds of games in his day, and, among others, had once been famous as a Right Tackle on the Harvard Eleven. Upon him he yet bore certain scars received upon a memorable day when Yale, flushed with success, saw their hitherto invincible line rent and burst asunder, saw a figure torn, bruised, and bleeding, flash out and away down the field to turn defeat into victory, and then to be borne off honourably to hospital, and bed.

If Bellew thought of this, by any chance, as he sat there, staring up at the moon, it is very sure that, had the choice been given him, he would joyfully have chosen the game of torn flesh, and broken bones, or any other game, no matter how desperate, rather than this particular game that Adam had invented, and thrust upon him.

Presently Bellew knocked the ashes from his pipe, and rising, walked on slowly toward the house. As he approached, he heard someone playing the piano, and the music accorded well with his mood, or his mood with the music, for it was haunting, and very sweet, and with a recurring melody in a minor key, that seemed to voice all the sorrow of Humanity, past, present, and to come.

Drawn by the music, he crossed the Rose Garden, and reaching the terrace, paused there; for the long French windows were open, and, from where he stood, he could see Anthea seated at the piano. She was dressed in a white gown of some soft, clinging material, and among the heavy braids of her hair was a single great, red rose. And, as he watched, he thought she had never looked more beautiful than now, with the soft glow of the candles upon her; for her face reflected the tender sadness of the music, it was in the mournful droop of her scarlet lips, and the sombre depths of her eyes. Close beside her sat little Miss Priscilla busy with her needle as usual, but now she paused, and lifting her head in her quick, bird-like way, looked up at Anthea, long, and fixedly.

“Anthea my dear,” said she suddenly, “I’m fond of music, and I love to hear you play, as

you know, — but I never heard you play quite so — dolefully? dear me, no, — that's not the right word, — nor dismal, — but I mean something between the two."

"I thought you were fond of Grieg, Aunt Priscilla."

"So I am, but then, even in his gayest moments, poor Mr. Grieg was always breaking his heart over something, or other. And — Gracious! — there's Mr. Bellew at the window. Pray come in, Mr. Bellew, and tell us how you liked Peterday, and the muffins?"

"Thank you!" said Bellew, stepping in through the long French window, "but I should like to hear Miss Anthea play again, first, if she will?"

But Anthea, who had already risen from the piano, shook her head:

"I only play when I feel like it, — to please myself, — and Aunt Priscilla," said she, crossing to the broad, low window-seat, and leaning out into the fragrant night.

"Why then," said Bellew, sinking into the easy-chair that Miss Priscilla indicated with a little stab of her needle, "why then the muffins were delicious, Aunt Priscilla, and Peterday was just exactly what a one-legged mariner ought to be."

"And the shrimps, Mr. Bellew?" enquired Miss Priscilla, busy at her sewing again.

"Out-shrimped all other shrimps so ever!" he answered, glancing to where Anthea sat with her chin propped in her hand, gazing up at the waning moon, seemingly quite oblivious of him.

"And did — *He* — pour out the tea?" enquired Miss Priscilla, "from the china pot with the blue flowers and the Chinese Mandarin fanning himself, — and very awkward, of course, with his one hand, — I don't mean the Mandarin, Mr. Bellew, — and very full of apologies?"

"He did."

"Just as usual; yes he always does, — and every year he gives me three lumps of sugar, — and I only take one, you know. It's a pity," sighed Miss Priscilla, "that it was his right arm, — a great pity!" And here she sighed again, and, catching herself, glanced up quickly at Bellew, and smiled to see how completely absorbed he was in contemplation of the silent figure in the window-seat. "But, after all, better a right arm — than a leg," she pursued, — "at least, I think so!"

"Certainly!" murmured Bellew.

"A man with only one leg, you see, would

be almost as helpless as an — old woman with a crippled foot, — ”

“ Who grows younger, and brighter, every year! ” added Bellew, turning to her with his pleasant smile, “ yes, and I think, — prettier! ”

“ Oh, Mr. Bellew! ” exclaimed Miss Priscilla shaking her head at him reprovngly, yet looking pleased, none the less, — “ how can you be so ridiculous, — Good gracious me! ”

“ Why, it was the Sergeant who put it into my head, — ”

“ The Sergeant? ”

“ Yes, — it was after I had given him your message about peaches, Aunt Priscilla and — ”

“ Oh dear heart! ” exclaimed Miss Priscilla, at this juncture, “ Prudence is out, to-night, and I promised to bake the bread for her, and here I sit chatting, and gossiping while that bread goes rising, and rising all over the kitchen! ” And Miss Priscilla laid aside her sewing, and catching up her stick, hurried to the door.

“ And I was almost forgetting to wish you ‘many happy returns of the day, Aunt Priscilla!’ ” said Bellew, rising.

At this familiar appellation, Anthea turned sharply, in time to see him stoop, and kiss Miss Priscilla’s small, white hand; whereupon An-

thea must needs curl her lip at his broad back. Then he opened the door, and Miss Priscilla tapped away, even more quickly than usual.

Anthea was half-sitting, half-kneeling among the cushions in the corner of the deep window, apparently still lost in contemplation of the moon. So much so, that she did not stir, or even lower her up-ward gaze, when Bellew came, and stood beside her.

Therefore, taking advantage of the fixity of her regard, he, once more, became absorbed in her loveliness. Surely a most unwise proceeding — in Arcadia, by the light of a midsummer moon! And he mentally contrasted the dark, proud beauty of her face, with that of all the women he had ever known, — to their utter, and complete disparagement.

“ Well? ” enquired Anthea, at last, perfectly conscious of his look, and finding the silence growing irksome, yet still with her eyes averted, — “ Well, Mr. Bellew? ”

“ On the contrary, ” he answered, “ the moon is on the wane! ”

“ The moon! ” she repeated, “ Suppose it is, — what then? ”

“ True happiness can only come riding astride the full moon you know, — you remember old Nannie told us so. ”

“And you—believed it?” she enquired scornfully.

“Why, of course!” he answered in his quiet way.

Anthea didn't speak but, once again, the curl of her lip was eloquent.

“And so,” he went on, quite unabashed, “when I behold Happiness riding astride the full moon, I shall just reach up, in the most natural manner in the world, and—take it down, that it may abide with me, world without end.”

“Do you think you will be tall enough?”

“We shall see,—when the time comes.”

“I think it's all very ridiculous!” said Anthea.

“Why then—suppose you play for me, that same, plaintive piece you were playing as I came in,—something of Grieg's I think it was,—will you, Miss Anthea?”

She was on the point of refusing, then, as if moved by some capricious whim, she crossed to the piano, and dashed into the riotous music of a Polish Dance. As the wild notes leapt beneath her quick, brown fingers, Bellew, seated near-by, kept his eyes upon the great, red rose in her hair, that nodded slyly at him with her every movement. And surely, in all the world,

there had never bloomed a more tantalizing, more wantonly provoking rose than this! Wherefore Bellew, very wisely, turned his eyes from its glowing temptation. Doubtless observing which, the rose, in evident desperation, nodded, and swayed, until, it had fairly nodded itself from its sweet resting-place, and, falling to the floor, lay within Bellew's reach. Whereupon, he promptly stooped, and picked it up, and,—even as, with a last, crashing chord, Anthea ceased playing, and turned, in that same moment he dropped it deftly into his coat pocket.

“Oh! by the way, Mr. Bellew,” she said, speaking as if the idea had but just entered her mind, “what do you intend to do about—all your furniture?”

“Do about it?” he repeated, settling the rose carefully in a corner of his pocket where it would not be crushed by his pipe.

“I mean—where would you like it—stored until you can send, and have it—taken away?”

“Well,—I—er—rather thought of keeping it—where it was if you didn't mind.”

“I'm afraid that will be—impossible, Mr. Bellew.”

“Why then the barn will be an excellent

place for it, I don't suppose the rats and mice will do it any real harm, and as for the damp, and the dust—"

"Oh! you know what I mean!" exclaimed Anthea, beginning to tap the floor impatiently with her foot. "Of course we can't go on using the things now that they are your property, it—wouldn't be—right."

"Very well," he nodded, his fingers questing anxiously after the rose again, "I'll get Adam to help me to shift it all into the barn, to-morrow morning."

"Will you please be serious, Mr. Bellew!"

"As an owl!" he nodded.

"Why then—of course you will be leaving Dapplemere soon, and I should like to know exactly when, so that I can—make the necessary arrangements."

"But you see, I am not leaving Dapplemere soon or even thinking of it."

"Not?" she repeated, glancing up at him in swift surprise.

"Not until—you bid me."

"I?"

"You!"

"But I—I understood that you—intend to—settle down?"

"Certainly!" nodded Bellew, transferring

his pipe to another pocket altogether, lest it should damage the rose's tender petals. "To settle down has lately become the—er—ambition of my life."

"Then pray," said Anthea, taking up a sheet of music, and beginning to study it with attentive eyes, "be so good as to tell me—what you mean."

"That necessarily brings us back to the moon again," answered Bellew.

"The moon?"

"The moon!"

"But what in the world has the moon to do with your furniture?" she demanded, her foot beginning to tap again.

"Everything!—I bought that furniture with—er—with one eye on the moon, as it were,—consequently the furniture, the moon, and I, are bound indissolubly together."

"You are pleased to talk in riddles, to-night, and really, Mr. Bellew, I have no time to waste over them, so, if you will excuse me—"

"Thank you for playing to me," he said, as he held the door open for her.

"I played because I—I felt like it, Mr. Bellew."

"Nevertheless, I thank you."

"When you make up your mind about—the furniture,—please let me know."

“ When the moon is at the full, yes.”

“ Can it be possible that you are still harping on the wild words of poor old Nannie? ” she exclaimed, and once more, she curled her lip at him.

“ Nannie is very old, I’ll admit,” he nodded, “ but surely you remember that we proved her right in one particular,—I mean about the Tiger Mark, you know.”

Now, when he said this, for no apparent reason, the eyes that had hitherto been looking into his, proud and scornful,—wavered, and were hidden under their long, thick lashes; the colour flamed in her cheeks, and, without another word, she was gone.

CHAPTER XVIII

How the Sergeant went upon his guard

THE Arcadians, one and all, generally follow that excellent maxim which runs:

“ Early to bed, and early to rise
Makes a man healthy, and wealthy, and wise.”

Healthy they are, beyond a doubt, and, in their quaint, simple fashion, profoundly wise. If they are not extraordinarily wealthy, yet are they generally blessed with contented minds which, after all, is better than money, and far more to be desired than fine gold.

Now whether their general health, happiness, and wisdom is to be attributed altogether to their early to bed proclivities, is perhaps a moot question. Howbeit, to-night, long after these weary Arcadians had forgotten their various cares, and troubles in the blessed oblivion of sleep, (for even Arcadia has its troubles) Bellew sat beneath the shade of “ King Arthur ” alone with his thoughts.

Presently, however, he was surprised to hear the house-door open, and close very softly, and