

together with their heads very close together and in muffled tones.

When, at last, Bellew rose, his eyes were bright and eager, and his square chin, prominent, and grimly resolute.

"So — you quite understand, my Porges?"

"Yes, yes — Oh I understand!"

"Where the little bridge spans the brook, — the trees are thicker, there."

"Aye aye, Captain!"

"Then — fare thee well, Shipmate! Good-bye, my Porges, — and remember!"

So they clasped hands, very solemnly, Big Porges, and Small Porges, and turned each his appointed way, the one up, the other down, the lane. But lo! as they went Small Porges' tears were banished quite; and Bellew strode upon his way, his head held high, his shoulders squared, like one in whom Hope has been newborn.

CHAPTER XXX

How Anthea gave her promise

"AND so — he — has really gone!" Miss Priscilla sighed as she spoke, and looked up from her needle-work to watch Anthea who sat biting her pen, and frowning down at the blank sheet of paper before her. "And so, he is — really — gone?"

"Who — Mr. Bellew? Oh yes!"

"He went — very early!"

"Yes."

"And — without any breakfast!"

"That was — his own fault!" said Anthea.

"And without even — saying 'Good-bye'!"

"Perhaps he was in a hurry," Anthea suggested.

"Oh dear me, no my dear! I don't believe Mr. Bellew was ever in a hurry in all his life."

"No," said Anthea, giving her pen a vicious bite, "I don't believe he ever was; he is always so — hatefully placid, and deliberate!" and here, she bit her pen again.

"Eh, my dear?" exclaimed Miss Priscilla,

pausing with her needle in mid-air, "did you say — hatefully?"

"Yes."

"Anthea!"

"I — hate him, Aunt Priscilla!"

"Eh? — My dear!"

"That was why I — sent him away."

"You — sent him away?"

"Yes."

"But — Anthea — why?"

"Oh Aunt Priscilla! — surely you never — believed in the — fortune? Surely you guessed it was — *his* money that paid back the mortgage, — didn't you, Aunt, — didn't you?"

"Well, my dear —. But then — he did it so very — tactfully, and — and — I had hoped, my dear that —"

"That I should — marry him, and settle the obligation that way, perhaps?"

"Well, yes my dear, I did hope so —"

"Oh! — I'm going to marry —"

"Then why did you send —"

"I'm going to marry Mr. Cassilis — whenever he pleases!"

"Anthea!" The word was a cry, and her needle-work slipped from Miss Priscilla's nerveless fingers.

"He asked me to write and tell him if ever I changed my mind —"

"Oh — my dear! my dear!" cried Miss Priscilla reaching out imploring hands, "you never mean it, — you are all distraught to-day — tired, and worn out with worry, and loss of sleep, — wait!"

"Wait!" repeated Anthea bitterly, "for what?"

"To — marry — him! O Anthea! you never mean it? Think, — think what you are doing."

"I thought of it all last night, Aunt Priscilla, and all this morning, and — I have made up my mind."

"You mean to write —?"

"Yes."

"To tell Mr. Cassilis that you will — marry him?"

"Yes."

But now Miss Priscilla rose, and, next moment, was kneeling beside Anthea's chair.

"Oh my dear!" she pleaded, "you that I love like my own flesh and blood, — don't! Oh Anthea! don't do what can never be undone. Don't give your youth and beauty to one who can never — never make you happy, — Oh Anthea —!"

"Dear Aunt Priscilla, I would rather marry one I don't love than have to live beholden all my days to a man that I — hate!" Now, as

she spoke, though her embrace was as ready, and her hands as gentle as ever, yet Miss Priscilla saw that her proud face was set, and stern. So, she presently rose, sighing, and taking her little crutch stick, tapped dolefully away, and left Anthea to write her letter.

And now, hesitating no more, Anthea took up her pen, and wrote, — surely a very short missive for a love-letter. And, when she had folded, and sealed it, she tossed it aside, and laying her arms upon the table, hid her face, with a long, shuddering sigh.

In a little while, she rose, and taking up the letter, went out to find Adam; but remembering that he had gone to Cranbrook with Small Porges, she paused irresolute, and then turned her steps toward the orchard. Hearing voices, she stopped again, and glancing about, espied the Sergeant, and Miss Priscilla. She had given both her hands into the Sergeant's one, great, solitary fist, and he was looking down at her, and she was looking up at him, and upon the face of each, was a great and shining joy.

And, seeing all this, Anthea felt herself very lonely all at once, and, turning aside, saw all things through a blurr of sudden tears. She was possessed, also, of a sudden, fierce loath-

ing of the future, a horror because of the promise her letter contained. Nevertheless she was firm, and resolute on her course because of the pride that burned within her.

So thus it was that as the Sergeant presently came striding along on his homeward way, he was suddenly aware of Miss Anthea standing before him; whereupon he halted, and removing his hat, wished her a "Good-afternoon!"

"Sergeant," said she, "will you do something for me?"

"Anything you ask me, Miss Anthea, mam, — ever and always."

"I want you to take this letter to — Mr. Cassilis, — will you?"

The Sergeant hesitated unwontedly, turning his hat about and about in his hand, finally he put it on, out of the way.

"Will you, Sergeant?"

"Since you ask me — Miss Anthea mam, — I will."

"Give it into his own hand."

"Miss Anthea mam — I will."

"Thank you! — here it is, Sergeant." And so she turned, and was gone, leaving the Sergeant staring down at the letter in his hand, and shaking his head over it.

Anthea walked on hastily, never looking behind, and so, coming back to the house, threw herself down by the open window, and stared out with unseeing eyes at the roses nodding slumberous heads in the gentle breeze.

So the irrevocable step was taken! She had given her promise to marry Cassilis whenever he would, and must abide by it! Too late now, any hope of retreat, she had deliberately chosen her course, and must follow it—to the end.

“Begging your pardon, Miss Anthea mam—!”

She started, and glancing round, espied Adam.

“Oh!—you startled me, Adam,—what is it?”

“Begging your pardon, Miss Anthea, but is it true as Mr. Belloo be gone away—for good?”

“Yes, Adam.”

“Why then all I can say is—as I’m sorry,—ah! mortal sorry I be, an’ my ’eart, mam, my ’eart likewise gloomy.”

“Were you so—fond of him, Adam?”

“Well, Miss Anthea,—considering as he were—the best, good-naturedest, properest kind o’ gentleman as ever was; when I tell you as over an’ above all this, he could use

his fists better than any man as ever I see,—him having knocked me into a dry ditch, though, to be sure I likewise drew his claret,—begging your pardon, I’m sure, Miss Anthea; all of which happened on account o’ me finding him a-sleeping in your ’ay, mam;—when I tell you furthermore, as he treated me ever as a man, an’ wern’t noways above shaking my ’and, or smoking a pipe wi’ me—sociable like; when I tell you as he were the finest gentleman, and properest man as ever I knowed, or heard tell on,—why, I think as the word ‘fond’ be about the size of it, Miss Anthea mam!” saying which, Adam nodded several times, and bestowed an emphatic back-handed knock to the crown of his hat.

“You used to sit together very often—under the big apple tree, didn’t you, Adam?”

“Ah!—many an’ many a night, Miss Anthea.”

“Did he—ever tell you—much of his—life, Adam?”

“Why yes, Miss Anthea,—told me summat about his travels, told me as he’d shot lions, an’ tigers—away out in India, an’ Africa.”

“Did he ever mention—”

“Well, Miss Anthea?” said he enquiringly, seeing she had paused.

"Did he ever speak of—the lady he is going to marry?"

"Lady?" repeated Adam, giving a sudden twist to his hat.

"Yes,—the lady—who lives in London?"

"No, Miss Anthea," answered Adam, screwing his hat tighter, and tighter.

"Why—what do you mean?"

"I mean—as there never was no lady, Miss Anthea,—neither up to Lonnon, nor nowhere's else, as I ever heard on."

"But—oh Adam!—you—told me—"

"Ah!—for sure I told ye, but it were a lie, Miss Anthea,—leastways, it weren't the truth. Ye see, I were afraid as you'd refuse to take the money for the furnitur' unless I made ye believe as he wanted it uncommon bad. So I up an' told ye as he'd bought it all on account o' him being matrimonially took wi' a young lady up to Lonnon—"

"And then—you went to—him, and warned him—told him of the story you had invented?"

"I did, Miss Anthea; at first, I thought as he were going to up an' give me one for myself, but, arterwards he took it very quiet, an' told me as I'd done quite right, an' agreed to play the game. An' that's all about it, an'

glad I am as it be off my mind at last. An' now, Miss Anthea mam, seeing you're that rich—wi' Master Georgy's fortun',—why you can pay back for the furnitur'—if so be you're minded to. An' I hope as you agree wi' me as I done it all for the best, Miss Anthea?"

Here, Adam unscrewed his hat, and knocked out the wrinkles against his knee, which done, he glanced at Anthea:

"Why—what is it, Miss Anthea?"

"Nothing, Adam,—I haven't slept well, lately—that's all."

"Ah, well!—you'll be all right again now,—we all shall,—now the mortgage be paid off,—shan't we, Miss Anthea?"

"Yes, Adam."

"We 'ad a great day—over to Cranbrook, Master Georgy an' me, he be in the kitchen now, wi' Prudence—a-eating of bread an' jam. Good-night, Miss Anthea mam, if you should be wanting me again I shall be in the stables,—Good-night, Miss Anthea!" So, honest, well-meaning Adam touched his forehead with a square-ended finger, and trudged away. But Anthea sat there, very still, with drooping head, and vacant eyes.

And so it was done, the irrevocable step had been taken; she had given her promise! So

now, having chosen her course, she must follow it—to the end.

For, in Arcadia, it would seem that a promise is still a sacred thing.

Now, in a while, lifting her eyes, they encountered those of the smiling Cavalier above the mantel. Then, as she looked, she stretched out her arms with a sudden yearning gesture:

“Oh!” she whispered, “if I were only—just a picture, like you.”

CHAPTER XXXI

Which, being the last, is, very properly, the longest in the book

In those benighted days when men went abroad cased in steel, and, upon very slight provocation, were wont to smite each other with axes, and clubs, to buffet and skewer each other with spears, lances, swords, and divers other barbarous engines, yet, in that dark, and doughty age, ignorant though they were of all those smug maxims, and excellent moralities with which we are so happily blessed,—even in that unhallowed day, when the solemn tread of the policeman's foot was all unknown,—they had evolved for themselves a code of rules whereby to govern their life, and conduct. Amongst these, it was tacitly agreed upon, and understood, that a spoken promise was a pledge, and held to be a very sacred thing, and he who broke faith, committed all the cardinal sins. Indeed their laws were very few, and simple, easily understood, and well calculated to govern man's conduct to his fellow. In this day of ours, ablaze with learning, and culture,