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than the volume or two of mediocre verse underneath. He made little enough of his genuine triumphs, his real abilities, but he would talk with that breath of a few stanzas which often rhymed as false as they rang. Once Tom cleaned the cups when Daintree was out, and he flew into something very like a rage when he came in and saw them. He was the most unaccountable of men.

"Still he is the kindest," was Tom's reflection on the top of that conclusion, and the same night he not only made another of his poor attempts at thanking Daintree for all that he was doing and had done; he at last put the question which seemed to mark a stride in his slow and uphill return from brute to man. And yet even now it was no very sincere curiosity, but rather an uncomfortable feeling that he ought to seem curious, which prompted him to say:

"I can't understand your kindness to me. Why did you begin it? Why do you go on? I wonder what made you take an interest in me at the start?"

Woe was the word, for woe he did, but keenly inquisitive he was not, and the stride was shorter than it had looked.

"I believed in your innocence," replied Daintree with deliberation; "that was all."

"I can't think why. You were the only one. Yet you knew nothing about me, it seems." And still his tone was that of purely impersonal speculation. Daintree took the cheroot from between his teeth.

"I knew something about Blaydes," said he.

"Ah!" "Not much; very little, in fact, but that little was pretty bad. I knew what an infernal blackguard he was, and I felt sure there must be more ruined men than one upon his track. You remember that point in the defense?"

Tom jumped up. "Don't remind me of it!" he cried. "The very barrister disbelieved in me! And it doesn't interest me now; it only hurts. Don't speak of it, if you please."

"Oh, very well," said Daintree, "only that point was suggested by me."

"You?" exclaimed Tom in an altered voice. "Ah, but what don't I owe to you? More than I can ever realize or believe; everything—everything—and yet I refuse to speak of it to you of all men! You see how ungrateful I am; you see what they've made of me among them. Oh, sir, forgive me, have patience with me, and I may be grateful yet! Give me time, and I shall thank you as I cannot now."

"You shall not," rejoined Daintree firmly. "You were quite right, and we'll speak of all this no more. Good heavens!" he cried out. "How do you know my motives were so pure? What if it was a mere whim—and not altogether my own? At all events, I take no credit for it, and never you thank me again, do you hear? You'll offend me if you do. You will indeed!"

He spoke earnestly, nervously and without a trace of affectation or egotism. Nor did Tom remember a single foible as he looked in the handsome, dark, inscrutable face and took his benefactor by both hands.

"God bless you!" he whispered. "Do you know what I used to call you in my heart when I had one? My Noble Unknown! Well, you are nobler even than I thought. Do you know what you are doing? You're giving me my heart back little by little! I shall be grateful yet!"

He went to the door, but would stand there gazing at his friend. So long he stood, with burning eyes that seemed to ache for tears, but at length he was gone, and Daintree sat alone with a cold cheroot between his fingers.

CHAPTER XXV.

ONCE in livery, Tom sat no more at his master's table. He had, however, to insist on waiting at it instead and to make himself the servant he had been hitherto in name only. Daintree would have let the old arrangement continue, but the new one was a boon to Tom. It gave him freedom and independence and occupation, and so helped him wonderfully upon the upward road.

One evening when a ship had come in and Daintree had driven into Sydney for his letters he returned in such extraordinary spirits that he could hardly touch his dinner; he must gloat over a crinkling sheet of paper, while the soup grew cold in the very spoon, and Tom could only suppose that his master's family had come round at last. As a rule, he talked incessantly to Tom while the latter waited, but this evening his letter absorbed his whole attention. At last, however, he looked up, and his saturnal countenance was redeemed and transfigured by a perfectly startling radiance and joy.

"Thomas," he said, "you must marry a wife!"

The cheery tone was as new in him as the delighted look. Tom was so astonished he had to think what the words meant before shaking his head.

"Why not, my good fellow?" cried Daintree.

"Why should you want me to?" retorted Tom.

"Because I am about to marry one myself."

Had he said he was about to bury one Tom could not have been more startled and amazed. Somehow he had never conceived of Daintree as a married man. That solitary spirit, centered and immersed in self and consciously wallowing in its own solitude and gloom, had forbidden such a thought the more easily since Tom had himself abandoned every aspiration of the kind. A twinge of jealousy succeeded his first surprise, but in another moment his heart dilated with unselfish pleasure, and his congratulations were no less sincere than vociferous.

"If you knew her," said Daintree, "you would congratulate me even more." And he proceeded to praise his choice as he could have praised nothing that was not in some sense his, and yet his passion was convincing. His voice shook with it as his face shone.

"A Sydney lady?" Tom ventured to inquire.

"Good heavens, no! If she only were as near as that! She is on her way out to marry me. This letter was written a month before she sailed."

"From England?"

"Yes."

"You will see her in another month." "Perhaps before. You never know how long or how short the voyage will be. Mine was 136 days, and that was long. I kept a chart of it—stop; I'm going to fetch it! Clear away. I've had dinner enough."

He rushed from the table, to return presently with a mariner's chart of the world, upon which he had neatly marked out the daily courses of his recent voyage. It was a chain of many links from England to the Cape and a chain of longer links from the Cape to Australia.

"Now, then," cried Daintree, arranging the chart under the lamp and seating himself delightedly at the table. "Now we'll see where they've got to. Hello! Where's my letter?"

It was on the floor, and Tom picked it up, averting his eyes so that he should see nothing while Daintree referred to the contents.

"Ha! Here we have it," and the letter was thrust into his pocket. "They were to sail on the 23d of June. How many days ago is that? This is September the 12th. Seven—thirty-one—thirty-one and twelve. How much is that?"

"Eighty-one," said Tom.

"Only eighty-one! Then you're right!" sighed Daintree, "and they won't be here for another month. I was fifty-five days more."

"They may make a quicker voyage." "They may, but I never have. The one before was a hundred and forty days. They were both above the average, but not so very much."

"Then all the more time to prepare in," said Tom, entering thoroughly into the situation. "We must get the place to rights, you know, sir."

"That's true. It will help to pass the time."

"Then we might pin up this chart." "What, and follow the course?"

"Suppose they came no quicker than you did and put a drawing pin in the place every day."

Daintree was delighted. He shook Tom's hand, and up went the chart and in went the drawing pin.

"You see," he said, "they've not got to the Cape yet. They're only just beginning to turn the corner and run their easting down."

"That's assuming they came no quicker than you," said his consoler. "Well, we will assume it. Still, when they're a hundred days out we'll have a flag ready, and you shall begin going every morning to the point to see whether there's a ball at the south yard arm, and after that will be the longest time of all."

Meanwhile there was much to do, and Tom did most of it with enormous zest. He had never thought to be so happy again. His enthusiasm was the one return that he could make to Daintree, and he permitted it no bounds. It was Tom who stuck the drawing pin through a cork ship of cunning build, full rigged, with needles for masts and paper sails. When Daintree saw it, they christened her the Rosamund, after her real namesake, with a fitting libation, and from that day forth the cork vessel plowed the white ocean of the chart and was a good half inch nearer Sydney every morning when the master of the house entered the breakfast room.

"You sympathetic fellow!" he would say to Tom, and sympathy bred sympathy as it always will. "You must marry yourself, Thomas," he would add, "and you and your wife must live with me and mine, and we'll go into partnership together up the country somewhere and all four live happy ever after."

To all of which the servant would shake his head, but continue to enter into the master's happiness with unabated sympathy and enthusiasm. Nor was this a conscious merit in Tom; it made him think no better of himself. He knew how much was inspired by gratitude and how much more by the selfish relief of sinking his own woes in the hopes and fears and raptures of his friend. He was not even aware of the essential fineness of a nature capable of this kind of comfort. Eternal dissatisfaction with his own feelings kept his opinion of himself at zero still. And if the new bond between Tom and his benefactor had done no more than provide them with common ground on which they might meet and be at one in all sincerity, even so it would have done much for Tom's peace of mind.

When Daintree spoke of his beloved his dark face shone, the darker eyes softened, and the rich voice quivered with no common passion. It was possible to agree and to applaud without hypocrisy, which was not possible when the puny poet stood in the strong man's shoes. Of his poetry enough has been said, but about his passion there was no mistake. The one was genuine; the other was not. It was a man's passion, a selfish passion, but the sheer masterful strength of it was patent to Tom from the first. Sometimes it made him fear for the girl, and despair of himself. Gratitude apart, it was as though his spoiled and petty spirit was incapable of an honest, whole hearted, ungrudging admiration and regard.

In all their talks the only name Tom heard was Clarinda. It was characteristic of his state that he never inquired of the other. His sympathy and his interest were confined to his friend.

real curiosity he had none. He asked no questions, but a crooked answer was ready for him if he had.

"You must let me tell her all I owe to you," Tom said once. "It will be a pleasure to her and a relief to me."

"Perhaps you owe as much to herself."

It had slipped out, but Tom was not at all excited.

"You mean that she believed in me, too?" he asked with a mild sort of incredulity, and he saw from the other's face that she had not. "Upon my soul," he thought, "I begin to disbelieve in myself, especially since I've done as bad out here—and perhaps not heard the last of it yet!"

Daintree wondered why he shuddered in the sun. It was because his one true and fierce emotion was the base fear of further tortures. He despised himself for that most of all.

Meanwhile the cork ship with the paper sails was creeping slowly, but surely, across the great white south Atlantic of the chart, and the wall on which it hung had been repaired, and the whole bungalow smelt of paint. It was a fair sized house of two stories, with a veranda encircling the one and a balcony the other. Very pretty it looked in its new coat of paint for the summer, a white coat with yellow trimmings, which stood out delightfully on the blue water's edge. The garden lawn merged into a narrow strand that laid straight under the wavelets themselves. As summer set in the trees behind the house broke out in every gay and gorgeous color; it was the plumage of the parrots that now came and perched in flocks among the branches.

Tom gave up his room, as two ladies and a maid were expected. It was reserved for the maid. A room was found for Tom in the pretty little stables amid the trees, where he helped Fawcett with the horses and the currie, which was in Sydney on some errand every day. Generally the master went alone. Once he took Tom with him. It was on the occasion of his cashing a check to meet the running expenses of these elaborate preparations.

They were on their way home at dusk when Daintree pulled up on the outskirts of the town and hailed a disconsolate, soldierly figure with one arm in a sling.

"Why, Harry!" cried Daintree. "That's never you?"

"I wish it wasn't, sir."

"You've left the force?"

"These six months. It was my arm. Look there, sir!"

An emaciated hand came through the sling. The thumb and forefinger were uninjured, but half the middle finger and both the other two were like dead, distorted branches on a living tree.

"What did it do?"

"A bullet; caught me on the funny bone and paralyzed half my hand. My right hand too. It's set me on the shelf at thirty-three."

"An accident, Harry?"

"Tom held his breath."

"Quite," said Harry bitterly. "It was meant for my heart. You would hear of the bushrangers at Dr. Sullivan's last summer—that's when it was—and the one that did it was the only one to get away."

Tom's clothes were sticking to him, freezing him. "Drive on!" he whispered. "For God's sake, sir, drive on!" Daintree expressed sympathy with the man and whipped up his horses.

"Not so fast!" cried Tom. "You offered me wages. Advance me £5 of what you got from the bank!"

His face was white with horror, his tone so piteous and so eager that Daintree pulled up, took 50 sovereigns from a bag and dropped them one by one into the trembling hand. Tom sprang out and ran back to the disabled man.

"From my master!" he gasped and thrust the money into his left hand and darted back without daring to look in his face. The astonished trooper had not time to say a word.

"God bless you for that money!" faltered Tom in terrible agitation as they drove on. "I gave it to him from you. I want no wages. Give them all to him!"

The other remained silent.

"You don't ask why?"

"I think I know."

"It was I who smashed his arm and spoiled his life!"

"I suspected it."

"When?"

"On the road down, when you kept looking behind and thinking they were after you."

"Ah, no!" cried Tom, almost beside himself with grief and shame. "That was for something else. See what a villain I have been! You should have left me one. I could have stood it if you'd left me what I was! Oh, what am I to do—I in luxury and that man shattered and ruined by my hand? I can't bear it! I must confess! And I an innocent man in the beginning! Oh, that was bad enough, but it's as bad to know you're guilty and to go scot free!"

The other said nothing, but listened attentively as Tom now unboomed himself of the whole truth of his adventure with the bushrangers, whereupon Daintree justified his offense with such warmth of conviction that Tom was a little soothed. But his lavish friend went further. He understood that the disabled man should want for nothing, but first they must find out what his circumstances really were.

(To be Continued.)

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