

lay back with something like a smile on his face, as though the bad news were now effectually placed beyond discovery by the children.

Poor Myles's plan for keeping the children in the dark was not, however, destined to be successful. Ken Rohan was at his father's business at the mill by cock-crow the next morning, after a night of torturing self-reproaches upon his own selfish idleness and unprofitableness. He would begin at the very beginning and aid Danny (to that stiff-necked and ungrateful person's deep-mouthed indignation) by setting the wheel in motion before there was water to turn it, and the hoppers before they had anything but one another to grind. When the post arrived, he could not go far through his father's letters without receiving dismal intimations that his son's wayward course was not the only cloud that had been daunting the miller's sturdy heart of late. One letter he had torn open amidst the heap of invoices, business notes, and accounts, without noticing Mr. Hans Harman's cognisance, a boar's head, stamped on sealing-wax on the cover. The letter fascinated him as though the Harman family boar's head were the head of a Gorgon:—

Confidential.

"Stone Hall, Sept. 8, 186—.

"DEAR ROHAN,—You will see by enclosed note from the Attorney-General (which I must ask you to return) that I have been as good as my word. You will see also that there is no time to be lost to save our young friend from mischief.—Yours, etc.,

"HANS HARMAN."

The enclosure from the Attorney-General, the Right Hon. Tobias Glascock, contained these words on the second leaf of a letter, the first of which had been detached:

"Your young *protege* bears a bad reputation with the police; but if you really want him transferred from the gallows to the Civil Service there is a Second Clerkship in the Pipe-Roll Office which you can have for him on the understanding that you will answer with your head for his loyalty and (what is of more consequence) for the county.—T. G."

Ken read this over and over till his eyelids grew hot and his brain was on fire. His cheeks could scarcely have tingled more if they had been cut across with a riding-whip.

"Great God!" he cried, in an agony, "have I sunk into such a pit of infamy as this?—made a subject of bargain and sale in some wretched market of corruption, for God knows what base considerations—pitched into some scullion's office by the Government I have dared to dream of overturning—nay, indebted for it, as for a favor—bound in eternal gratitude for it to the man who is probably a personal enemy and certainly a pestilent villain. Gracious heaven! what is to be done? I feel as if I were in a bath of boiling pitch."

And Mrs. Rohan and Katie, seeing him stride about all day in a raging fever, marvelled that the poor boy took on so at his father's condition, and thought they had found an antidote for the whole trouble when they were able to report that the sufferer was beginning to articulate faintly again. What was actually passing through Ken's mind at the moment was a fancied scene in which he was flinging the fragments of Mr. Hans Harman's letter in his teeth in his own office with words that would bite like vitriol. Such, alas! is youth's selfishness that, when he espied Dr. O'Harte's massive figure arriving at the Mill (the great-hearted Doctor having caught the very first train to his old friend's bedside, the moment the tidings reached him, notwithstanding his unconquerable terror of death scenes), his first thought of joy was not so much that his father had found a friend as that he himself had found a counsellor, whose broad shoulders were enormously comforting in an emergency of this kind.

"This seems to be a good post enough," was the Doctor's first remark, after he had read the letters a couple of times leisurely. "There are a great many people who are neither knaves nor lickspittles who would jump at it." He turned his keen eyes full on

the young man, as if in search of some carefully concealed flaw in his bold purpose. A less practised eye than his would have given up the search at sight of that transparent face with the indignant blood manning its battlements. "Very well, Ken, I understand you," he said, in an altered key, "and you are right. You ought not in your position to close with Harman's offer. But recollect, sir," he suddenly said, with sternness, "your poor father's feelings ought to be considered as well as your own in this matter." The deep flush of shame that suddenly mantled Ken's cheeks and forehead told how keenly the reproach had gone home. "Before you indulge in any expensive luxury of indignation, recollect that your poor father has had trials, and must have had sore ones before he would ask or receive favors from Hans Harman. It would be murder to involve your father in any further worry in his present state. It looks like a merciful arrangement of Providence that he should know nothing about it. Besides, the note looks like a civil one; and why answer it with insult? Upon the whole, I can see nothing better to do with this offer for the present than to put it here," he said, putting the letter with its enclosure into the fire: "and let it rest there," he added, as the nomination to the Second Clerkship in the Pipe-Roll Office turned into a little heap of white ashes.

Myles Rohan's power of speech returned, and Dr. O'Harte, immensely relieved to find that it was not to be a death-bed scene after all, blossomed into the sunniest spirits, and, like a triumphant surgeon after an operation, roared out: "I knew I'd do it, Myles. I knew my old bark would bring your view-haloo back, if there was a shout in the country." Myles shifted his position so as to cover one of the documents which was escaping from under his pillow, and with his hospitable smile, though the old hearty voice was feeble, responded: "You always had the cheerful word, Doctor! You're as welcome as the flowers of May."

"It has caused a great shock in town, and I am really distressed," said Monsignor McGrudder, with whom Dr. O'Harte was dining that evening, "for I always will say that Myles Rohan is an upright man. I am not sure that I ought not to call to see him myself," said the Monsignor, with a graciousness worthy of Cardinal Rimbomba's reception-room on an Ambassadors' Night, "only that his son is one of those rash young men that make scenes—you understand?"

"I understand perfectly," said the Doctor, with a roll of the eye which made a young priest sitting opposite him choke and redden in a remarkable manner. "Besides, I don't think it is necessary."

"Unless," said Monsignor McGrudder, "unless that, of course, it is a singular and shocking event—I go no further than that—and for Myles Rohan's sake I should not like my people to consider it a judgment from Providence for the language he unhappily did use to me."

"Your people are more likely to consider it an invitation from Providence to break your windows," said Dr. O'Harte, dryly.

CHAPTER XX.—MABEL OPENS A MENAGERIE

There was a letter from Lord Drumshaughlin lying on the breakfast-table, which Mabel immediately pounced upon, and kissed. "Dear old papa! so the gout has given him permission to write at last," she cried, opening it as she might a jewel-box, and lingering fondly, as girls are apt to do, to observe the look of it. The writing was quaint and crooked, but refined, as became handwriting subject to fits of the gout. It was upon thick club notepaper, and faintly scented, Mabel thought. The old lord began in an elevated strain of moral reflection, with a touching reference to filial insensibility to the tribulations of desolate old age. "For myself, my dear Mabel," he wrote, "I do not complain. I have been too long injured to suffering and neglect. You will be sorry to hear, by the way, that the gout has advanced to the knee joint, and your mother has not been much asked to the country since your departure—which has not

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