THE STORY

BOOK THE FIRST. AMELIUS AMONG THE SOCIALISTS

CHAPTER 1

Sixteen years after the date of Mr. Ronald's disastrous discovery at Ramsgate--that is to say, in the year 1872--the steamship Aquila left the port of New York, bound for Liverpool.

It was the month of September. The passenger-list of the Aquila had comparatively few names inscribed on it. In the autumn season, the voyage from America to England, but for the remunerative value of the cargo, would prove to be for the most part a profitless voyage to shipowners. The flow of passengers, at that time of year, sets steadily the other way. Americans are returning from Europe to their own country. Tourists have delayed the voyage until the fierce August heat of the United States has subsided, and the delicious Indian summer is ready to welcome them. At bed and board the passengers by the Aquila on her homeward voyage had plenty of room, and the choicest morsels for everybody alike on the well spread dinner-table.

The wind was favourable, the weather was lovely. Cheerfulness and good-humour pervaded the ship from stem to stern. The courteous captain did the honours of the cabin-table with the air of a gentleman who was receiving friends in his own house. The handsome doctor promenaded the deck arm-in-arm with ladies in course of rapid recovery from the first gastric consequences of travelling by sea. The excellent chief engineer, musical in his leisure moments to his fingers' ends, played the fiddle in his cabin, accompanied on the flute by that young Apollo of the Atlantic trade, the steward's mate. Only on the third morning of the voyage was the harmony on board the Aquila disturbed by a passing moment of discord--due to an unexpected addition to the ranks of the passengers, in the shape of a lost bird!

It was merely a weary little land-bird (blown out of its course, as the learned in such matters supposed); and it perched on one of the yards to rest and

recover itself after its long flight.

The instant the creature was discovered, the insatiable Anglo-Saxon delight in killing birds, from the majestic eagle to the contemptible sparrow, displayed itself in its full frenzy. The crew ran about the decks, the passengers rushed into their cabins, eager to seize the first gun and to have the first shot. An old quarter-master of the Aquila was the enviable man, who first found the means of destruction ready to his hand. He lifted the gun to his shoulder, he had his finger on the trigger, when he was suddenly pounced upon by one of the passengers--a young, slim, sunburnt, active man--who snatched away the gun, discharged it over the side of the vessel, and turned furiously on the quarter-master. "You wretch! would you kill the poor weary bird that trusts our hospitality, and only asks us to give it a rest? That little harmless thing is as much one of God's creatures as you are. I'm ashamed of you--I'm horrified at you--you've got bird-murder in your face; I hate the sight of you!"

The quarter-master--a large grave fat man, slow alike in his bodily and his mental movements--listened to this extraordinary remonstrance with a fixed stare of amazement, and an open mouth from which the unspat tobacco-juice tricked in little brown streams. When the impetuous young gentleman paused (not for want of words, merely for want of breath), the quarter-master turned about, and addressed himself to the audience gathered round. "Gentlemen," he said, with a Roman brevity, "this young fellow is mad."

The captain's voice checked the general outbreak of laughter. "That will do, quarter-master. Let it be understood that nobody is to shoot the bird--and let me suggest to you, sir, that you might have expressed your sentiments quite as effectually in less violent language."

Addressed in those terms, the impetuous young man burst into another fit of excitement. "You're quite right, sir! I deserve every word you have said to me; I feel I have disgraced myself." He ran after the quartermaster, and seized him by both hands. "I beg your pardon; I beg your pardon with all my heart. You would have served me right if you had thrown me overboard after the language I used to you. Pray excuse my quick temper; pray forgive me. What do you say? 'Let bygones be bygones'? That's a capital way of putting it. You're a thorough good fellow. If I can ever be of the smallest use to you (there's my card and address in London), let me know it; I entreat you let me know it." He returned in a violent hurry to the captain. "I've made it up with the quarter-master, sir. He forgives me; he bears no malice. Allow me to congratulate you on having such a good Christian in your ship. I wish I was

like him! Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen, for the disturbance I have made. It shan't happen again--I promise you that."

The male travellers in general looked at each other, and seemed to agree with the quarter-master's opinion of their fellow-passenger. The women, touched by his evident sincerity, and charmed with his handsome blushing eager face, agreed that he was quite right to save the poor bird, and that it would be all the better for the weaker part of creation generally if other men were more like him. While the various opinions were still in course of expression, the sound of the luncheon bell cleared the deck of the passengers, with two exceptions. One was the impetuous young man. The other was a middle-aged traveller, with a grizzled beard and a penetrating eye, who had silently observed the proceedings, and who now took the opportunity of introducing himself to the hero of the moment.

"Are you not going to take any luncheon?" he asked.

"No, sir. Among the people I have lived with we don't eat at intervals of three or four hours, all day long."

"Will you excuse me," pursued the other, "if I own I should like to know what people you have been living with? My name is Hethcote; I was associated, at one time of my life, with a college devoted to the training of young men. From what I have seen and heard this morning, I fancy you have not been educated on any of the recognized systems that are popular at the present day. Am I right?"

The excitable young man suddenly became the picture of resignation, and answered in a formula of words as if he was repeating a lesson.

"I am Claude-Amelius-Goldenheart. Aged twenty-one. Son, and only child, of the late Claude Goldenheart, of Shedfield Heath, Buckinghamshire, England. I have been brought up by the Primitive Christian Socialists, at Tadmor Community, State of Illinois. I have inherited an income of five hundred a year. And I am now, with the approval of the Community, going to London to see life."

Mr. Hethcote received this copious flow of information, in some doubt whether he had been made the victim of coarse raillery, or whether he had merely heard a quaint statement of facts.

Claude-Amelius-Goldenheart saw that he had produced an unfavourable impression, and hastened to set himself right.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, "I am not making game of you, as you seem to suppose. We are taught to be courteous to everybody, in our Community. The truth is, there seems to be something odd about me (I'm sure I don't know what), which makes people whom I meet on my travels curious to know who I am. If you'll please to remember, it's a long way from Illinois to New York, and curious strangers are not scarce on the journey. When one is obliged to keep on saying the same thing over and over again, a form saves a deal of trouble. I have made a form for myself--which is respectfully at the disposal of any person who does me the honour to wish for my acquaintance. Will that do, sir? Very well, then; shake hands, to show you're satisfied."

Mr. Hethcote shook hands, more than satisfied. He found it impossible to resist the bright honest brown eyes, the simple winning cordial manner of the young fellow with the quaint formula and the strange name. "Come, Mr. Goldenheart," he said, leading the way to a seat on deck, "let us sit down comfortably, and have a talk."

"Anything you like, sir--but don't call me Mr. Goldenheart."

"Why not?"

"Well, it sounds formal. And, besides, you're old enough to be my father; it's my duty to call you Mister--or Sir, as we say to our elders at Tadmor. I have left all my friends behind me at the Community--and I feel lonely out here on this big ocean, among strangers. Do me a kindness, sir. Call me by my Christian name; and give me a friendly slap on the back if you find we get along smoothly in the course of the day."

"Which of your names shall it be?" Mr. Hethcote asked, humouring this odd lad. "Claude?"

"No. Not Claude. The Primitive Christians said Claude was a finicking French name. Call me Amelius, and I shall begin to feel at home again. If you're in a hurry, cut it down to three letters (as they did at Tadmor), and call me Mel."

"Very good," said Mr. Hethcote. "Now, my friend Amelius (or Mel), I am going to speak out plainly, as you do. The Primitive Christian Socialists must have great confidence in their system of education, to turn you adrift in the world without a companion to look after you."

"You've hit it, sir," Amelius answered coolly. "They have unlimited confidence in their system of education. And I'm a proof of it."

"You have relations in London, I suppose?" Mr. Hethcote proceeded.

For the first time the face of Amelius showed a shadow of sadness on it.

"I have relations," he said. "But I have promised never to claim their hospitality. 'They are hard and worldly; and they will make you hard and worldly, too.' That's what my father said to me on his deathbed." He took off his hat when he mentioned his father's death, and came to a sudden pause--with his head bent down, like a man absorbed in thought. In less than a minute he put on his hat again, and looked up with his bright winning smile. "We say a little prayer for the loved ones who are gone, when we speak of them," he explained. "But we don't say it out loud, for fear of seeming to parade our religious convictions. We hate cant in our Community."

"I cordially agree with the Community, Amelius. But, my good fellow, have you really no friend to welcome you when you get to London?"

Amelius answered the question mysteriously. "Wait a little!" he said--and took a letter from the breast-pocket of his coat. Mr. Hethcote, watching him, observed that he looked at the address with unfeigned pride and pleasure.

"One of our brethren at the Community has given me this," he announced. "It's a letter of introduction, sir, to a remarkable man--a man who is an example to all the rest of us. He has risen, by dint of integrity and perseverance, from the position of a poor porter in a shop to be one of the most respected mercantile characters in the City of London."

With this explanation, Amelius handed his letter to Mr. Hethcote. It was addressed as follows:--

To John Farnaby, Esquire, Messrs. Ronald & Farnaby, Stationers, Aldersgate Street, London.

CHAPTER 2

Mr. Hethcote looked at the address on the letter with an expression of surprise, which did not escape the notice of Amelius. "Do you know Mr. Farnaby?" he asked.

"I have some acquaintance with him," was the answer, given with a certain appearance of constraint.

Amelius went on eagerly with his questions. "What sort of man is he? Do you think he will be prejudiced against me, because I have been brought up in Tadmor?"

"I must be a little better acquainted, Amelius, with you and Tadmor before I can answer your question. Suppose you tell me how you became one of the Socialists, to begin with?"

"I was only a little boy, Mr. Hethcote, at that time."

"Very good. Even little boys have memories. Is there any objection to your telling me what you can remember?"

Amelius answered rather sadly, with his eyes bent on the deck. "I remember something happening which threw a gloom over us at home in England. I heard that my mother was concerned in it. When I grew older, I never presumed to ask my father what it was; and he never offered to tell me. I only know this: that he forgave her some wrong she had done him, and let her go on living at home--and that relations and friends all blamed him, and fell away from him, from that time. Not long afterwards, while I was at school, my mother died. I was sent for, to follow her funeral with my father. When we got back, and were alone together, he took me on his knee and kissed me. 'Which will you do, Amelius,' he said; 'stay in England with your uncle and aunt? or come with me all the way to America, and never go back to England again? Take time to think of it.' I wanted no time to think of it; I said, 'Go with you, papa.' He frightened me by bursting out crying; it was the first time I had ever seen him in tears. I can understand it now. He had been cut to the heart, and had borne it like a martyr; and his boy was his one friend left. Well, by the end of the week we were on board the ship; and there we met a benevolent gentleman, with a long gray beard, who bade my father welcome, and presented me with a cake. In my ignorance, I thought he was the captain. Nothing of the sort. He was the first Socialist I had ever

seen; and it was he who had persuaded my father to leave England."

Mr. Hethcote's opinions of Socialists began to show themselves (a little sourly) in Mr. Hethcote's smile. "And how did you get on with this benevolent gentleman?" he asked. "After converting your father, did he convert you--with the cake?"

Amelius smiled. "Do him justice, sir; he didn't trust to the cake. He waited till we were in sight of the American land--and then he preached me a little sermon, on our arrival, entirely for my own use."

"A sermon?" Mr. Hethcote repeated. "Very little religion in it, I suspect."

"Very little indeed, sir," Amelius answered. "Only as much religion as there is in the New Testament. I was not quite old enough to understand him easily--so he wrote down his discourse on the fly-leaf of a story-book I had with me, and gave it to me to read when I was tired of the stories. Stories were scarce with me in those days; and, when I had exhausted my little stock, rather than read nothing I read my sermon--read it so often that I think I can remember every word of it now. 'My dear little boy, the Christian religion, as Christ taught it, has long ceased to be the religion of the Christian world. A selfish and cruel Pretence is set up in its place. Your own father is one example of the truth of this saying of mine. He has fulfilled the first and foremost duty of a true Christian--the duty of forgiving an injury. For this, he stands disgraced in the estimation of all his friends: they have renounced and abandoned him. He forgives them, and seeks peace and good company in the New World, among Christians like himself. You will not repent leaving home with him; you will be one of a loving family, and, when you are old enough, you will be free to decide for yourself what your future life shall be.' That was all I knew about the Socialists, when we reached Tadmor after our long journey."

Mr. Hethcote's prejudices made their appearance again. "A barren sort of place," he said, "judging by the name."

"Barren? What can you be thinking of? A prettier place I never saw, and never expect to see again. A clear winding river, running into a little blue lake. A broad hill-side, all laid out in flower-gardens, and shaded by splendid trees. On the top of the hill, the buildings of the Community, some of brick and some of wood, so covered with creepers and so encircled with verandahs that I can't tell you to this day what style of architecture they were built in. More trees behind the houses--and, on the other side of the hill, cornfields, nothing but cornfields rolling away and away in great yellow

plains, till they reached the golden sky and the setting sun, and were seen no more. That was our first view of Tadmor, when the stage-coach dropped us at the town."

Mr. Hethcote still held out. "And what about the people who live in this earthly Paradise?" he asked. "Male and female saints--eh?"

"Oh dear no, sir! The very opposite of saints. They eat and drink like their neighbours. They never think of wearing dirty horsehair when they can get clean linen. And when they are tempted to misconduct themselves, they find a better way out of it than knotting a cord and thrashing their own backs. Saints! They all ran out together to bid us welcome like a lot of school-children; the first thing they did was to kiss us, and the next thing was to give us a mug of wine of their own making. Saints! Oh, Mr. Hethcote, what will you accuse us of being next? I declare your suspicions of the poor Socialists keep cropping up again as fast as I cut them down. May I make a guess, sir, without offending you? From one or two things I have noticed, I strongly suspect you're a British clergyman."

Mr. Hethcote was conquered at last: he burst out laughing. "You have discovered me," he said, "travelling in a coloured cravat and a shooting jacket! I confess I should like to know how."

"It's easily explained, sir. Visitors of all sorts are welcome at Tadmor. We have a large experience of them in the travelling season. They all come with their own private suspicion of us lurking about the corners of their eyes. They see everything we have to show them, and eat and drink at our table, and join in our amusements, and get as pleasant and friendly with us as can be. The time comes to say goodbye--and then we find them out. If a guest who has been laughing and enjoying himself all day, suddenly becomes serious when he takes his leave, and shows that little lurking devil of suspicion again about the corners of his eyes--it's ten chances to one that he's a clergyman. No offence, Mr. Hethcote! I acknowledge with pleasure that the corners of your eyes are clear again. You're not a very clerical clergyman, sir, after all--I don't despair of converting you, yet!"

"Go on with your story, Amelius. You're the queerest fellow I have met with, for many a long day past."

"I'm a little doubtful about going on with my story, sir. I have told you how I got to Tadmor, and what it looks like, and what sort of people live in the place. If I am to get on beyond that, I must jump to the time when I was old enough to learn the Rules of the Community."

"Well--and what then?"

"Well, Mr. Hethcote, some of the Rules might offend you."

"Try!"

"All right, sir! don't blame me; I'm not ashamed of the Rules. And now, if I am to speak, I must speak seriously on a serious subject; I must begin with our religious principles. We find our Christianity in the spirit of the New Testament--not in the letter. We have three good reasons for objecting to pin our faith on the words alone, in that book. First, because we are not sure that the English translation is always to be depended on as accurate and honest. Secondly, because we know that (since the invention of printing) there is not a copy of the book in existence which is free from errors of the press, and that (before the invention of printing) those errors, in manuscript copies, must as a matter of course have been far more serious and far more numerous. Thirdly, because there is plain internal evidence (to say nothing of discoveries actually made in the present day) of interpolations and corruptions, introduced into the manuscript copies as they succeeded each other in ancient times. These drawbacks are of no importance, however, in our estimation. We find, in the spirit of the book, the most simple and most perfect system of religion and morality that humanity has ever received--and with that we are content. To reverence God; and to love our neighbour as ourselves: if we had only those two commandments to guide us, we should have enough. The whole collection of Doctrines (as they are called) we reject at once, without even stopping to discuss them. We apply to them the test suggested by Christ himself: by their fruits ye shall know them. The fruits of Doctrines, in the past (to quote three instances only), have been the Spanish Inquisition, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, and the Thirty Years' War--and the fruits, in the present, are dissension, bigotry, and opposition to useful reforms. Away with Doctrines! In the interests of Christianity, away with them! We are to love our enemies; we are to forgive injuries; we are to help the needy; we are to be pitiful and courteous, slow to judge others, and ashamed to exalt ourselves. That teaching doesn't lead to tortures, massacres, and wars; to envy, hatred, and malice--and for that reason it stands revealed to us as the teaching that we can trust. There is our religion, sir, as we find it in the Rules of the Community."

"Very well, Amelius. I notice, in passing, that the Community is in one respect like the Pope--the Community is infallible. We won't dwell on that. You have stated your principles. As to the application of them next? Nobody has a right to be rich among you, of course?"

"Put it the other way, Mr. Hethcote. All men have a right to be rich--provided they don't make other people poor, as a part of the process. We don't trouble ourselves much about money; that's the truth. We are farmers, carpenters, weavers, and printers; and what we earn (ask our neighbours if we don't earn it honestly) goes into the common fund. A man who comes to us with money puts it into the fund, and so makes things easy for the next man who comes with empty pockets. While they are with us, they all live in the same comfort, and have their equal share in the same profits--deducting the sum in reverse for sudden calls and bad times. If they leave us, the man who has brought money with him has his undisputed right to take it away again; and the man who has brought none bids us good-bye, all the richer for his equal share in the profits which he has personally earned. The only fuss at our place about money that I can remember was the fuss about my five hundred a year. I wanted to hand it over to the fund. It was my own, mind--inherited from my mother's property, on my coming of age. The Elders wouldn't hear of it: the Council wouldn't hear of it: the general vote of the Community wouldn't hear of it. 'We agreed with his father that he should decide for himself, when he grew to manhood'--that was how they put it. 'Let him go back to the Old World; and let him be free to choose, by the test of his own experience, what his future life shall be.' How do you think it will end, Mr. Hethcote? Shall I return to the Community? Or shall I stop in London?"

Mr. Hethcote answered, without a moment's hesitation. "You will stop in London."

"I'll bet you two to one, Sir, he goes back to the Community."

In those words, a third voice (speaking in a strong New England accent) insinuated itself into the conversation from behind. Amelius and Mr. Hethcote, looking round, discovered a long, lean, grave stranger--with his face overshadowed by a huge felt hat. "Have you been listening to our conversation?" Mr. Hethcote asked haughtily.

"I have been listening," answered the grave stranger, "with considerable interest. This young man, I find, opens a new chapter to me in the book of humanity. Do you accept my bet, Sir? My name is Rufus Dingwell; and my home is at Coolspring, Mass. You do not bet? I express my regret, and have the pleasure of taking a seat alongside of you. What is your name, Sir? Hethcote? We have one of that name at Coolspring. He is much respected. Mr. Claude A. Goldenheart, you are no stranger to me--no, Sir. I procured your name from the steward, when the little difficulty occurred just now about the bird. Your name considerably surprised me."

"Why?" Amelius asked.

"Well, sir--not to say that your surname (being Goldenheart) reminds one unexpectedly of The Pilgrim's Progress--I happen to be already acquainted with you. By reputation."

Amelius looked puzzled. "By reputation?" he said. "What does that mean?"

"It means, sir, that you occupy a prominent position in a recent number of our popular journal, entitled The Coolspring Democrat. The late romantic incident which caused the withdrawal of Miss Mellicent from your Community has produced a species of social commotion at Coolspring. Among our ladies, the tone of sentiment, Sir, is universally favourable to you. When I left, I do assure you, you were a popular character among us. The name of Claude A. Goldenheart was, so to speak, in everybody's mouth."

Amelius listened to this, with the colour suddenly deepening on his face, and with every appearance of heartfelt annoyance and regret. "There is no such thing as keeping a secret in America," he said, irritably. "Some spy must have got among us; none of our people would have exposed the poor lady to public comment. How would you like it, Mr. Dingwell, if the newspaper published the private sorrows of your wife or your daughter?"

Rufus Dingwell answered with the straightforward sincerity of feeling which is one of the indisputable virtues of his nation. "I had not thought of it in that light, sir," he said. "You have been good enough to credit me with a wife or a daughter. I do not possess either of those ladies; but your argument hits me, notwithstanding--hits me hard, I tell you." He looked at Mr. Hethcote, who sat silently and stiffly disapproving of all this familiarity, and applied himself in perfect innocence and good faith to making things pleasant in that quarter. "You are a stranger, Sir," said Rufus; "and you will doubtless wish to peruse the article which is the subject of conversation?" He took a newspaper slip from his pocket-book, and offered it to the astonished Englishman. "I shall be glad to hear your sentiments, sir, on the view propounded by our mutual friend, Claude A. Goldenheart."

Before Mr. Hethcote could reply, Amelius interposed in his own headlong way. "Give it to me! I want to read it first!"

He snatched at the newspaper slip. Rufus checked him with grave composure. "I am of a cool temperament myself, sir; but that don't prevent me from admiring heat in others. Short of boiling point--mind that!" With

this hint, the wise New Englander permitted Amelius to take possession of the printed slip.

Mr. Hethcote, finding an opportunity of saying a word at last, asserted himself a little haughtily. "I beg you will both of you understand that I decline to read anything which relates to another person's private affairs."

Neither the one nor the other of his companions paid the slightest heed to this announcement. Amelius was reading the newspaper extract, and placid Rufus was watching him. In another moment, he crumpled up the slip, and threw it indignantly on the deck. "It's as full of lies as it can hold!" he burst out.

"It's all over the United States, by this time," Rufus remarked. "And I don't doubt we shall find the English papers have copied it, when we get to Liverpool. If you will take my advice, sir, you will cultivate a sagacious insensibility to the comments of the press."

"Do you think I care for myself?" Amelius asked indignantly. "It's the poor woman I am thinking of. What can I do to clear her character?"

"Well, sir," suggested Rufus, "in your place, I should have a notification circulated through the ship, announcing a lecture on the subject (weather permitting) in the course of the afternoon. That's the way we should do it at Coolspring."

Amelius listened without conviction. "It's certainly useless to make a secret of the matter now," he said; "but I don't see my way to making it more public still." He paused, and looked at Mr. Hethcote. "It so happens, sir," he resumed, "that this unfortunate affair is an example of some of the Rules of our Community, which I had not had time to speak of, when Mr. Dingwell here joined us. It will be a relief to me to contradict these abominable falsehoods to somebody; and I should like (if you don't mind) to hear what you think of my conduct, from your own point of view. It might prepare me," he added, smiling rather uneasily, "for what I may find in the English newspapers."

With these words of introduction he told his sad story--jocosely described in the newspaper heading as "Miss Mellicent and Goldenheart among the Socialists at Tadmor."

CHAPTER 3

"Nearly six months since," said Amelius, "we had notice by letter of the arrival of an unmarried English lady, who wished to become a member of our Community. You will understand my motive in keeping her family name a secret: even the newspaper has grace enough only to mention her by her Christian name. I don't want to cheat you out of your interest; so I will own at once that Miss Mellicent was not beautiful, and not young. When she came to us, she was thirty-eight years old, and time and trial had set their marks on her face plainly enough for anybody to see. Notwithstanding this, we all thought her an interesting woman. It might have been the sweetness of her voice; or perhaps it was something in her expression that took our fancy. There! I can't explain it; I can only say there were young women and pretty women at Tadmor who failed to win us as Miss Mellicent did. Contradictory enough, isn't it?"

Mr. Hethcote said he understood the contradiction. Rufus put an appropriate question: "Do you possess a photograph of this lady, sir?"

"No," said Amelius; "I wish I did. Well, we received her, on her arrival, in the Common Room--called so because we all assemble there every evening, when the work of the day is done. Sometimes we have the reading of a poem or a novel; sometimes debates on the social and political questions of the time in England and America; sometimes music, or dancing, or cards, or billiards, to amuse us. When a new member arrives, we have the ceremonies of introduction. I was close by the Elder Brother (that's the name we give to the chief of the Community) when two of the women led Miss Mellicent in. He's a hearty old fellow, who lived the first part of his life on his own clearing in one of the Western forests. To this day, he can't talk long, without showing, in one way or another, that his old familiarity with the trees still keeps its place in his memory. He looked hard at Miss Mellicent, under his shaggy old white eyebrows; and I heard him whisper to himself, 'Ah, dear me! Another of The Fallen Leaves!' I knew what he meant. The people who have drawn blanks in the lottery of life--the people who have toiled hard after happiness, and have gathered nothing but disappointment and sorrow; the friendless and the lonely, the wounded and the lost--these are the people whom our good Elder Brother calls The Fallen Leaves. I like the saying myself; it's a tender way of speaking of our poor fellow-creatures who are down in the world."

He paused for a moment, looking out thoughtfully over the vast void of sea

and sky. A passing shadow of sadness clouded his bright young face. The two elder men looked at him in silence, feeling (in widely different ways) the same compassionate interest. What was the life that lay before him? And--God help him!--what would he do with it?

"Where did I leave off?" he asked, rousing himself suddenly.

"You left Miss Mellicent, sir, in the Common Room--the venerable citizen with the white eyebrows being suitably engaged in moralizing on her." In those terms the ever-ready Rufus set the story going again.

"Quite right," Amelius resumed. "There she was, poor thing, a little thin timid creature, in a white dress, with a black scarf over her shoulders, trembling and wondering in a room full of strangers. The Elder Brother took her by the hand, and kissed her on the forehead, and bade her heartily welcome in the name of the Community. Then the women followed his example, and the men all shook hands with her. And then our chief put the three questions, which he is bound to address to all new arrivals when they join us: 'Do you come here of your own free will? Do you bring with you a written recommendation from one of our brethren, which satisfies us that we do no wrong to ourselves or to others in receiving you? Do you understand that you are not bound to us by vows, and that you are free to leave us again if the life here is not agreeable to you?' Matters being settled so far, the reading of the Rules, and the Penalties imposed for breaking them, came next. Some of the Rules you know already; others of smaller importance I needn't trouble you with. As for the Penalties, if you incur the lighter ones, you are subject to public rebuke, or to isolation for a time from the social life of the Community. If you incur the heavier ones, you are either sent out into the world again for a given period, to return or not as you please; or you are struck off the list of members, and expelled for good and all. Suppose these preliminaries agreed to by Miss Mellicent with silent submission, and let us go on to the close of the ceremony--the reading of the Rules which settle the questions of Love and Marriage."

"Aha!" said Mr. Hethcote, "we are coming to the difficulties of the Community at last!"

"Are we also coming to Miss Mellicent, sir?" Rufus inquired. "As a citizen of a free country in which I can love in one State, marry in another, and be divorced in a third, I am not interested in your Rules--I am interested in your Lady."

"The two are inseparable in this case," Amelius answered gravely. "If I am to

speak of Miss Mellicent, I must speak of the Rules; you will soon see why. Our Community becomes a despotism, gentlemen, in dealing with love and marriage. For example, it positively prohibits any member afflicted with hereditary disease from marrying at all; and it reserves to itself, in the case of every proposed marriage among us, the right of permitting or forbidding it, in council. We can't even fall in love with each other, without being bound, under penalties, to report it to the Elder Brother; who, in his turn, communicates it to the monthly council; who, in their turn, decide whether the courtship may go on or not. That's not the worst of it, even yet! In some cases--where we haven't the slightest intention of falling in love with each other--the governing body takes the initiative. 'You two will do well to marry; we see it, if you don't. Just think of it, will you?' You may laugh; some of our happiest marriages have been made in that way. Our governors in council act on an established principle: here it is in a nutshell. The results of experience in the matter of marriage, all over the world, show that a really wise choice of a husband or a wife is an exception to the rule; and that husbands and wives in general would be happier together if their marriages were managed for them by competent advisers on either side. Laws laid down on such lines as these, and others equally strict, which I have not mentioned yet, were not put in force, Mr. Hethcote, as you suppose, without serious difficulties--difficulties which threatened the very existence of the Community. But that was before my time. When I grew up, I found the husbands and wives about me content to acknowledge that the Rules fulfilled the purpose with which they had been made--the greatest happiness of the greatest number. It all looks very absurd, I dare say, from your point of view. But these queer regulations of ours answer the Christian test--by their fruits ye shall know them. Our married people don't live on separate sides of the house; our children are all healthy; wife-beating is unknown among us; and the practice in our divorce court wouldn't keep the most moderate lawyer on bread and cheese. Can you say as much for the success of the marriage laws in Europe? I leave you, gentlemen, to form your own opinions."

Mr. Hethcote declined to express an opinion. Rufus declined to resign his interest in the lady. "And what did Miss Mellicent say to it?" he inquired.

"She said something that startled us all," Amelius replied. "When the Elder Brother began to read the first words relating to love and marriage in the Book of Rules, she turned deadly pale; and rose up in her place with a sudden burst of courage or desperation--I don't know which. 'Must you read that to me?' she asked. 'I have nothing to do with love or marriage.' The Elder Brother laid aside his Book of Rules. 'If you are afflicted with an hereditary malady,' he said, 'the doctor from the town will examine you, and

report to us.' She answered, 'I have no hereditary malady.' The Elder Brother took up his book again. 'In due course of time, my dear, the Council will decide for you whether you are to love and marry or not.' And he read the Rules. She sat down again, and hid her face in her hands, and never moved or spoke until he had done. The regular questions followed. Had she anything to say, in the way of objection? Nothing! In that case, would she sign the Rules? Yes! When the time came for supper, she excused herself, just like a child. 'I feel very tired; may I go to bed?' The unmarried women in the same dormitory with her anticipated some romantic confession when she grew used to her new friends. They proved to be wrong. 'My life has been one long disappointment,' was all she said. 'You will do me a kindness if you will take me as I am, and not ask me to talk about myself.' There was nothing sulky or ungracious in the expression of her wish to keep her own secret. A kinder and sweeter woman--never thinking of herself, always considerate of others--never lived. An accidental discovery made me her chief friend, among the men: it turned out that her childhood had been passed, where my childhood had been passed, at Shedfield Heath, in Buckinghamshire. She was never weary of consulting my boyish recollections, and comparing them with her own. 'I love the place,' she used to say; 'the only happy time of my life was the time passed there.' On my sacred word of honour, this was the sort of talk that passed between us, for week after week. What other talk could pass between a man whose one and twentieth birthday was then near at hand, and a woman who was close on forty? What could I do, when the poor, broken, disappointed creature met me on the hill or by the river, and said, 'You are going out for a walk; may I come with you?' I never attempted to intrude myself into her confidence; I never even asked her why she had joined the Community. You see what is coming, don't you? I never saw it. I didn't know what it meant, when some of the younger women, meeting us together, looked at me (not at her), and smiled maliciously. My stupid eyes were opened at last by the woman who slept in the next bed to her in the dormitory--a woman old enough to be my mother, who took care of me when I was a child at Tadmor. She stopped me one morning, on my way to fish in the river. 'Amelius,' she said, 'don't go to the fishing-house; Mellicent is waiting for you.' I stared at her in astonishment. She held up her finger at me: 'Take care, you foolish boy! You are drifting into a false position as fast as you can. Have you no suspicion of what is going on?' I looked all round me, in search of what was going on. Nothing out of the common was to be seen anywhere. 'What can you possibly mean?' I asked. 'You will only laugh at me, if I tell you,' she said. I promised not to laugh. She too looked all round her, as if she was afraid of somebody being near enough to hear us; and then she let out the secret. 'Amelius, ask for a holiday--and leave us for a while. Mellicent is in love with you.'"

CHAPTER 4

Amelius looked at his companions, in some doubt whether they would preserve their gravity at this critical point in his story. They both showed him that his apprehensions were well founded. He was a little hurt, and he instantly revealed it. "I own to my shame that I burst out laughing myself," he said. "But you two gentlemen are older and wiser than I am. I didn't expect to find you just as ready to laugh at poor Miss Mellicent as I was."

Mr. Hethcote declined to be reminded of his duties as a middle-aged gentleman in this backhanded manner. "Gently, Amelius! You can't expect to persuade us that a laughable thing is not a thing to be laughed at. A woman close on forty who falls in love with a young fellow of twenty-one--"

"Is a laughable circumstance," Rufus interposed. "Whereas a man of forty who fancies a young woman of twenty-one is all in the order of Nature. The men have settled it so. But why the women are to give up so much sooner than the men is a question, sir, on which I have long wished to hear the sentiments of the women themselves."

Mr. Hethcote dismissed the sentiments of the women with a wave of his hand. "Let us hear the rest of it, Amelius. Of course you went on to the fishing-house? And of course you found Miss Mellicent there?"

"She came to the door to meet me, much as usual," Amelius resumed, "and suddenly checked herself in the act of shaking hands with me. I can only suppose she saw something in my face that startled her. How it happened, I can't say; but I felt my good spirits forsake me the moment I found myself in her presence. I doubt if she had ever seen me so serious before. 'Have I offended you?' she asked. Of course, I denied it; but I failed to satisfy her. She began to tremble. 'Has somebody said something against me? Are you weary of my company?' Those were the next questions. It was useless to say No. Some perverse distrust of me, or some despair of herself, overpowered her on a sudden. She sank down on the floor of the fishing-house, and began to cry--not a good hearty burst of tears; a silent, miserable, resigned sort of crying, as if she had lost all claim to be pitied, and all right to feel wounded or hurt. I was so distressed, that I thought of nothing but consoling her. I meant well, and I acted like a fool. A sensible man would have lifted her up, I suppose, and left her to herself. I lifted her up, and put my arm round her waist. She looked at me as I did it. For just a moment, I declare she became twenty years younger! She blushed as I have never seen

a woman blush before or since--the colour flowed all over her neck as well as her face. Before I could say a word, she caught hold of my hand, and (of all the confusing things in the world!) kissed it. 'No!' she cried, 'don't despise me! don't laugh at me! Wait, and hear what my life has been, and then you will understand why a little kindness overpowers me.' She looked round the corner of the fishing-house suspiciously. 'I don't want anybody else to hear us,' she said, 'all the pride isn't beaten out of me yet. Come to the lake, and row me about in the boat.' I took her out in the boat. Nobody could hear us certainly; but she forgot, and I forgot, that anybody might see us, and that appearances on the lake might lead to false conclusions on shore."

Mr. Hethcote and Rufus exchanged significant looks. They had not forgotten the Rules of the Community, when two of its members showed a preference for each other's society.

Amelius proceeded. "Well, there we were on the lake. I paddled with the oars, and she opened her whole heart to me. Her troubles had begun, in a very common way, with her mother's death and her father's second marriage. She had a brother and a sister--the sister married a German merchant, settled in New York; the brother comfortably established as a sheep-farmer in Australia. So, you see, she was alone at home, at the mercy of the step-mother. I don't understand these cases myself, but people who do, tell me that there are generally faults on both sides. To make matters worse, they were a poor family; the one rich relative being a sister of the first wife, who disapproved of the widower marrying again, and never entered the house afterwards. Well, the step-mother had a sharp tongue, and Mellicent was the first person to feel the sting of it. She was reproached with being an encumbrance on her father, when she ought to be doing something for herself. There was no need to repeat those harsh words. The next day she answered an advertisement. Before the week was over, she was earning her bread as a daily governess."

Here Rufus stopped the narrative, having an interesting question to put. "Might I inquire, sir, what her salary was?"

"Thirty pounds a year," Amelius replied. "She was out teaching from nine o'clock to two--and then went home again."

"There seems to be nothing to complain of in that, as salaries go," Mr. Hethcote remarked.

"She made no complaint," Amelius rejoined. "She was satisfied with her salary; but she wasn't satisfied with her life. The meek little woman grew

downright angry when she spoke of it. 'I had no reason to complain of my employers,' she said. 'I was civilly treated and punctually paid; but I never made friends of them. I tried to make friends of the children; and sometimes I thought I had succeeded--but, oh dear, when they were idle, and I was obliged to keep them to their lessons, I soon found how little hold I had on the love that I wanted them to give me. We see children in books who are perfect little angels; never envious or greedy or sulky or deceitful; always the same sweet, pious, tender, grateful, innocent creatures--and it has been my misfortune never to meet with them, go where I might! It is a hard world, Amelius, the world that I have lived in. I don't think there are such miserable lives anywhere as the lives led by the poor middle classes in England. From year's end to year's end, the one dreadful struggle to keep up appearances, and the heart-breaking monotony of an existence without change. We lived in the back street of a cheap suburb. I declare to you we had but one amusement in the whole long weary year--the annual concert the clergyman got up, in aid of his schools. The rest of the year it was all teaching for the first half of the day, and needlework for the young family for the other half. My father had religious scruples; he prohibited theatres, he prohibited dancing and light reading; he even prohibited looking in at the shop-windows, because we had no money to spare and they tempted us to buy. He went to business in the morning, and came back at night, and fell asleep after dinner, and woke up and read prayers--and next day to business and back, and sleeping and waking and reading prayers--and no break in it, week after week, month after month, except on Sunday, which was always the same Sunday; the same church, the same service, the same dinner, the same book of sermons in the evening. Even when we had a fortnight once a year at the seaside, we always went to the same place and lodged in the same cheap house. The few friends we had led just the same lives, and were beaten down flat by just the same monotony. All the women seemed to submit to it contentedly except my miserable self. I wanted so little! Only a change now and then; only a little sympathy when I was weary and sick at heart; only somebody whom I could love and serve, and be rewarded with a smile and a kind word in return. Mothers shook their heads, and daughters laughed at me. Have we time to be sentimental? Haven't we enough to do, darning and mending, and turning our dresses, and making the joint last as long as possible, and keeping the children clean, and doing the washing at home--and tea and sugar rising, and my husband grumbling every week when I have to ask him for the house-money. Oh, no more of it! no more of it! People meant for better things all ground down to the same sordid and selfish level--is that a pleasant sight to contemplate? I shudder when I think of the last twenty years of my life!' That's what she complained of, Mr. Hethcote, in the solitary middle of the lake, with nobody but me to hear her."

"In my country, sir," Rufus remarked, "the Lecture Bureau would have provided for her amusement, on economical terms. And I reckon, if a married life would fix her, she might have tried it among Us by way of a change."

"That's the saddest part of the story," said Amelius. "There came a time, only two years ago, when her prospects changed for the better. Her rich aunt (her mother's sister) died; and--what do you think?--left her a legacy of six thousand pounds. There was a gleam of sunshine in her life! The poor teacher was an heiress in a small way, with her fortune at her own disposal. They had something like a festival at home, for the first time; presents to everybody, and kissings and congratulations, and new dresses at last. And, more than that, another wonderful event happened before long. A gentleman made his appearance in the family circle, with an interesting object in view--a gentleman, who had called at the house in which she happened to be employed as teacher at the time, and had seen her occupied with her pupils. He had kept it to himself to be sure, but he had secretly admired her from that moment--and now it had come out! She had never had a lover before; mind that. And he was a remarkably handsome man: dressed beautifully, and sang and played, and was so humble and devoted with it all. Do you think it wonderful that she said Yes, when he proposed to marry her? I don't think it wonderful at all. For the first few weeks of the courtship, the sunshine was brighter than ever. Then the clouds began to rise. Anonymous letters came, describing the handsome gentleman (seen under his fair surface) as nothing less than a scoundrel. She tore up the letters indignantly--she was too delicate even to show them to him. Signed letters came next, addressed to her father by an uncle and an aunt, both containing one and the same warning: 'If your daughter insists on having him, tell her to take care of her money.' A few days later, a visitor arrived--a brother, who spoke out more plainly still. As an honourable man, he could not hear of what was going on, without making the painful confession that his brother was forbidden to enter his house. That said, he washed his hands of all further responsibility. You two know the world, you will guess how it ended. Quarrels in the household; the poor middle-aged woman, living in her fool's paradise, blindly true to her lover; convinced that he was foully wronged; frantic when he declared that he would not connect himself with a family which suspected him. Ah, I have no patience when I think of it, and I almost wish I had never begun to tell the story! Do you know what he did? She was free of course, at her age, to decide for herself; there was no controlling her. The wedding day was fixed. Her father had declared he would not sanction it; and her step-mother kept him to his word. She went alone to the church, to meet her promised husband. He never appeared; he

deserted her, mercilessly deserted her--after she had sacrificed her own relations to him--on her wedding-day. She was taken home insensible, and had a brain fever. The doctors declined to answer for her life. Her father thought it time to look to her banker's pass-book. Out of her six thousand pounds she had privately given no less than four thousand to the scoundrel who had deceived and forsaken her! Not a month afterwards he married a young girl--with a fortune of course. We read of such things in newspapers and books. But to have them brought home to one, after living one's own life among honest people--I tell you it stupefied me!"

He said no more. Below them in the cabin, voices were laughing and talking, to a cheerful accompaniment of clattering knives and forks. Around them spread the exultant glory of sea and sky. All that they heard, all that they saw, was cruelty out of harmony with the miserable story which had just reached its end. With one accord the three men rose and paced the deck, feeling physically the same need of some movement to lighten their spirits. With one accord they waited a little, before the narrative was resumed.

CHAPTER 5

Mr. Hethcote was the first to speak again.

"I can understand the poor creature's motive in joining your Community," he said. "To a person of any sensibility her position, among such relatives as you describe, must have been simply unendurable after what had happened. How did she hear of Tadmor and the Socialists?"

"She had read one of our books," Amelius answered; "and she had her married sister at New York to go to. There were moments, after her recovery (she confessed it to me frankly), when the thought of suicide was in her mind. Her religious scruples saved her. She was kindly received by her sister and her sister's husband. They proposed to keep her with them to teach their children. No! the new life offered to her was too like the old life--she was broken in body and mind; she had no courage to face it. We have a resident agent in New York; and he arranged for her journey to Tadmor. There is a gleam of brightness, at any rate, in this part of her story. She blessed the day, poor soul, when she joined us. Never before had she found herself among such kind-hearted, unselfish, simple people. Never before--" he abruptly checked himself, and looked a little confused.

Obliging Rufus finished the sentence for him. "Never before had she known a young man with such natural gifts of fascination as C.A.G. Don't you be too modest, sir; it doesn't pay, I assure you, in the nineteenth century."

Amelius was not as ready with his laugh as usual. "I wish I could drop it at the point we have reached now," he said. "But she has left Tadmor; and, in justice to her (after the scandals in the newspaper), I must tell you how she left it, and why. The mischief began when I was helping her out of the boat. Two of our young women met us on the bank of the lake, and asked me how I got on with my fishing. They didn't mean any harm--they were only in their customary good spirits. Still, there was no mistaking their looks and tones when they put the question. Miss Mellicent, in her confusion, made matters worse. She coloured up, and snatched her hand out of mine, and ran back to the house by herself. The girls, enjoying their own foolish joke, congratulated me on my prospects. I must have been out of sorts in some way--upset, perhaps, by what I had heard in the boat. Anyhow, I lost my temper, and I made matters worse, next. I said some angry words, and left them. The same evening I found a letter in my room. 'For your sake, I must not be seen alone with you again. It is hard to lose the comfort of your

sympathy, but I must submit. Think of me as kindly as I think of you. It has done me good to open my heart to you.' Only those lines, signed by Mellicent's initials. I was rash enough to keep the letter, instead of destroying it. All might have ended well, nevertheless, if she had only held to her resolution. But, unluckily, my twenty-first birthday was close at hand; and there was talk of keeping it as a festival in the Community. I was up with sunrise when the day came; having some farming work to look after, and wanting to get it over in good time. My shortest way back to breakfast was through a wood. In the wood I met her."

"Alone?" Mr. Hethcote asked.

Rufus expressed his opinion of the wisdom of putting this question with his customary plainness of language. "When there's a rash thing to be done by a man and a woman together, sir, philosophers have remarked that it's always the woman who leads the way. Of course she was alone."

"She had a little present for me on my birthday," Amelius explained--"a purse of her own making. And she was afraid of the ridicule of the young women, if she gave it to me openly. 'You have my heart's dearest wishes for your happiness; think of me sometimes, Amelius, when you open your purse.' If you had been in my place, could you have told her to go away, when she said that, and put her gift into your hand? Not if she had been looking at you at the moment--I'll swear you couldn't have done it!"

The lean yellow face of Rufus Dingwell relaxed for the first time into a broad grin. "There are further particulars, sir, stated in the newspaper," he said slily.

"Damn the newspaper!" Amelius answered.

Rufus bowed, serenely courteous, with the air of a man who accepted a British oath as an unwilling compliment paid by the old country to the American press. "The newspaper report states, sir, that she kissed you."

"It's a lie!" Amelius shouted.

"Perhaps it's an error of the press," Rufus persisted. "Perhaps, you kissed her?"

"Never mind what I did," said Amelius savagely.

Mr. Hethcote felt it necessary to interfere. He addressed Rufus in his most

magnificent manner. "In England, Mr. Dingwell, a gentleman is not in the habit of disclosing these--er--these--er, er--"

"These kissings in a wood?" suggested Rufus. "In my country, sir, we do not regard kissing, in or out of a wood, in the light of a shameful proceeding. Quite the contrary, I do assure you."

Amelius recovered his temper. The discussion was becoming too ridiculous to be endured by the unfortunate person who was the object of it.

"Don't let us make mountains out of molehills," he said. "I did kiss her--there! A woman pressing the prettiest little purse you ever saw into your hand, and wishing you many happy returns of the day with the tears in her eyes; I should like to know what else was to be done but to kiss her. Ah, yes, smooth out your newspaper report, and have another look at it! She did rest her head on my shoulder, poor soul, and she did say, 'Oh, Amelius, I thought my heart was turned to stone; feel how you have made it beat!' When I remembered what she had told me in the boat, I declare to God I almost burst out crying myself--it was so innocent and so pitiful."

Rufus held out his hand with true American cordiality. "I do assure you, sir, I meant no harm," he said. "The right grit is in you, and no mistake--and there goes the newspaper!" He rolled up the slip, and flung it overboard.

Mr. Hethcote nodded his entire approval of this proceeding. Amelius went on with his story.

"I'm near the end now," he said. "If I had known it would have taken so long to tell--never mind! We got out of the wood at last, Mr. Rufus; and left it without a suspicion that we had been watched. I was prudent enough (when it was too late, you will say) to suggest to her that we had better be careful for the future. Instead of taking it seriously, she laughed. 'Have you altered your mind, since you wrote to me?' I asked. 'To be sure I have,' she said. 'When I wrote to you I forgot the difference between your age and mine. Nothing that we do will be taken seriously. I am afraid of their laughing at me, Amelius; but I am afraid of nothing else.' I did my best to undeceive her. I told her plainly that people unequally matched in years--women older than men, as well as men older than women--were not uncommonly married among us. The council only looked to their being well suited in other ways, and declined to trouble itself about the question of age. I don't think I produced much effect; she seemed, for once in her life, poor thing, to be too happy to look beyond the passing moment. Besides, there was the birthday festival to keep her mind from dwelling on doubts and fears that were not

agreeable to her. And the next day there was another event to occupy our attention--the arrival of the lawyer's letter from London, with the announcement of my inheritance on coming of age. It was settled, as you know, that I was to go out into the world, and to judge for myself; but the date of my departure was not fixed. Two days later, the storm that had been gathering for weeks past burst on us--we were cited to appear before the council to answer for an infraction of the Rules. Everything that I have confessed to you, and some things besides that I have kept to myself, lay formally inscribed on a sheet of paper placed on the council table--and pinned to the sheet of paper was Mellicent's letter to me, found in my room. I took the whole blame on myself, and insisted on being confronted with the unknown person who had informed against us. The council met this by a question:--'Is the information, in any particular, false?' Neither of us could deny that it was, in every particular, true. Hearing this, the council decided that there was no need, on our own showing, to confront us with the informer. From that day to this, I have never known who the spy was. Neither Mellicent nor I had an enemy in the Community. The girls who had seen us on the lake, and some other members who had met us together, only gave their evidence on compulsion--and even then they prevaricated, they were so fond of us and so sorry for us. After waiting a day, the governing body pronounced their judgment. Their duty was prescribed to them by the Rules. We were sentenced to six months' absence from the Community; to return or not as we pleased. A hard sentence, gentlemen--whatever we may think of it--to homeless and friendless people, to the Fallen Leaves that had drifted to Tadmor. In my case it had been already arranged that I was to leave. After what had happened, my departure was made compulsory in four-and-twenty hours; and I was forbidden to return, until the date of my sentence had expired. In Mellicent's case they were still more strict. They would not trust her to travel by herself. A female member of the Community was appointed to accompany her to the house of her married sister at New York: she was ordered to be ready for the journey by sunrise the next morning. We both understood, of course, that the object of this was to prevent our travelling together. They might have saved themselves the trouble of putting obstacles in our way."

"So far as You were concerned, I suppose?" said Mr. Hethcote.

"So far as She was concerned also," Amelius answered.

"How did she take it, sir?" Rufus inquired.

"With a composure that astonished us all," said Amelius. "We had anticipated tears and entreaties for mercy. She stood up perfectly calm, far

calmer than I was, with her head turned towards me, and her eyes resting quietly on my face. If you can imagine a woman whose whole being was absorbed in looking into the future; seeing what no mortal creature about her saw; sustained by hopes that no mortal creature about her could share--you may see her as I did, when she heard her sentence pronounced. The members of the Community, accustomed to take leave of an erring brother or sister with loving and merciful words, were all more or less distressed as they bade her farewell. Most of the women were in tears as they kissed her. They said the same kind words to her over and over again. 'We are heartily sorry for you, dear; we shall all be glad to welcome you back.' They sang our customary hymn at parting--and broke down before they got to the end. It was she who consoled them! Not once, through all that melancholy ceremony, did she lose her strange composure, her rapt mysterious look. I was the last to say farewell; and I own I couldn't trust myself to speak. She held my hand in hers. For a moment, her face lighted up softly with a radiant smile--then the strange preoccupied expression flowed over her again, like shadow over a light. Her eyes, still looking into mine, seemed to look beyond me. She spoke low, in sad steady tones. 'Be comforted, Amelius; the end is not yet.' She put her hands on my head, and drew it down to her. 'You will come back to me,' she whispered--and kissed me on the forehead, before them all. When I looked up again, she was gone. I have neither seen her nor heard from her since. It's all told, gentlemen--and some of it has distressed me in the telling. Let me go away for a minute by myself, and look at the sea."