

**CHAPTER IV**

Saturday at Alton College, nominally a half holiday, was really a whole one. Classes in gymnastics, dancing, elocution, and drawing were held in the morning. The afternoon was spent at lawn tennis, to which lady guests resident in the neighborhood were allowed to bring their husbands, brothers, and fathers--Miss Wilson being anxious to send her pupils forth into the world free from the uncouth stiffness of schoolgirls unaccustomed to society.

Late in October came a Saturday which proved anything but a holiday for Miss Wilson. At half-past one, luncheon being over, she went out of doors to a lawn that lay between the southern side of the college and a shrubbery. Here she found a group of girls watching Agatha and Jane, who were dragging a roller over the grass. One of them, tossing a ball about with her racket, happened to drive it into the shrubbery, whence, to the surprise of the company, Smilash presently emerged, carrying the ball, blinking, and proclaiming that, though a common man, he had his feelings like another, and that his eye was neither a stick nor a stone. He was dressed as before, but his garments, soiled with clay and lime, no longer looked new.

"What brings you here, pray?" demanded Miss Wilson.

"I was led into the belief that you sent for me, lady," he replied. "The baker's lad told me so as he passed my 'umble cot this morning. I thought he were incapable of deceit."

"That is quite right; I did send for you. But why did you not go round to the servants' hall?"

"I am at present in search of it, lady. I were looking for it when this ball cotech me here " (touching his eye). "A cruel blow on the hi' nat'rally spires its vision and expression and makes a honest man look like a thief."

"Agatha," said Miss Wilson, "come here."

"My dooty to you, Miss," said Smilash, pulling his forelock.

"This is the man from whom I had the five shillings, which he said you had just given him. Did you do so?"

"Certainly not. I only gave him threepence."

"But I showed the money to your ladyship," said Smilash, twisting his hat agitatedly. "I gev it you. Where would the like of me get five shillings except by the bounty of the rich and noble? If the young lady thinks I hadn't ort to have kep' the tother 'arfcrown, I would not object to its bein' stopped from my wages if I were given a job of work here. But--"

"But it's nonsense," said Agatha. "I never gave you three half-crowns."

"Perhaps you mout 'a' made a mistake. Pence is summat similar to 'arf-crowns, and the day were very dark."

"I couldn't have," said Agatha. "Jane had my purse all the earlier part of the week, Miss Wilson, and she can tell you that there was only threepence in it. You know that I get my money on the first of every month. It never lasts longer than a week. The idea of my having seven and sixpence on the sixteenth is ridiculous."

"But I put it to you, Miss, ain't it twice as ridiculous for me, a poor laborer, to give up money wot I never got?"

Vague alarm crept upon Agatha as the testimony of her senses was contradicted. "All I know is," she protested, "that I did not give it to you; so my pennies must have turned into half-crowns in your pocket."

"Mebbe so," said Smilash gravely. "I've heard, and I know it for a fact, that money grows in the pockets of the rich. Why not in the pockets of the poor as well? Why should you be su'prised at wot 'appens every day?"

"Had you any money of your own about you at the time?"

"Where could the like of me get money?--asking pardon for making so bold as to catechise your ladyship."

"I don't know where you could get it," said Miss Wilson testily; "I ask you, had you any?"

"Well, lady, I disremember. I will not impose upon you. I disremember."

"Then you've made a mistake," said Miss Wilson, handing him back his money. "Here. If it is not yours, it is not ours; so you had better keep it."

"Keep it! Oh, lady, but this is the heighth of nobility! And what shall I do to earn your bounty, lady?"

"It is not my bounty: I give it to you because it does not belong to me, and, I suppose, must belong to you. You seem to be a very simple man."

"I thank your ladyship; I hope I am. Respecting the day's work, now, lady; was you thinking of employing a poor man at all?"

"No, thank you; I have no occasion for your services. I have also to give you the shilling I promised you for getting the cabs. Here it is."

"Another shillin'!" cried Smilash, stupefied.

"Yes," said Miss Wilson, beginning to feel very angry. "Let me hear no more about it, please. Don't you understand that you have earned it?"

"I am a common man, and understand next to nothing," he replied reverently. "But if your ladyship would give me a day's work to keep me goin', I could put up all this money in a little wooden savings bank I have at home, and keep it to spend when sickness or odd age shall, in a manner of speaking, lay their 'ends upon me. I could smooth that grass beautiful; them young ladies 'll strain themselves with that heavy roller. If tennis is the word, I can put up nets fit to catch birds of paradise in. If the courts is to be chalked out in white, I can draw a line so straight that you could hardly keep yourself from erecting an equilateral triangle on it. I am honest when well watched, and I can wait at table equal to the Lord Mayor o' London's butler."

"I cannot employ you without a character," said Miss Wilson, amused by his scrap of Euclid, and wondering where he had picked it up.

"I bear the best of characters, lady. The reverend rector has known me from a boy."

"I was speaking to him about you yesterday," said Miss Wilson, looking hard at him, "and he says you are a perfect stranger to him."

"Gentlemen is so forgetful," said Smilash sadly. "But I alluded to my native rector--meaning the rector of my native village, Auburn. 'Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain,' as the gentleman called it."

"That was not the name you mentioned to Mr. Fairholme. I do not recollect what name you gave, but it was not Auburn, nor have I ever heard of any such place."

"Never read of sweet Auburn!"

"Not in any geography or gazetteer. Do you recollect telling me that you have been in prison?"

"Only six times," pleaded Smilash, his features working convulsively. "Don't bear too hard on a common man. Only six times, and all through drink. But I have took the pledge, and kep' it faithful for eighteen months past."

Miss Wilson now set down the man as one of those keen, half-witted country fellows, contemptuously styled originals, who unintentionally make themselves popular by flattering the sense of sanity in those whose faculties are better adapted to circumstances.

"You have a bad memory, Mr. Smilash," she said good-humoredly. "You never give the same account of yourself twice."

"I am well aware that I do not express myself with exactability. Ladies and gentlemen have that power over words that they can always say what they mean, but a common man like me can't. Words don't come natural to him. He has more thoughts than words, and what words he has don't fit his thoughts. Might I take a turn with the roller, and make myself useful about the place until nightfall, for ninepence?"

Miss Wilson, who was expecting more than her usual Saturday visitors, considered the proposition and assented. "And remember," she said, "that as you are a stranger here, your character in Lyvern depends upon the use you make of this opportunity."

"I am grateful to your noble ladyship. May your ladyship's goodness sew up the hole which is in the pocket where I carry my character, and which has caused me to lose it so frequent. It's a bad place for men to keep their characters in; but such is the fashion. And so hurray for the glorious nineteenth century!"

He took off his coat, seized the roller, and began to pull it with an energy foreign to the measured millhorse manner of the accustomed laborer. Miss Wilson looked doubtfully at him, but, being in haste, went indoors without further comment. The girls mistrusting his eccentricity, kept aloof. Agatha determined to have another and better look at him. Racket in hand, she walked slowly across the grass and came close to him just as he, unaware of her approach, uttered a groan of exhaustion and sat down to rest.

"Tired already, Mr. Smilash?" she said mockingly.

He looked up deliberately, took off one of his washleather gloves, fanned himself with it, displaying a white and fine hand, and at last replied, in the tone and with the accent of a gentleman:

"Very."

Agatha recoiled. He fanned himself without the least concern.

"You--you are not a laborer," she said at last.

"Obviously not."

"I thought not."

He nodded.

"Suppose I tell on you," she said, growing bolder as she recollected that she was not alone with him.

"If you do I shall get out of it just as I got out of the half-crowns, and Miss Wilson will begin to think that you are mad."

"Then I really did not give you the seven and sixpence," she said, relieved.

"What is your own opinion?" he answered, taking three pennies from his pocket, jingling them in his palm.  
"What is your name?"

"I shall not tell you," said Agatha with dignity.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps you are right," he said. "I would not tell you mine if you asked me."

"I have not the slightest intention of asking you."

"No? Then Smilash shall do for you, and Agatha will do for me."

"You had better take care."

"Of what?"

"Of what you say, and--are you not afraid of being found out?"

"I am found out already--by you, and I am none the worse."

"Suppose the police find you out!"

"Not they. Besides, I am not hiding from the police. I have a right to wear corduroy if I prefer it to broadcloth. Consider the advantages of it! It has procured me admission to Alton College, and the pleasure of your acquaintance. Will you excuse me if I go on with my rolling, just to keep up appearances? I can talk as I roll."

"You may, if you are fond of soliloquizing," she said, turning away as he rose.

"Seriously, Agatha, you must not tell the others about me."

"Do not call me Agatha," she said impetuously. "What shall I call you, then?"

"You need not address me at all."

"I need, and will. Don't be ill-natured."

"But I don't know you. I wonder at your--" she hesitated at the word which occurred to her, but, being unable to think of a better one, used it--" at your cheek."

He laughed, and she watched him take a couple of turns with the roller. Presently, refreshing himself by a look at her, he caught her looking at him, and smiled. His smile was commonplace in comparison with the one she gave him in return, in which her eyes, her teeth, and the golden grain in her complexion seemed to flash simultaneously. He stopped rolling immediately, and rested his chin on the handle of the roller.

"If you neglect your work," said she maliciously, "you won't have the grass ready when the people come."

"What people?" he said, taken aback.

"Oh, lots of people. Most likely some who know you. There are visitors coming from London: my guardian, my guardiansess, their daughter, my mother, and about a hundred more."

"Four in all. What are they coming for? To see you?"

"To take me away," she replied, watching for signs of disappointment on his part.

They were at once forthcoming. "What the deuce are they going to take you away for?" he said. "Is your education finished?"

"No. I have behaved badly, and I am going to be expelled."

He laughed again. "Come!" he said, "you are beginning to invent in the Smilash manner. What have you done?"

"I don't see why I should tell you. What have you done?"

"I! Oh, I have done nothing. I am only an unromantic gentleman, hiding from a romantic lady who is in love with me."

"Poor thing," said Agatha sarcastically. "Of course, she has proposed to you, and you have refused."

"On the contrary, I proposed, and she accepted. That is why I have to hide."

"You tell stories charmingly," said Agatha. "Good-bye. Here is Miss Carpenter coming to hear what we are taking about."

"Good-bye. That story of your being expelled beats--Might a common man make so bold as to inquire where the whitening machine is, Miss?"

This was addressed to Jane, who had come up with some of the others. Agatha expected to see Smilash presently discovered, for his disguise now seemed transparent; she wondered how the rest could be imposed on by it. Two o'clock, striking just then, reminded her of the impending interview with her guardian. A tremor shook her, and she felt a craving for some solitary hiding-place in which to await the summons. But it was a point of honor with her to appear perfectly indifferent to her trouble, so she stayed with the girls, laughing and chatting as they watched Smilash intently marking out the courts and setting up the nets. She made the others laugh too, for her hidden excitement, sharpened by irrepressible shootings of dread, stimulated her, and the romance of Smilash's disguise gave her a sensation of dreaming. Her imagination was already busy upon a drama, of which she was the heroine and Smilash the hero, though, with the real man before her, she could not indulge herself by attributing to him quite as much gloomy grandeur of character as to a wholly ideal personage. The plot was simple, and an old favorite with her. One of them was to love the other and to die broken-hearted because the loved one would not requite the passion. For Agatha, prompt to ridicule sentimentality in her companions, and gifted with an infectious spirit of farce, secretly turned for imaginative luxury to visions of despair and death; and often endured the mortification of the successful clown who believes, whilst the public roar with laughter at him, that he was born a tragedian. There was much in her nature, she felt, that did not find expression in her popular representation of the soldier in the chimney.

By three o'clock the local visitors had arrived, and tennis was proceeding in four courts, rolled and prepared by Smilash. The two curates were there, with a few lay gentlemen. Mrs. Miller, the vicar, and some mothers and other chaperons looked on and consumed light refreshments, which were brought out upon trays by Smilash, who had borrowed and put on a large white apron, and was making himself officiously busy.

At a quarter past the hour a message came from Miss Wilson, requesting Miss Wylie's attendance. The visitors were at a loss to account for the sudden distraction of the young ladies' attention which ensued. Jane almost burst into tears, and answered Josephs rudely when he innocently asked what the matter was. Agatha went away apparently unconcerned, though her hand shook as she put aside her racket.

In a spacious drawing-room at the north side of the college she found her mother, a slight woman in widow's weeds, with faded brown hair, and tearful eyes. With her were Mrs. Jansenius and her daughter. The two elder ladies kept severely silent whilst Agatha kissed them, and Mrs. Wylie sniffed. Henrietta embraced Agatha effusively.

"Where's Uncle John?" said Agatha. "Hasn't he come?"

"He is in the next room with Miss Wilson," said Mrs. Jansenius coldly. "They want you in there."

"I thought somebody was dead," said Agatha, "you all look so funereal. Now, mamma, put your handkerchief back again. If you cry I will give Miss Wilson a piece of my mind for worrying you."

"No, no," said Mrs. Wylie, alarmed. "She has been so nice!"

"So good!" said Henrietta.

"She has been perfectly reasonable and kind," said Mrs. Jansenius.

"She always is," said Agatha complacently. "You didn't expect to find her in hysterics, did you?"

"Agatha," pleaded Mrs. Wylie, "don't be headstrong and foolish."

"Oh, she won't; I know she won't," said Henrietta coaxingly. "Will you, dear Agatha?"

"You may do as you like, as far as I am concerned," said Mrs. Jansenius. "But I hope you have more sense than to throw away your education for nothing."

"Your aunt is quite right," said Mrs. Wylie. "And your Uncle John is very angry with you. He will never speak to you again if you quarrel with Miss Wilson."

"He is not angry," said Henrietta, "but he is so anxious that you should get on well."

"He will naturally be disappointed if you persist in making a fool of yourself," said Mrs. Jansenius.

"All Miss Wilson wants is an apology for the dreadful things you wrote in her book," said Mrs. Wylie. "You'll apologize, dear, won't you?"

"Of course she will," said Henrietta.

"I think you had better," said Mrs. Jansenius.

"Perhaps I will," said Agatha.

"That's my own darling," said Mrs. Wylie, catching her hand.

"And perhaps, again, I won't."

"You will, dear," urged Mrs. Wylie, trying to draw Agatha, who passively resisted, closer to her. "For my sake. To oblige your mother, Agatha. You won't refuse me, dearest?"

Agatha laughed indulgently at her parent, who had long ago worn out this form of appeal. Then she turned to Henrietta, and said, "How is your caro sposo? I think it was hard that I was not a bridesmaid."

The red in Henrietta's cheeks brightened. Mrs. Jansenius hastened to interpose a dry reminder that Miss Wilson was waiting.

"Oh, she does not mind waiting," said Agatha, "because she thinks you are all at work getting me into a proper frame of mind. That was the arrangement she made with you before she left the room. Mamma knows that I have a little bird that tells me these things. I must say that you have not made me feel any goody-goodier so far. However, as poor Uncle John must be dreadfully frightened and uncomfortable, it is only kind to put an end to his suspense. Good-bye!" And she went out leisurely. But she looked in again to say in a low voice: "Prepare for something thrilling. I feel just in the humor to say the most awful things." She vanished, and immediately they heard her tapping at the door of the next room.

Mr. Jansenius was indeed awaiting her with misgiving. Having discovered early in his career that his dignified person and fine voice caused people to stand in some awe of him, and to move him into the chair at public meetings, he had grown so accustomed to deference that any approach to familiarity or irreverence disconcerted him exceedingly. Agatha, on the other hand, having from her childhood heard Uncle John quoted as wisdom and authority incarnate, had begun in her tender years to scoff at him as a pompous and purseproud city merchant, whose sordid mind was unable to cope with her transcendental affairs. She had habitually terrified her mother by ridiculing him with an absolute contempt of which only childhood and extreme ignorance are capable. She had felt humiliated by his kindness to her (he was a generous giver of presents), and, with the instinct of an anarchist, had taken disparagement of his advice and defiance of his authority as the signs wherefrom she might infer surely that her face was turned to the light. The result was that he was a little tired of her without being quite conscious of it; and she not at all afraid of him, and a little too conscious of it.

When she entered with her brightest smile in full play, Miss Wilson and Mr. Jansenius, seated at the table, looked somewhat like two culprits about to be indicted. Miss Wilson waited for him to speak, deferring to his imposing presence. But he was not ready, so she invited Agatha to sit down.

"Thank you," said Agatha sweetly. "Well, Uncle John, don't you know me?"

"I have heard with regret from Miss Wilson that you have been very troublesome here," he said, ignoring her remark, though secretly put out by it.

"Yes," said Agatha contritely. "I am so very sorry."

Mr. Jansenius, who had been led by Miss Wilson to expect the utmost contumacy, looked to her in surprise.

"You seem to think," said Miss Wilson, conscious of Mr. Jansenius's movement, and annoyed by it, "that you may transgress over and over again, and then set yourself right with us," (Miss Wilson never spoke of offences as against her individual authority, but as against the school community) "by saying that you are sorry. You spoke in a very different tone at our last meeting."

"I was angry then, Miss Wilson. And I thought I had a grievance--everybody thinks they have the same one. Besides, we were quarrelling--at least I was; and I always behave badly when I quarrel. I am so very sorry."

"The book was a serious matter," said Miss Wilson gravely. "You do not seem to think so."

"I understand Agatha to say that she is now sensible of the folly of her conduct with regard to the book, and that she is sorry for it," said Mr. Jansenius, instinctively inclining to Agatha's party as the stronger one and the least dependent on him in a pecuniary sense. Have you seen the book?" said Agatha eagerly.

"No. Miss Wilson has described what has occurred."

"Oh, do let me get it," she cried, rising. "It will make Uncle John scream with laughing. May I, Miss Wilson?"

"There!" said Miss Wilson, indignantly. "It is this incorrigible flippancy of which I have to complain. Miss Wylie only varies it by downright insubordination."

Mr. Jansenius too was scandalized. His fine color mounted at the idea of his screaming. "Tut, tut!" he said, "you must be serious, and more respectful to Miss Wilson. You are old enough to know better now, Agatha--quite old enough."

Agatha's mirth vanished. "What have I said What have I done?" she asked, a faint purple spot appearing in her cheeks.

"You have spoken triflingly of--of the volume by which Miss Wilson sets great store, and properly so."

"If properly so, then why do you find fault with me?"

"Come, come," roared Mr. Jansenius, deliberately losing his temper as a last expedient to subdue her, "don't be impertinent, Miss."

Agatha's eyes dilated; evanescent flushes played upon her cheeks and neck; she stamped with her heel. "Uncle John," she cried, "if you dare to address me like that, I will never look at you, never speak to you, nor ever enter your house again. What do you know about good manners, that you should call me impertinent? I will not submit to intentional rudeness; that was the beginning of my quarrel with Miss Wilson. She told me I was impertinent, and I went away and told her that she was wrong by writing it in the fault book. She has been wrong all through, and I would have said so before but that I wanted to be reconciled to her and to let bygones be bygones. But if she insists on quarrelling, I cannot help it."

"I have already explained to you, Mr. Jansenius," said Miss Wilson, concentrating her resentment by an effort to suppress it, "that Miss Wylie has ignored all the opportunities that have been made for her to reinstate herself here. Mrs. Miller and I have waived merely personal considerations, and I have only required a simple acknowledgment of this offence against the college and its rules."

"I do not care that for Mrs. Miller," said Agatha, snapping her fingers. "And you are not half so good as I thought."

"Agatha," said Mr. Jansenius, "I desire you to hold your tongue."

Agatha drew a deep breath, sat down resignedly, and said: "There! I have done. I have lost my temper; so now we have all lost our tempers."

"You have no right to lose your temper, Miss," said Mr. Jansenius, following up a fancied advantage.

"I am the youngest, and the least to blame," she replied. "There is nothing further to be said, Mr. Jansenius," said Miss Wilson, determinedly. "I am sorry that Miss Wylie has chosen to break with us."

"But I have not chosen to break with you, and I think it very hard that I am to be sent away. Nobody here has



the least quarrel with me except you and Mrs. Miller. Mrs. Miller is annoyed because she mistook me for her cat, as if that was my fault! And really, Miss Wilson, I don't know why you are so angry. All the girls will think I have done something infamous if I am expelled. I ought to be let stay until the end of the term; and as to the Rec--the fault book, you told me most particularly when I first came that I might write in it or not just as I pleased, and that you never dictated or interfered with what was written. And yet the very first time I write a word you disapprove of, you expel me. Nobody will ever believe now that the entries are voluntary."

Miss Wilson's conscience, already smitten by the coarseness and absence of moral force in the echo of her own "You are impertinent," from the mouth of Mr. Jansenius, took fresh alarm. "The fault book," she said, "is for the purpose of recording self-reproach alone, and is not a vehicle for accusations against others."

"I am quite sure that neither Jane nor Gertrude nor I reproached ourselves in the least for going downstairs as we did, and yet you did not blame us for entering that. Besides, the book represented moral force--at least you always said so, and when you gave up moral force, I thought an entry should be made of that. Of course I was in a rage at the time, but when I came to myself I thought I had done right, and I think so still, though it would perhaps have been better to have passed it over."

"Why do you say that I gave up moral force?"

"Telling people to leave the room is not moral force. Calling them impertinent is not moral force."

"You think then that I am bound to listen patiently to whatever you choose to say to me, however unbecoming it may be from one in your position to one in mine?"

"But I said nothing unbecoming," said Agatha. Then, breaking off restlessly, and smiling again, she said: "Oh, don't let us argue. I am very sorry, and very troublesome, and very fond of you and of the college; and I won't come back next term unless you like."

"Agatha," said Miss Wilson, shaken, "these expressions of regard cost you so little, and when they have effected their purpose, are so soon forgotten by you, that they have ceased to satisfy me. I am very reluctant to insist on your leaving us at once. But as your uncle has told you, you are old and sensible enough to know the difference between order and disorder. Hitherto you have been on the side of disorder, an element which was hardly known here until you came, as Mrs. Trefusis can tell you. Nevertheless, if you will promise to be more careful in future, I will waive all past cause of complaint, and at the end of the term I shall be able to judge as to your continuing among us."

Agatha rose, beaming. "Dear Miss Wilson," she said, "you are so good! I promise, of course. I will go and tell mamma."

Before they could add a word she had turned with a pirouette to the door, and fled, presenting herself a moment later in the drawing-room to the three ladies, whom she surveyed with a whimsical smile in silence.

"Well?" said Mrs. Jansenius peremptorily.

"Well, dear?" said Mrs. Trefusis, caressingly.

Mrs. Wylie stifled a sob and looked imploringly at her daughter.

"I had no end of trouble in bringing them to reason," said Agatha, after a provoking pause. "They behaved like children, and I was like an angel. I am to stay, of course."

"Blessings on you, my darling," faltered Mrs. Wylie, attempting a kiss, which Agatha dexterously evaded.

"I have promised to be very good, and studious, and quiet, and decorous in future. Do you remember my castanet song, Hetty?"

"Tra! lalala, la! la! la! Tra! lalala, la! la! la! Tra! lalalalalalalalalalal!"

And she danced about the room, snapping her fingers instead of castanets.

"Don't be so reckless and wicked, my love," said Mrs. Wylie. "You will break your poor mother's heart."

Miss Wilson and Mr. Jansenius entered just then, and Agatha became motionless and gazed abstractedly at a vase of flowers. Miss Wilson invited her visitors to join the tennis players. Mr. Jansenius looked sternly and disappointedly at Agatha, who elevated her left eyebrow and depressed her right simultaneously; but he, shaking his head to signify that he was not to be conciliated by facial feats, however difficult or contrary to nature, went out with Miss Wilson, followed by Mrs. Jansenius and Mrs. Wylie.

"How is your Hubby?" said Agatha then, brusquely, to Henrietta.

Mrs. Trefusis's eyes filled with tears so quickly that, as she bent her head to hide them, they fell, sprinkling Agatha's hand.

"This is such a dear old place," she began. "The associations of my girlhood--"

"What is the matter between you and Hubby?" demanded Agatha, interrupting her. "You had better tell me, or I will ask him when I meet him."

"I was about to tell you, only you did not give me time."

"That is a most awful cram," said Agatha. "But no matter. Go on."

Henrietta hesitated. Her dignity as a married woman, and the reality of her grief, revolted against the shallow acuteness of the schoolgirl. But she found herself no better able to resist Agatha's domineering than she had been in her childhood, and much more desirous of obtaining her sympathy. Besides, she had already learnt to tell the story herself rather than leave its narration to others, whose accounts did not, she felt, put her case in the proper light. So she told Agatha of her marriage, her wild love for her husband, his wild love for her, and his mysterious disappearance without leaving word or sign behind him. She did not mention the letter.

"Have you had him searched for?" said Agatha, repressing an inclination to laugh.

"But where? Had I the remotest clue, I would follow him barefoot to the end of the world."

"I think you ought to search all the rivers--you would have to do that barefoot. He must have fallen in somewhere, or fallen down some place."

"No, no. Do you think I should be here if I thought his life in danger? I have reasons--I know that he is only gone away."

"Oh, indeed! He took his portmanteau with him, did he? Perhaps he has gone to Paris to buy you something nice and give you a pleasant surprise."

"No," said Henrietta dejectedly. "He knew that I wanted nothing."

"Then I suppose he got tired of you and ran away."

Henrietta's peculiar scarlet blush flowed rapidly over her cheeks as she flung Agatha's arm away, exclaiming, "How dare you say so! You have no heart. He adored me."

"Bosh!" said Agatha. "People always grow tired of one another. I grow tired of myself whenever I am left alone for ten minutes, and I am certain that I am fonder of myself than anyone can be of another person."

"I know you are," said Henrietta, pained and spiteful. "You have always been particularly fond of yourself."

"Very likely he resembles me in that respect. In that case he will grow tired of himself and come back, and you will both coo like turtle doves until he runs away again. Ugh! Serve you right for getting married. I wonder how people can be so mad as to do it, with the example of their married acquaintances all warning them against it."

"You don't know what it is to love," said Henrietta, plaintively, and yet patronizingly. "Besides, we were not like other couples."

"So it seems. But never mind, take my word for it, he will return to you as soon as he has had enough of his own company. Don't worry thinking about him, but come and have a game at lawn tennis."

During this conversation they had left the drawing-room and made a detour through the grounds. They were now approaching the tennis courts by a path which wound between two laurel hedges through the shrubbery. Meanwhile, Smilash, waiting on the guests in his white apron and gloves (which he had positively refused to take off, alleging that he was a common man, with common hands such as born ladies and gentlemen could not be expected to take meat and drink from), had behaved himself irreproachably until the arrival of Miss Wilson and her visitors, which occurred as he was returning to the table with an empty tray, moving so swiftly that he nearly came into collision with Mrs. Jansenius. Instead of apologizing, he changed countenance, hastily held up the tray like a shield before his face, and began to walk backward from her, stumbling presently against Miss Lindsay, who was running to return a ball. Without heeding her angry look and curt rebuke, he half turned, and sidled away into the shrubbery, whence the tray presently rose into the air, flew across the laurel hedge, and descended with a peal of stage thunder on the stooped shoulders of Josephs. Miss Wilson, after asking the housekeeper with some asperity why she had allowed that man to interfere in the attendance, explained to the guests that he was the idiot of the countryside. Mr. Jansenius laughed, and said that he had not seen the man's face, but that his figure reminded him forcibly of some one; he could not just then recollect exactly whom.

Smilash, making off through the shrubbery, found the end of his path blocked by Agatha and a young lady whose appearance alarmed him more than had that of Mrs. Jansenius. He attempted to force his tray through the hedge, but in vain; the laurel was impenetrable, and the noise he made attracted the attention of the approaching couple. He made no further effort to escape, but threw his borrowed apron over his head and stood bolt upright with his back against the bushes.

"What is that man doing there?" said Henrietta, stopping mistrustfully.

Agatha laughed, and said loudly, so that he might hear: "It is only a harmless madman that Miss Wilson employs. He is fond of disguising himself in some silly way and trying to frighten us. Don't be afraid. Come on."

Henrietta hung back, but her arm was linked in Agatha's, and she was drawn along in spite of herself. Smilash did not move. Agatha strolled on coolly, and as she passed him, adroitly caught the apron between her finger and thumb and twitched it from his face. Instantly Henrietta uttered a piercing scream, and Smilash caught her in his arms.

"Quick," he said to Agatha, "she is fainting. Run for some water. Run!" And he bent over Henrietta, who clung to him frantically. Agatha, bewildered by the effect of her practical joke, hesitated a moment, and then ran to the lawn.

"What is the matter?" said Fairholme.

"Nothing. I want some water--quick, please. Henrietta has fainted in the shrubbery, that is all."

"Please do not stir," said Miss Wilson authoritatively, "you will crowd the path and delay useful assistance. Miss Ward, kindly get some water and bring it to us. Agatha, come with me and point out where Mrs. Trefusis is. You may come too, Miss Carpenter; you are so strong. The rest will please remain where they are."

Followed by the two girls, she hurried into the shrubbery, where Mr. Jansenius was already looking anxiously for his daughter. He was the only person they found there. Smilash and Henrietta were gone.

At first the seekers, merely puzzled, did nothing but question Agatha incredulously as to the exact spot on which Henrietta had fallen. But Mr. Jansenius soon made them understand that the position of a lady in the hands of a half-witted laborer was one of danger. His agitation infected them, and when Agatha endeavored to reassure him by declaring that Smilash was a disguised gentleman, Miss Wilson, supposing this to be a mere repetition of her former idle conjecture, told her sharply to hold her tongue, as the time was not one for talking nonsense. The news now spread through the whole company, and the excitement became intense. Fairholme shouted for volunteers to make up a searching party. All the men present responded, and they were about to rush to the college gates in a body when it occurred to the cooler among them that they had better divide into several parties, in order that search might be made at once in different quarters. Ten minutes of confusion followed. Mr. Jansenius started several times in quest of Henrietta, and, when he had gone a few steps, returned and begged that no more time should be wasted. Josephs, whose faith was simple, retired to pray, and did good, as far as it went, by withdrawing one voice from the din of plans, objections, and suggestions which the rest were making; each person trying to be heard above the others.

At last Miss Wilson quelled the prevailing anarchy. Servants were sent to alarm the neighbors and call in the village police. Detachments were sent in various directions under the command of Fairholme and other energetic spirits. The girls formed parties among themselves, which were reinforced by male deserters from the previous levies. Miss Wilson then went indoors and conducted a search through the interior of the college. Only two persons were left on the tennis ground--Agatha and Mrs. Jansenius, who had been surprisingly calm throughout.

"You need not be anxious," said Agatha, who had been standing aloof since her rebuff by Miss Wilson. "I am sure there is no danger. It is most extraordinary that they have gone away; but the man is no more mad than I am, and I know he is a gentleman He told me so."

"Let us hope for the best," said Mrs. Jansenius, smoothly. "I think I will sit down--I feel so tired. Thanks." (Agatha had handed her a chair.) "What did you say he told you--this man?"

Agatha related the circumstances of her acquaintance with Smilash, adding, at Mrs. Jansenius's request, a minute description of his personal appearance. Mrs. Jansenius remarked that it was very singular, and that she was sure Henrietta was quite safe. She then partook of claret-cup and sandwiches. Agatha, though glad to find someone disposed to listen to her, was puzzled by her aunt's coolness, and was even goaded into pointing out that though Smilash was not a laborer, it did not follow that he was an honest man. But Mrs. Jansenius only said: "Oh, she is safe--quite safe! At least, of course, I can only hope so. We shall have news presently," and took another sandwich.

The searchers soon began to return, baffled. A few shepherds, the only persons in the vicinity, had been asked

whether they had seen a young lady and a laborer. Some of them had seen a young woman with a basket of clothes, if that mout be her. Some thought that Phil Martin the carrier would see her if anybody would. None of them had any positive information to give.

As the afternoon wore on, and party after party returned tired and unsuccessful, depression replaced excitement; conversation, no longer tumultuous, was carried on in whispers, and some of the local visitors slipped away to their homes with a growing conviction that something unpleasant had happened, and that it would be as well not to be mixed up in it. Mr. Jansenius, though a few words from his wife had surprised and somewhat calmed him, was still pitiably restless and uneasy.

At last the police arrived. At sight of their uniforms excitement revived; there was a general conviction that something effectual would be done now. But the constables were only mortal, and in a few moments a whisper spread that they were fooled. They doubted everything told them, and expressed their contempt for amateur searching by entering on a fresh investigation, prying with the greatest care into the least probable places. Two of them went off to the chalet to look for Smilash. Then Fairholme, sunburnt, perspiring, and dusty, but still energetic, brought back the exhausted remnant of his party, with a sullen boy, who scowled defiantly at the police, evidently believing that he was about to be delivered into their custody.

Fairholme had been everywhere, and, having seen nothing of the missing pair, had come to the conclusion that they were nowhere. He had asked everybody for information, and had let them know that he meant to have it too, if it was to be had. But it was not to be had. The sole resort of his labor was the evidence of the boy whom he didn't believe.

"Im!" said the inspector, not quite pleased by Fairholme's zeal, and yet overborne by it. "You're Wickens's boy, ain't you?"

"Yes, I am Wickens's boy," said the witness, partly fierce, partly lachrymose, "and I say I seen him, and if anyone sez I didn't see him, he's a lie."

"Come," said the inspector sharply, "give us none of your cheek, but tell us what you saw, or you'll have to deal with me afterwards."

"I don't care who I deal with," said the boy, at bay. "I can't be took for seein' him, because there's no lor agin it. I was in the gravel pit in the canal meadow--"

"What business had you there?" said the inspector, interrupting.

"I got leave to be there," said the boy insolently, but reddening.

"Who gave you leave?" said the inspector, collaring him. "Ah," he added, as the captive burst into tears, "I told you you'd have to deal with me. Now hold your noise, and remember where you are and who you're speakin' to; and perhaps I mayn't lock you up this time. Tell me what you saw when you were trespassin' in the meadow."

"I sor a young 'omen and a man. And I see her kissin' him; and the gentleman won't believe me."

"You mean you saw him kissing her, more likely."

"No, I don't. I know wot it is to have a girl kiss you when you don't want. And I gev a screech to friken 'em. And he called me and gev me tuppence, and sez, 'You go to the devil,' he sez, 'and don't tell no one you seen me here, or else,' he sez, 'I might be tempted to drownd you,' he sez, 'and wot a shock that would be to your parents!' 'Oh, yes, very likely,' I sez, jes' like that. Then I went away, because he knows Mr. Wickens, and I

was afeerd of his telling on me."

The boy being now subdued, questions were put to him from all sides. But his powers of observation and description went no further. As he was anxious to propitiate his captors, he answered as often as possible in the affirmative. Mr. Jansenius asked him whether the young woman he had seen was a lady, and he said yes. Was the man a laborer? Yes--after a moment's hesitation. How was she dressed? He hadn't taken notice. Had she red flowers in her hat? Yes. Had she a green dress? Yes. Were the flowers in her hat yellow? (Agatha's question.) Yes. Was her dress pink? Yes. Sure it wasn't black? No answer.

"I told you he was a liar," said Fairholme contemptuously.

"Well, I expect he's seen something," said the inspector, "but what it was, or who it was, is more than I can get out of him."

There was a pause, and they looked askance upon Wickens's boy. His account of the kissing made it almost an insult to the Janseniuses to identify with Henrietta the person he had seen. Jane suggested dragging the canal, but was silenced by an indignant "sh-sh-sh," accompanied by apprehensive and sympathetic glances at the bereaved parents. She was displaced from the focus of attention by the appearance of the two policemen who had been sent to the chalet. Smilash was between them, apparently a prisoner. At a distance, he seemed to have suffered some frightful injury to his head, but when he was brought into the midst of the company it appeared that he had twisted a red handkerchief about his face as if to soothe a toothache. He had a particularly hangdog expression as he stood before the inspector with his head bowed and his countenance averted from Mr. Jansenius, who, attempting to scrutinize his features, could see nothing but a patch of red handkerchief.

One of the policemen described how they had found Smilash in the act of entering his dwelling; how he had refused to give any information or to go to the college, and had defied them to take him there against his will; and how, on their at last proposing to send for the inspector and Mr. Jansenius, he had called them asses, and consented to accompany them. The policeman concluded by declaring that the man was either drunk or designing, as he could not or would not speak sensibly.

"Look here, governor," began Smilash to the inspector, "I am a common man--no commoner goin', as you may see for--"

"That's 'im," cried Wickens's boy, suddenly struck with a sense of his own importance as a witness. "That's 'im that the lady kissed, and that gev me tuppence and threatened to drownd me."

"And with a 'umble and contrite 'art do I regret that I did not drownd you, you young rascal," said Smilash. "It ain't manners to interrupt a man who, though common, might be your father for years and wisdom."

"Hold your tongue," said the inspector to the boy. "Now, Smilash, do you wish to make any statement? Be careful, for whatever you say may be used against you hereafter."

"If you was to lead me straight away to the scaffold, colonel, I could tell you no more than the truth. If any man can say that he has heard Jeff Smilash tell a lie, let him stand forth."

"We don't want to hear about that," said the inspector. "As you are a stranger in these parts, nobody here knows any bad of you. No more do they know any good of you neither."

"Colonel," said Smilash, deeply impressed, "you have a penetrating mind, and you know a bad character at sight. Not to deceive you, I am that given to lying, and laziness, and self-indulgence of all sorts, that the only excuse I can find for myself is that it is the nature of the race so to be; for most men is just as bad as me, and

some of 'em worsen I do not speak pers'nal to you, governor, nor to the honorable gentlemen here assembled. But then you, colonel, are a hinspector of police, which I take to be more than merely human; and as to the gentlemen here, a gentleman ain't a man--leastways not a common man--the common man bein' but the slave wot feeds and clothes the gentleman beyond the common."

"Come," said the inspector, unable to follow these observations, "you are a clever dodger, but you can't dodge me. Have you any statement to make with reference to the lady that was last seen in your company?"

"Take a statement about a lady!" said Smilash indignantly. "Far be the thought from my mind!"

"What have you done with her?" said Agatha, impetuously. "Don't be silly."

"You're not bound to answer that, you know," said the inspector, a little put out by Agatha's taking advantage of her irresponsible unofficial position to come so directly to the point. "You may if you like, though. If you've done any harm, you'd better hold your tongue. If not, you'd better say so."

"I will set the young lady's mind at rest respecting her honorable sister," said Smilash. "When the young lady caught sight of me she fainted. Bein' but a young man, and not used to ladies, I will not deny but that I were a bit scared, and that my mind were not open to the sensiblest considerations. When she unveils her orbs, so to speak, she ketches me round the neck, not knowin' me from Adam the father of us all, and sez, 'Bring me some water, and don't let the girls see me.' Through not 'avin' the intelligence to think for myself, I done just what she told me. I ups with her in my arms--she bein' a light weight and a slender figure--and makes for the canal as fast as I could. When I got there, I lays her on the bank and goes for the water. But what with factories, and pollutions, and high civilizations of one sort and another, English canal water ain't fit to sprinkle on a lady, much less for her to drink. Just then, as luck would have it, a barge came along and took her aboard, and--"

"To such a thing," said Wickens's boy stubbornly, emboldened by witnessing the effrontery of one apparently of his own class. "I sor you two standin' together, and her a kissin' of you. There worn's no barge."

"Is the maiden modesty of a born lady to be disbelieved on the word of a common boy that only walks the earth by the sufferance of the landlords and moneylords he helps to feed?" cried Smilash indignantly. "Why, you young infidel, a lady ain't made of common brick like you. She don't know what a kiss means, and if she did, is it likely that she'd kiss me when a fine man like the inspector here would be only too happy to oblige her. Fie, for shame! The barge were red and yellow, with a green dragon for a figurehead, and a white horse towin' of it. Perhaps you're color-blind, and can't distinguish red and yellow. The bargee was moved to compassion by the sight of the poor faintin' lady, and the offer of 'arf-a-crown, and he had a mother that acted as a mother should. There was a cabin in that barge about as big as the locker where your ladyship keeps your jam and pickles, and in that locker the bargee lives, quite domestic, with his wife and mother and five children. Them canal boats is what you may call the wooden walls of England."

"Come, get on with your story," said the inspector. "We know what barges is as well as you."

"I wish more knew of 'em," retorted Smilash; "perhaps it 'ud lighten your work a bit. However, as I was sayin', we went right down the canal to Lyvern, where we got off, and the lady she took the railway omnibus and went away in it. With the noble openhandedness of her class, she gave me sixpence; here it is, in proof that my words is true. And I wish her safe home, and if I was on the rack I could tell no more, except that when I got back I were laid hands on by these here bobbies, contrary to the British constitooshun, and if your ladyship will kindly go to where that constitooshun is wrote down, and find out wot it sez about my rights and liberties--for I have been told that the working-man has his liberties, and have myself seen plenty took with him --you will oblige a common chap more than his education will enable him to express."

"Sir," cried Mr. Jansenius suddenly, "will you hold up your head and look me in the face?"

Smilash did so, and immediately started theatrically, exclaiming, "Whom do I see?"

"You would hardly believe it," he continued, addressing the company at large, "but I am well beknown to this honorable gentleman. I see it upon your lips, governor, to ask after my missus, and I thank you for your condescending interest. She is well, sir, and my residence here is fully agreed upon between us. What little cloud may have rose upon our domestic horizon has past away; and, governor"---here Smilash's voice fell with graver emphasis---"them as interferences betwixt man and wife now will incur a nevvvy responsibility. Here I am, such as you see me, and here I mean to stay, likewise such as you see me. That is, if what you may call destiny permits. For destiny is a rum thing, governor. I came here thinking it was the last place in the world I should ever set eyes on you in, and blow me if you ain't a'most the first person I pops on."

"I do not choose to be a party to this mummery of--"

"Asking your leave to take the word out of your mouth, governor, I make you a party to nothink. Respecting my past conduct, you may out with it or you may keep it to yourself. All I say is that if you out with some of it I will out with the rest. All or none. You are free to tell the inspector here that I am a bad 'un. His penetrating mind have discovered that already. But if you go into names and particulars, you will not only be acting against the wishes of my missus, but you will lead to my tellin' the whole story right out afore everyone here, and then goin' away where no one won't never find me."

"I think the less said the better," said Mrs. Jansenius, uneasily observant of the curiosity and surprise this dialogue was causing. "But understand this, Mr.--"

"Smilash, dear lady; Jeff Smilash."

"Mr. Smilash, whatever arrangement you may have made with your wife, it has nothing to do with me. You have behaved infamously, and I desire to have as little as possible to say to you in future! I desire to have nothing to say to you--nothing" said Mr. Jansenius. "I look on your conduct as an insult to me, personally. You may live in any fashion you please, and where you please. All England is open to you except one place--my house. Come, Ruth." He offered his arm to his wife; she took it, and they turned away, looking about for Agatha, who, disgusted at the gaping curiosity of the rest, had pointedly withdrawn beyond earshot of the conversation.

Miss Wilson looked from Smilash--who had watched Mr. Jansenius's explosion of wrath with friendly interest, as if it concerned him as a curious spectator only--to her two visitors as they retreated. "Pray, do you consider this man's statement satisfactory?" she said to them. "I do not."

"I am far too common a man to be able to make any statement that could satisfy a mind cultivated as yours has been," said Smilash, "but I would 'umbly pint out to you that there is a boy yonder with a telegram trying to shove hisself through the 'iborn throng."

"Miss Wilson!" cried the boy shrilly.

She took the telegram; read it; and frowned. "We have had all our trouble for nothing, ladies and gentlemen," she said, with suppressed vexation. "Mrs. Trefusis says here that she has gone back to London. She has not considered it necessary to add any explanation."

There was a general murmur of disappointment.

"Don't lose heart, ladies," said Smilash. "She may be drowned or murdered for all we know. Anyone may



send a telegram in a false name. Perhaps it's a plant. Let's hope for your sakes that some little accident--on the railway, for instance--may happen yet."

Miss Wilson turned upon him, glad to find someone with whom she might justly be angry. "You had better go about your business," she said. "And don't let me see you here again."

"This is 'ard," said Smilash plaintively. "My intentions was nothing but good. But I know wot it is. It's that young varmint a-saying that the young lady kissed me."

"Inspector," said Miss Wilson, "will you oblige me by seeing that he leaves the college as soon as possible?"

"Where's my wages?" he retorted reproachfully. "Where's my lawful wages? I am su'prised at a lady like you, chock full o' moral science and political economy, wanting to put a poor man off. Where's your wages fund? Where's your remuneratory capital?"

"Don't you give him anything, ma'am," said the inspector. "The money he's had from the lady will pay him very well. Move on here, or we'll precious soon hurry you."

"Very well," grumbled Smilash. "I bargained for ninepence, and what with the roller, and opening the soda water, and shoving them heavy tables about, there was a decomposition of tissue in me to the tune of two shillings. But all I ask is the ninepence, and let the lady keep the one and threppence as the reward of abstinence. Exploitation of labor at the rate of a hundred and twenty-five per cent., that is. Come, give us ninepence, and I'll go straight off."

"Here is a shilling," said Miss Wilson. "Now go."

"Threppence change!" cried Smilash. "Honesty has ever been--"

"You may keep the change."

"You have a noble 'art, lady; but you're flying in the face of the law of supply and demand. If you keep payin' at this rate, there'll be a rush of laborers to the college, and competition'll soon bring you down from a shilling to sixpence, let alone ninepence. That's the way wages go down and death rates goes up, worse luck for the likes of hus, as has to sell ourselves like pigs in the market."

He was about to continue when the policeman took him by the arm, turned him towards the gate, and pointed expressively in that direction. Smilash looked vacantly at him for a moment. Then, with a wink at Fairholme, he walked gravely away, amid general staring and silence.