THE FACE IN THE CROWD

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FROM WHERE IRIS STOOD ON THE VERANDA OF THE HOTEL THEY HAD A VIEW THAT WAS UNSURPASSED. (Page 10)

THE FACE IN THE CROWD

BY

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Chapter I
“You Are Not My Daughter”

“IRIS!”

The girl was standing on the hotel veranda, just outside one of the windows of the big room which overlooked the glory and beauty that is summed up in the name of the Lake of Geneva.

It was toward evening, and the sun was sinking over the city. They were well away from the streets, and from the noise of the most beautiful cosmopolis in the world, whence in recent years people of almost every nation and every tongue have come in search of a common basis on which to attempt to lay the foundations of world peace. Sometimes Iris Sinclair thought that they had merely succeeded in laying the foundations of a veritable Tower of Babel instead!

But what mattered? From where she stood on the first floor veranda of a small hotel on the slope of the hills, they had a view that was unsurpassed. The deep blue of the lake, the little Swiss fishing boats, with their quaint, picturesque sails, gliding over the still, calm depths—the vine-clad hills rising from the water’s edge. Behind and above all was the long range of Alpine peaks, each of them clad with the eternal snows. Mont Blanc, majestic in its lonely splendour as the monarch of the mountains, at the end of the range, crowning all.

Every moment had been sheer delight, since their coming from murky Midland Millchester, to escape the drab dreariness of a North of England autumn and winter. Mr. Sinclair had prospered as a manufacturer just sufficiently to retire in modest comfort, before the slump in the cotton trade swept masters and workmen alike into the melting-pot of depression. Iris had lost her mother a couple of years back, and her father had never seemed the same man since. Others had seen what had been hidden, so far, from the girl’s eyes—that he was a tree which had already been marked to fall by the axe of the Great Feller of human lives.

All she knew was that his energy had seemed sapped, he had lost heart and strength. When the doctor ordered him in early autumn to winter abroad, Iris had believed, with all the optimism of girlhood, that the magician’s touch of Switzerland would speedily make him his old self once again. But autumn had

gone, and winter passed. They had sojourned on the lake shore of Lucerne, and had mounted higher to the Grindelwald Valley in hopes that the crisp, frozen, air of the winter sports centre would prove effectually bracing.

But the keen cold proved too much for him, and weeks back they had come, by easy stages, to sojourn near to Geneva, in a delightful and unpretentious *pension*, with a view that was almost unsurpassed.

For a time Mr. Sinclair seemed better, and Iris was glad to forget her anxiety. No doubt her father would be quite well again, long before the summer heat on the lake shore compelled them to move, most probably back to England and home. But for the present she was more than content they should remain where they were. They had no senseless luxury, but every comfort, and the sprinkle of visitors at the same *pension* had proved congenial folk.

There was a smile of content on Iris' girlish face, as she turned at her father's call, and entered the sitting-room where he was resting on a comfortable lounge just inside the window.

"Yes, father? Can I get you anything? It won't be dinner-time yet awhile!"

"I know. I am not sure I shall go down. They can bring me something up here. I don't want anything at the moment—except you. Draw up that low chair, and come and sit beside me. There is something I want to say to you—it ought to have been said before."

Something in his tone struck the girl as being unusual. She was conscious of a sudden feeling of apprehension, as if an icy breath, coming in through the open window from the distant snow-clad summit of Mont Blanc, had clutched her heart.

"Father! Why do you speak like that? Are you worse? Is the old pain in your side troubling you again? Let me get you——!"

"Nothing, I want nothing," he said, laying a detaining hand upon hers, as she was preparing to move away.

"No, I want nothing—only you!" he said quietly. "Iris, I am not quite sure how you will feel when you know the truth—you ought to have known it before. My beloved Margaret always said so—but we kept putting it off."

The broad smooth brow above Iris' eyes of purple-blue were knitted in puzzled wonder. What did he mean? What could he mean? She had never known her father to talk in this strain before—never once had her mother done so.

“I don’t know what you mean, father,” she said a little breathlessly. “What haven’t you told me that mother thought I ought to know? You sound very mysterious. What great secret have you been keeping from me all these years?”

Once, twice Mr. Sinclair tried to speak. But at first no words would come.

Then, mastering himself with a fierce effort, he said in a low strained voice, “You called me ‘father’ just now—as you have always done, naturally. But it is not true.”

“Not—true?”

He nodded. It was a tense moment of deep emotion for them both.

At last he said, “Iris, you are not my daughter!”

“Oh! oh!” cried the girl. “You can’t mean it! It isn’t true! Why, mother—!”

“Was not your mother! You were simply her adopted child—as you are mine.”

For a moment Iris was too utterly stunned for speech. There was the sound of a sob of anguish in her voice, as she said at last, “Then—whose daughter am I?”

“Ah, that I cannot tell you. I do not know. We—we never knew.”

Chapter II
The Story from the Past

IRIS sat still as if frozen for a moment. Then she rose, walked abruptly to the window, and out upon the balcony.

The westering sun was sinking across the city. The glow of roseate pink and gleaming gold was setting the eternal snows aflame upon the Alpine peaks. It was the hour above all others that Iris loved—"the coronation of the mountains by the priestly sun."

But to-night Iris saw nothing. Deepening blue of the lake, and purple of the sky, glittering Alpine pinnacles and creeping shadows in the valley to the hill slopes—she gazed at them all with unseeing eyes. Yet she had well nigh worshipped the beauty of it all a moment or so before.

But a few words from the man she had always looked upon as her father, had changed everything. James Sinclair not her father? The woman to whom she had given a daughter's love and mourned for her as her child would do—not her own mother after all? Then—*who was she?*

A sudden passionate agony of pain and swift resentment rent her very soul. Why, oh, why had she been allowed to grow up to girlhood, to the very threshold of womanhood, indeed, without being told the real truth? Having kept it from her for so long, why had the man she called her father told her now?

She turned and re-entered the room as suddenly as she had left it.

"Why have you told me now?" she cried passionately. "Having said so much you must tell me more. I insist, fa——!" she checked in time the name that rose so naturally to her lips.

He nodded. If the girl herself had not been suffering so acutely, she would have seen how keen was James Sinclair's own pain at the revelation he had been forced to make at last. Besides, there was a reason why it had had to be made. Iris did not know as yet. That must come later, and then—God pity her, poor child!

"You say you don't know who I am?" Iris went on; "but you must know something. Whatever you know it is my right to know it, too. You must share your knowledge with me."

He nodded.

“It is a long story, and a strange one. I am tired, and it will try me beyond bearing to tell you now what you should have known before. As for you, my dear, I can guess your feelings at this moment. It seems a shock almost too terrible to be borne, doesn’t it? Yet, Iris, when you have heard your own strange story, you will realise that it might have been worse for you—much worse!”

Iris was silent. At that moment it did not seem possible that anything could very well be more terrible than being told that she was no child of those she had thought were her parents. The suddenness of the revelation completely overwhelmed her. Just then, from somewhere far away on one of the hill slopes overlooking the lake, there came the familiar “yodel,” the sound of the alpenhorn—rising, falling, musical as a chime of bells, echoing and re-echoing far and wide. Iris had always listened for that yodelling, and loved it, as among the many beautiful things associated with these Alpine days. Now, she felt that she would for ever hate the sound, associated as it must always be with the hour which had torn her careless girlish happiness to shreds. She was not only fatherless, but nameless—a child from the unknown!

“The story will take some time in telling, Iris,” said Mr. Sinclair. Had the girl not been so fully occupied with her own misery, she would have noticed a strange new weakness in his voice. After all, this was a moment of high tension and emotion for them both.

“I want to ask you not to interrupt me while I am speaking, in case I forget anything. I have carefully prepared myself, or tried to, for this trying ordeal. I am most anxious to leave nothing out that you ought to know, so I am going to ask you not to stop me by asking questions. If anything occurs to you that you would like to know, you can ask me afterwards. Now,” he said after a pause, “it is not very easy to begin, and I must go back a very long way. I was a poor man once, Iris, left fatherless when a boy. My father was a minister in a squalid district, and often poorly paid, of course. He had intended giving me an education to fit me for a civil engineer, as I wished. But, instead, I had to leave school, and go to work in order to help my mother and my sister, some years younger than myself. In our part of the north there was only one way of earning good money in those days, that is, by going to work in a mill. I went into the office, and only God and myself knew how hard it was to put aside my dreams of civil engineering, and become just one of hundreds who lived, day in, day out, amid the roar of machinery, the endless turning of the wheels—shuttle and loom—web and woof. But I was no longer merely an expense to my widowed mother; that fact consoled me not a little, for I realised how

things were at home. But by and by I began to be really interested not in my own special job—for I was not cut out for clerical work—but in my surroundings. I loved machinery of all kinds, and though these were not the type that I had loved to master, I had not been there more than a couple of years before I could have told any one all there was to know about every machine used in the place. Naturally, this did not escape notice, and I was soon promoted to a more responsible job, and not in the office, either. My father and the 'boss' of our mill had been boys together. He knew how things were, and that for the sake of his Master's work among the poorest of the poor, my father had taken a pastorate, and not gone into any money-making business as he himself had done. He had prospered, and when he retired in favour of his sons, he encouraged me to start in a small way for myself. I did, and God prospered me; also He gave me His choicest gift as well—my wife. Years came and went, and there was only one shadow over our happiness—our only child—a girl—died when a few weeks old. Her nursery remained as empty as the blank in her mother's heart.

"I used to fancy my Margaret grieved over this in secret, far more than I ever knew. There came a winter more wet and dreary than even winters in the Midlands are as a rule, and my wife seemed to be failing and growing thinner every day. Then, Iris, God sent you to us—in order, as I believe, not only to save your own life, but hers!"

Iris was following every word with a breathless interest that was full of personal pain. Even now it seemed to her that the story she was listening to was not part of her very own—how could it be? It was something impersonal, detached. Yet she knew quite well that it was nothing of the kind! She pulled herself together now with renewed interest, and gazed at Mr. Sinclair with startled eyes.

"You know what March the twentieth is, Iris?"

"My birthday, of course!"

He shook his head.

"We always kept it as such, Iris—but your real birthday we never knew. That was the day you came to us."

"The day I——! But how? How old was I?"

Again James Sinclair shook his head.

"We could not be sure. Probably about two months or ten weeks—not more."

“It was one of the wettest nights of a mild, wet spring. We were unusually busy at the mill, and I had come home late. I was too tired to do more than sit by the fire, and chat to Margaret, busy with her needlework opposite to me. But by and by there was silence between us. I think both of us were listening to the roar of the storm, which seemed to grow worse and worse every moment. We lived at that time at Rossop—a good bit out of the town, and our house stood alone. We had, too, for a north country mill district, what was quite a nice garden, with some trees. I don’t think Margaret and I ever forgot how the wind roared in those great trees, nor how the hail and rain dashed against the window panes; it seemed as if the glass itself must break.

“We sat up later than usual. I suppose the same thought was in both our minds—that sleep would be impossible owing to the roar of the storm. But at last I was so tired I felt I should be able to sleep through anything. I was on the point of saying so to Margaret, when, as often happens, there came a sudden lull in the tempest. The hail and rain that had been dashing against the window panes in sheets ceased suddenly, and then——!”

Chapter III
The Cry In the Dark

THE flood of reminiscence was checked for a moment. Iris felt as if every nerve was strung up to the highest pitch of tension.

"And then?" she echoed breathlessly.

"We both heard it at once, I think. A sound which came from somewhere right under the window of the room where we were sitting. I started up with an exclamation. But Margaret was before me. She had realised sooner than I had done exactly what it meant. You have guessed already what it was we heard."

Iris nodded. She could not trust herself to speak.

"Yes, it was the cry of a little child. My wife sprang up. 'James! A baby's cry, a baby! Did you hear?' Margaret had crossed the room with flying feet, almost before I had sprung up. She flung the sitting-room door wide, rushed to the hall, opened the front door, and went out upon the step, heedless of the fact that the lull in the storm had passed, and the rain was once more descending in sheets.

" 'Margaret! Wait! It's pouring! There may be somebody——!' I scarcely knew what I feared. But to hear a baby's cry close under the window of a house that stood alone, might mean the presence of other people who had no right to be there at all. I might as well have spoken to the gale that howled in the tree tops as attempt to call her back. I rushed first of all to the window, and pulled up the Venetian blind. Then I followed Margaret out into the garden. Then once again we heard that feeble, whining wail—and it came from the Iris bed!"

The girl started.

"Ah, yes—you guess the reason for your name! We never knew another. But to return to that moment of moments—for such it was in your life and ours. The light from the uncurtained window of the sitting-room fell on the Iris bed. It had been a forward spring, and the plants were more advanced than they are as a rule with us in the north. But there, among the masses of green, something white was gleaming—something that moved. My wife stooped down and gathered the bundle in her arms, drenched and dripping, for it was raining in torrents. Margaret herself was wet through by the time she had hurried up the steps and into the house. I remained long enough to run down to

the garden gate, but the roadway was empty. Nobody was about, and there was no sound of footsteps, or of a conveyance of any kind. The house we lived in was very lonely—standing in its own garden. It did not take me very long to ransack every corner of the place, and ascertain that nobody was lurking among the shrubs. When at length I returned to the house, I found my wife on her knees on the hearth-rug in front of the fire. She had thrown back the enveloping folds of a sopping woollen shawl, and then, for the first time, both of us saw—you! Well, you know pretty well what you were like as we saw you at that moment. It was entirely her idea to have a photograph taken of you within a day or two of your coming to us. It was my suggestion, too, that you should be dressed in exactly the same clothes as those in which you were found."

"That accounts for it!" said Iris, in startled tones. For the moment she had forgotten Mr. Sinclair's request concerning interruption—apparently he did not demur, for he said quickly: "Accounts for what?"

"For the fact that—well, I was not wearing the kind of clothes I should have expected her to provide for me. She was the most beautiful needlewoman, and later pictures of me show so much of her beautiful work—every stitch I wore as a child seemed to be hand-made!"

James Sinclair nodded.

"So you noticed that your first babyhood garments looked pretty cheap and ready-made? You are right. She herself remarked that your whole outfit could have been matched at very little cost in any children's outfitting shop in the country. Everything was poor quality, with the ill-fitting of shop-made garments. There was a purpose in that, as we soon found out—it was to hide your identity, so that those who had been wicked enough to abandon you could not be traced by means of anything you were wearing.

"Well, of course, mother soon had your wet clothes changed for dry ones, some of those which our own lost little one had worn during the brief weeks she was lent to us—they had been carefully laid away ever since. She never allowed you to wear those clothes in which you were discovered except on that one occasion, the taking of the needed photograph."

"Needed?"

"Of course. You do not suppose that we let matters stay where they were? It was late that night, and the weather grew worse instead of better. Also, we had not yet installed a telephone in our house. I was not much more than a beginner, and found the expense of one at the office as much as I could meet. Besides, we were both of us so taken up with doing what we could for you that

we decided to leave matters till the morning. Afterwards I blamed myself. Had we notified the police at once, any one who had deserted you might have been traced and called to account very quickly. Of course, any trail there was had got cold by next morning, though I fear nothing in the way of footprints could ever have been found after such weather.

"There was another thing. I never forgot Margaret's look as she bent over you, lying there on the hearth-rug—her face was transfigured! It wore the same look that I had seen during the few weeks she held a child of her own in her arms! When you had been dressed in dry clothes—our own wee Maggie's things—she fed you and fondled you until you fell asleep against her breast. Then she looked up and said, 'Oh, James! How could they desert her? Left in the wet and cold—a baby! They don't deserve to have her back! Must we tell any one?' 'Of course—the police!' I said. 'People who have children are not allowed to shelve their responsibilities like that. They must be found.' My wife was silent. But her eyes were closed, and I saw her lips moving. Then I caught the words, 'Oh, God, if it be possible, don't let those who deserted her be found. Let me keep her!' Well, Iris, that prayer was answered—no trace of your parentage has ever been discovered to this day!"

Chapter IV

Why Have You Told Me?

"WHY have you told me now?" Iris asked the question in low, strained tones.

"Because you are grown up. You will be thinking of yourself, and others thinking of you—as a woman. It is right that you should know. Besides, since Margaret has been taken from me, I have had a feeling that the end may not be very far off—for me!"

With a low cry of amazement Iris came towards him with hands outstretched.

"Father! Father!"

For the moment all he had been telling her was forgotten, swept away in the torrent of a great and overwhelming fear.

"Father, you can't mean it! Why, you are better—stronger——!"

But even as she uttered the words her voice faltered, for she knew they were not true. As she looked at him, she saw something in his face that she had never seen before. It was as if a veil had been torn away! It was revealed to her that he was right. Why, oh, why, had she never noticed before that he was literally fading out of life before her eyes?

"Don't say that! Don't go!" she pleaded, taking his hands in hers, she held them fast, and noticed how they trembled. "You are all I have left. You—my father! You must always be that to me, in spite of everything. Oh, father, God cannot mean to take you and leave me——!"

"In His own time—which will be the right time, Iris!" he said gently. "Remember, you will not be homeless or alone. I had better tell you what I arranged for you, as soon as I knew that my time might not be long. Be calm, my child, don't grieve! But there is this you should know as well. We called you Iris, of course, and the name fits those eyes of yours in matchless fashion. When we had exhausted every avenue of inquiry as to your parents, and not a reply of any kind reached us, we decided to adopt you as our own. Of course, you bear our name. We moved to Millchester, when you were still small, and there no one knows you were not really our own. I have provided for you in my will, although I hope that you will never settle down to a life of idleness,

just because it will not be necessary for you to earn your own living. One thing more—if God's call comes for me before long, while you are still not of age, indeed, in any case, since a girl cannot easily live alone—I want you to make your home with my sister."

"Aunt Myra!"

Iris uttered a startled exclamation.

James Sinclair nodded.

"Yes; she and I have had not much in common, I know, nor have we often met. But she is a good woman, with a kindly heart, though ever since as a girl she struck out in her own line as an artist, she has been quite absorbed in her work. First she was art mistress at a school for years, now she has retired from that and paints pictures. She is some years younger than I am, and lived with our mother until Granny's death a few years back. Now, as you know, she has settled in an old Cornish fishing town which is an artist's colony. She knows all your story, of course. She also knows my wishes if you are left alone!"

"Father!"

With an agonised cry the girl buried her face in his shoulder. The double knowledge that had come to her that evening was overwhelming.

"Father! Don't go! I want you so! You are everything to me!"

"Girlie, it must be as God wills—He will call me in His own time, it may be soon, that is all! I am ready, I have no fear!"

"But dying is dreadful!" she cried passionately. "I can never forget losing mother!"

His face worked convulsively. Had not his loss been even greater than her own?

"Heaven is only the 'next room' to earth," he said gently, "and I can only think of Margaret being in 'God's Next Room.' I shall meet her when I step over the threshold—when God's Hand opens the door to me! Why should death be dreadful to us, Iris, if we love Him? The sting of death is sin, and upon the Cross of Calvary Christ Himself put sin away, bearing it in our stead. Death is swallowed up in Victory—for Calvary is Victory! Look, Iris!"

James Sinclair pointed through the open French window with his hand. The hour of sunset had come—glory that was utterly indescribable lit up the snow-crowned Alpine peaks. Above the crest of Mont Blanc, it was as if the very gates of Heaven were being opened, letting out the splendour of God

Who dwelt within.

“Crimson and scarlet and white—and Heaven’s blue above all!” said James Sinclair in a whisper.

“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. . . . The Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth from all sin.”

“There, Iris, is our passport through those golden gates of Heaven—the sinner’s only passport Christ Himself—the only way to God, and then: ‘Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty, they shall behold the land that is very far off!’ Yes, I shall see His face!”

There was silence then—a silence that apparently neither of them cared to break. Iris fixed her gaze upon the distant mountains—but her eyes were all unseeing to-night. She was scarcely conscious of the moment when the refulgent golden glory faded—when the last pink streak of the afterglow of the sunset sank suddenly beneath the overflowing gray pall of twilight and the coming of night.

Then, as a chill wind rose suddenly, and blew in upon them through the open window, Iris rose.

“It’s getting cold, I’d better close the window.”

There was no answer.

“Why, he is asleep!”

Iris bent down. James Sinclair’s eyes were closed, and the touch of her warm young hand in his struck an icy coldness greater by far than the chill of the wind at eventide.

“Father! Oh, father!”

Again there was no reply. Then Iris knew that he slept the sleep from which there is no waking. God had taken him while he slept. Already his eyes had seen the King in His beauty, the Land that is very far off.

He had told Iris all he wished her to know—only just in time!

Chapter V

A Chance Meeting

"*Je suis—lost!* Why in the name of education didn't they give one a working—or rather speaking—knowledge of French and German at school, instead of a little Latin and less Greek?"

A young fellow, who was bronzed and burned by some years' acquaintance with foreign suns, drew back irresolutely, and allowed the festive crowd to sweep past unheeded. He had heard a lot about this "*mardi gras*" fuss, of course—the upsetting and uprising of all that is frivolous and foolish in the Parisian—a last fling before the austerities of Lent. Anxious to get a glimpse of it, he had entered a local train for another Paris station, the wrong one as it happened, and found himself shot out at a place he had never heard of, and certainly never wanted to see.

Thinking he might as well have a look round while he was about it, Dick Hilder had gone out of the station and found himself swept along in the wake of as giddy a carnival as he had ever expected to witness in his life.

At last he put his back to the wall, breathless, and allowed the folk to surge by him and go their own way. The place was evidently just an ordinary suburban *ville*, a little town on the outskirts of Paris, inhabited by French workpeople, who at the moment were enjoying a well-deserved holiday.

But he had come out with a definite objective—he had been told of the doings of the day, somewhere in a different part of Paris from where his hotel was situated, and only a silly mistake on his own part had landed him elsewhere.

Anxious not to miss what he really wanted, Dick Hilder resolved to find his way back to the station he had just left, and return to the heart of Paris as quickly as he could. But this was easier said than done. Among the crowd of people passing by, Dick shrewdly guessed that there would not be very many who spoke any language besides their own. They were a different type from the folk in the heart of the great capital, where most people seemed able to reply to a simple question from a stranger.

But here——! Anyway, Dick resolved to have a try, and scarcely thinking what he was doing, he plucked at the sleeve of a man who was hurrying by, and flung at him about the silliest question he could have asked: "Parlez-vous,

Francais?”

“Oui, oui, M’sieu!” said the workman, naturally surprised.

“Well, je suis—lost! Where am I, how do I get back to the station?”

But now the man not unnaturally shook his head in bewilderment. Dick shrugged his shoulders, and was turning away when he heard a girlish voice, with the musical tinkle of amusement in it.

“Can I be of any use?”

“English!” gasped Dick with relief, and he found himself meeting a pair of violet-blue eyes that were looking shyly into his own.

“Oh, I say, thanks most awfully! I must have got out at the wrong station, and the names here don’t sound a bit like they are in print.”

There was a twinkle of amusement in Iris Sinclair’s eye.

“You’re quite right, and I’m no linguist compared with most of the wonderful people on the Continent. But, anyway, I think I can help you, if you will tell me where you want to go.”

In a sentence Dick told her the point he had been advised to reach, in order to see festive Paris at its best. She nodded and pointed the way back to the station.

“Thanks most awfully,” he said again. “I seem only to open my mouth and put my foot in it, when I try to talk French! I was giving what I thought was quite a handsome tip to a cabby yesterday, and said, ‘Merci, Cochon!’ as well, and he—well, he just glared!”

“Possibly he did,” Iris said in amusement, “the Frenchman is almost invariably polite, and I doubt if even a longsuffering Englishman would care to be addressed as ‘pig!’ ”

Dick gasped and looked uneasy.

“I say, you don’t mean——?”

“But I do,” she laughed. “ ‘Cocher’ was the word you wanted for a cabby. I admit there’s not much difference. But we have words in English with different meanings which are still more alike. Don’t be afraid to try your English on the railway officials, though. They like it! I once summoned my best French to ask a Swiss ticket-collector the time of the Lucerne train, and he replied—in English! I can tell you I felt very small indeed.”

“Not smaller than I have been feeling for the last few minutes,” laughed

Dick. “I almost wished myself back in Africa, where a smattering of native lingo goes a long way, plus a bit of pidgin English.”

The crowd had thinned for the moment, the procession passing on elsewhere. Iris glanced at her watch.

“You can’t miss the way—first right, second left, and there’s no other station in this little place. I must hurry, I have an appointment.”

She gave him a shy, smiling nod, and went on her way.

“Ships that pass in the day, as well as in the night!” she sighed. “I’d like to have met him again, he had such a frank, manly face. What idiots folks on the Continent must think us English people. As he says, why aren’t we taught more modern languages in our schooldays? ‘Cochon,’ indeed! Poor cabby! I found out in Switzerland how little I really knew!”

The smile faded from her face. Iris sighed. The memory of the last few days there was terribly fresh and keen. There were times when Iris told herself she would never get over the suddenness of her loss. Certainly, she had not smiled since that night, until her amusing encounter with the stranded Englishman to-day.

Miss Myra Sinclair had written to her, telling her to join her at her Cornish studio, as soon as she returned to England. Absence from home had prevented her receiving Iris’ letter in time to travel to Geneva for the funeral. But a kindly English clergyman and his wife had done everything possible for the girl who had been bereaved so suddenly. They had insisted on Iris being their guest for a few days, before she returned to England, breaking her journey in Paris in order to visit an old schoolfellow who was married and living near by —her husband the manager of a large manufacturing concern on the outskirts of Paris.

Two days after her encounter with the young Englishman, Iris started on another stage of her journey to England.

As for Dick Hilder, he found his way back to the part of Paris he wanted easily enough, thanks to her direction. But all the time he was wondering who she was, that English girl with the wonderful eyes that had twinkled so roguishly at his linguistic attempts.

“Deep mourning, too, and dark shadows under her eyes—I couldn’t help noticing that,” he thought. “It almost seemed as if there had been more tears than smiles for her lately! I’d like to meet her again. Now, where have I seen eyes like hers before? Somewhere, I’m sure.”

Dick was an orphan from his early youth. He had gone straight from a public school to the business of his father's cousin, David Marchant, partner in a firm whose name was one to conjure with in the export and import trade of this country and Africa. From the beginning it had been understood that Dick Hilder should have no favour and no preference because of his relationship to a member of the firm, even though he made his home with his father's cousin, and was practically their adopted son.

As time passed, Dick worked himself up through the various departments of the firm, and eventually, to his great joy, was entrusted to represent their interests in the different parts of Africa which fly the British flag. Dick had spent some time at the Cape, Natal, and East Africa. He had returned via Marseilles to join Mr. and Mrs. Marchant in Paris, and travel with them to England.

But somehow he did not feel like telling them of his adventure in the "Mardi Gras" crowd—it would involve mentioning the fact that an English girl had come along just in time to help him out of difficulty, and to direct him to the station—"Gare," she had called it! Of course, he ought to have remembered, and that one word would have been enough.

So when he rejoined David Marchant and his wife at their hotel Dick made no mention of his encounter. Already he had seen most of the sights of Paris, while Mr. Marchant had visited it on business many times before. At one time, David Marchant had done most of the firm's travelling abroad, and his wife had accompanied him as a rule. For two or three years they had lived entirely in various parts of Africa where the firm's business called.

But years ago they had had out there a terrible experience, of which they could never bring themselves to speak, even to Dick, who lived with them. It had brought them back to England crushed and desolate, knowing that life could never be the same again. Settling down near London, David Marchant gave the Colonial interests of his firm into other hands. He could not bear to leave his wife, and on his occasional journeys to Paris she went with him, but never further from home.

It was a real joy to them both to have Dick with them once again. His light, cheery presence helped them to forget the experience through which they had once passed—that is, if such a thing as forgetfulness is really possible.

A day or two after the giddy fling which precedes Lent in Paris had been exchanged for outward forms of austerity, and the apparent repentance of the season of fasting, Mr. and Mrs. Marchant and Dick went off to Boulogne, on the first stage of their journey to England.

Mr. Marchant had one or two business calls, and not unnaturally Dick and Mrs. Marchant next day strolled down to the harbour, to see the departure of the Folkestone boat, which in another couple of days would be taking them back to England and home.

The boat express had come in, and the last of the passengers had gone on board. The order was given, and the boat cast off her moorings. Slowly, very slowly, the cross-channel steamer drew away from the quay.

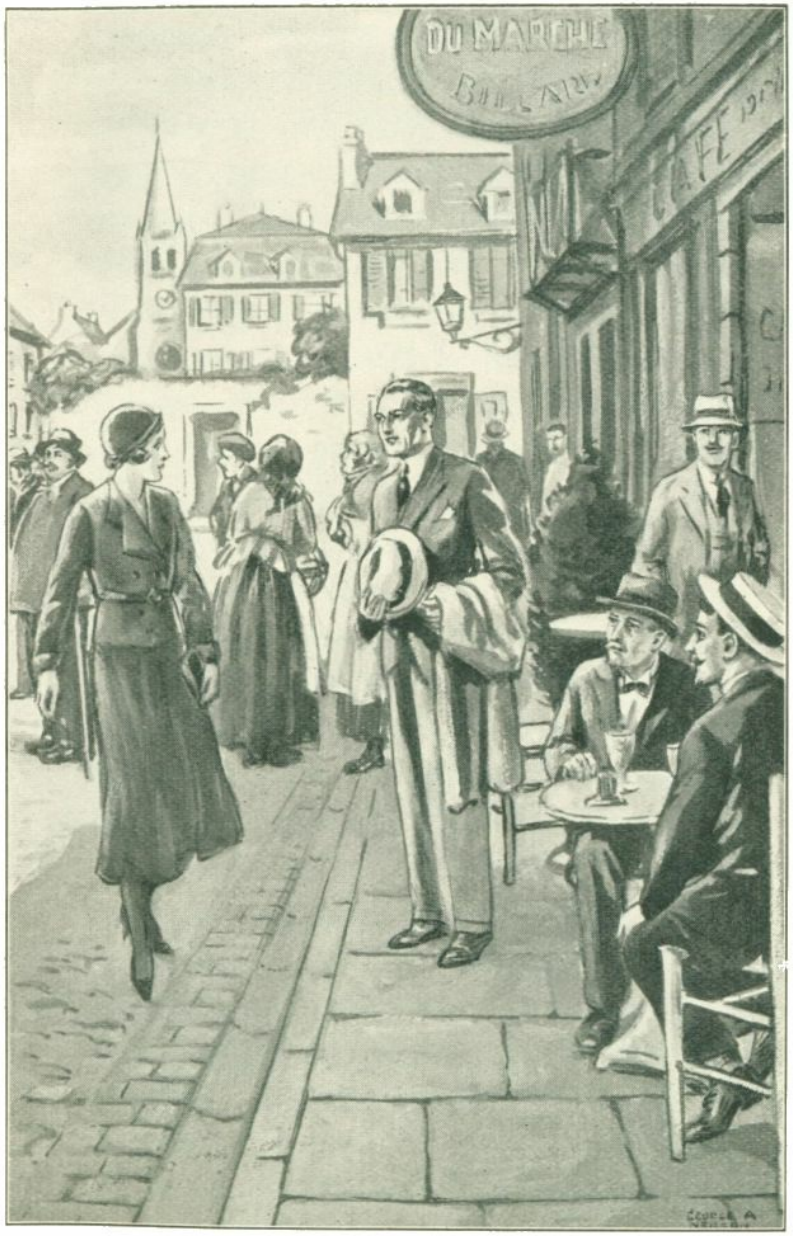
"Why, there she is!" The words burst from Dick Hilder in sudden dismay, as he caught sight of a black-robed girlish figure standing at the taffrail, within a couple of yards of where he stood upon the quay. So near, and yet so far! The space between was widening by inches—feet—fathoms—as the ship glided towards the open sea.

But the girl had seen him. Their eyes met in that brief moment, and a smile of welcome, and farewell, filled the pansy-blue eyes Dick had told himself he could never forget.

He raised his hat mechanically, and stood holding it in one hand and waving with the other.

"Dick, who is that? Somebody you know?"

For a moment Dick did not reply. He had hard work not to call out aloud and ask her name and destination. Why, not until this moment had he realised how she had filled his thoughts—how much he longed to see her again, to learn to know her! If only he had come down to the quay half-an-hour earlier! To be tantalised like this!



“ENGLISH!” GASPED DICK, AND HE FOUND HIMSELF MEETING A PAIR OF VIOLET-BLUE EYES (Page 40)

But for a moment Mrs. Marchant’s startled, eager question remained unanswered. Dick stood bareheaded in the sunshine, his eyes fixed on that lonely, girlish figure standing a little apart from the crowd, one little hand

raised shyly to wave to him. The space of water between widened inexorably, leaving him behind—carrying her on, out towards the sea, to England—going he knew not where, save that she would be just a solitary unit swallowed up in a congested crowd of forty millions of people for whom he cared nothing at all!

"Who is that girl, Dick?" Mrs. Marchant clutched at Dick's sleeve so tightly that her grip hurt him. But the young man was too engrossed in watching with despairing eyes that widening space of water, as the cross-channel steamer gathered speed and glided out to sea.

It was not until he could no longer distinguish her from others in the crowd on deck that Dick set his lips tightly, then turned to answer the question the lady beside him was asking for the third time.

"Who is she, Cousin Anne? I don't know?"

"But, Dick—you must know! She smiled to you, and you——!"

Mrs. Marchant paused. She had seen the look on Dick's face—a look she had never surprised there before.

"I know neither her name nor where she lives," said Dick, and in his heart he groaned at all that the words implied.

"We met—once. I was lost in the carnival crowd the other day—took a wrong train—she directed me right. That's all."

"All!" It seemed to Dick Hilder that Mrs. Marchant was even more agitated than himself. "Oh, Dick, don't you see? You must have done! Oh, who can she be?"

Dick looked at her in surprise.

"I—I don't understand. I saw that she recognised me, and waved——!"

"But her eyes! Dick! That unusual colour—why—why——! Look at me!"

Dick looked steadily into the eyes of the older woman as they met his own. A startled exclamation rose to his lips. Now he knew why that unusual deep blue colouring had reminded him of some one, and seemed vaguely familiar! Why, his Cousin Anne's eyes were the most remarkable feature in her face—every one who knew her knew that, and remarked upon it. Given the difference in years, for Mrs. Marchant was middle-aged, and eyes often tear-drenched inevitably lose their girlish sparkle, why then——?

"I see it now! She has your eyes, Cousin Anne! Why, if you had a daughter!"

“If—if I had a daughter?” The words were like a cry of agony. “Oh, Dick, Dick, who can she be?”

Chapter VI

The Artist’s Home

“Oh, how beautiful! how beautiful! Why, the sea is a deeper blue than even the Swiss Lakes! I never dreamed of anything like this!” Iris Sinclair, still only half awake after the broken rest of a night journey, had crept out of the London train at the junction, feeling unaccountably dreary and depressed.

She was alone in a strange part of the country, going to make her permanent home with a woman of whom she knew very little indeed. She, too, had been distinctly conscious of a pang of regret, when she caught sight of the unknown young Englishman waving to her, as the steamer slid away from the quay at Boulogne. There was something about his fine, frank face which inspired trust, and she had thought many times of that odd little encounter in the carnival, and his delicious sense of humour, which had not spared a laugh even when it was against himself. She had tried to forget him; since neither of them knew either the name or the destination of the other, it hardly came within the bounds of possibility that they would ever meet again. Yet there he was, waving good-bye to her, as she said farewell to France! Not only so, but Iris had found time to glance at his companion—his mother, of course, so she decided in her own mind. The girl found it in her heart to envy his relationship with such a sweet-faced, kindly woman. To Iris there was something essentially winsome and attractive in her face. She had seen her keen look of interest at the girl on the deck, and noted that she had turned to the young man beside her with an eager question. But the distance widened every second, and soon the couple on the quay faded into the distance—but not from Iris’ thoughts.

It was all very well for the young fellow from Africa to have such a winsome and womanly companion; it only made the girl’s own utter loneliness seem all the harder to bear. One thing above all others Iris had felt she could not face. She made up her mind not to go back to Millchester for the present.

Of course, it had been for years her home, and everybody had taken it for granted she was James Sinclair’s daughter, since they had moved there after finding her in the garden. Now, of course, it was impossible for the truth to be kept back. The contents of his will would be made public. People would discover that she was an adopted child, and perhaps some inkling of the truth

would leak out—that Iris herself had no idea who she really was. So she resolved to spend a few hours in London, in order to meet James Sinclair's solicitor, who had travelled from the north at her request. A hastily written letter from Myra Sinclair awaited her in London. Full of grief as she was at her brother's death, they had met so seldom in recent years that neither of them counted for very much in the life of the other.

Since she had not received the news in time to go out to Geneva for his funeral, she did not feel compelled to go to London in order to meet Iris. She was very, very busy. In fact, as she explained in a scribbled sentence, she was working for dear life on a picture which was intended for the Academy. Iris was to learn what these words mean, and what a life and death matter it was to a woman who only lived for the art she had made her own. She enclosed a time-table, and asked Iris to let her know when she might be expected. It was the brief, hustling letter of a busy woman—wholly occupied with the matter she had in hand. But it did not tend to make things any easier for the girl who had gone abroad full of joyous hope that the glorious surroundings of the Alps, away from the murk of Millchester, would restore her father to perfect health.

She had come back alone—her heart broken with her loss, and crushed by the knowledge that the man she mourned was not her father at all. Hammering ceaselessly in her brain was the one—for her—all-important question. Who was she? What was her real name?

Iris went through the needful business with the lawyer almost mechanically, and was relieved to find that there was very little to wind up. James Sinclair had disposed of his factory some time before, and the careful investments he had made would bring in a sufficient income for the girl who had been regarded as his own. As for the house and furniture, the lawyer would find some one who would take it off her hands as it stood—all her personal possessions would be forwarded to her at her new home.

The lawyer had known all along, of course, just how matters stood, and he shrewdly guessed that it would take her a long time to recover from the shock of her discovery, followed immediately, as it had been, by James Sinclair's sudden death. He felt that Iris was doing the wisest thing possible in going straight to fresh surroundings.

He himself had seen her off at Paddington by the night train, for business had taken longer than expected. He had booked a comfortable sleeping berth, saw that she had an excellent meal before she started, and ordered early morning tea for her on the journey. When the night train drew out of Paddington, Iris felt that one page in her life had been finally turned down, and a fresh one was to begin. But what would be written on that page in days to

come?

It was a chilly morning in early spring. After several fitful little dozes which could not take the place of restful sleep, Iris woke at last to find that Plymouth was left behind, and she was really entering Cornwall. Everything was so strange, so new, so different from her surroundings in the mill district. The rugged hills, and deep river-valleys, the clear atmosphere, where every object stood out sharp and plain—to Iris it was a new and unknown world to which she had come! But it was not until she had left the night train at St. Erth, and entered the little local one for St. Ives, that she realised the real beauty of the west.

The train swept across the Hayle estuary, with its flocks of wading birds, then once through the rocky cutting, and round Carbis Bay, the whole wide sweep of St. Ives Bay burst upon her like a vision. Godrevy Island; gnashing teeth of the reef of rocks; the great scimitar of cliff, with its golden rim of sand; edging sea of a colour which Iris had never seen even in Switzerland. “I never dreamed it would be like this! No wonder artists come here!”

A few moments later, and yet another bay that seemed as if it had been cut out of the pages of a picture book, and then—St. Ives itself!

There on the platform stood a middle-aged woman, in a tussore cloak which had, quite obviously, been thrown over an artist’s overall in haste.

Iris knew her in a moment, though they had not met for several years. There was little change in Myra Sinclair—the change was in herself. The artist was looking impatiently into the faces of the sprinkling of passengers who had come by the early morning train, then suddenly she heard a girlish voice.

“Here I am, Aunt Myra!”

“Iris!”

For a moment Miss Sinclair looked at her in amazement. She remembered Iris as a long-legged schoolgirl, at the awkward stage: this graceful, well-poised girl was a complete stranger. She took refuge in the platitude, “I should never have known you!”

Then as if suddenly recollecting something, she said briskly, “Point out your luggage. The porter will bring it up. Come quickly, there is not a minute to lose!”

Chapter VII
The Studio

IRIS looked surprised, as well she might.

"Not a minute to lose! Why, Aunt Myra, is anything the matter?"

"No—yes, at least, it matters a lot to me! This is a wonderful morning, even for us, and I dare not lose a minute of it. Everything else must wait. Come along!"

Iris smiled to herself, as Miss Sinclair started off at a quick walk that was almost a run. Evidently she was a woman of one idea—and one only. It was a good thing her brother had prepared Iris for that. She never stopped once to point out, with a resident's pride, the beauty of the view above the station, backwards across Porthminster Beach, and the wide, sweeping bay, nor did she even glance at the shops which were just waking up for the day.

Once past the old church, with its one-handed clock, Miss Sinclair darted up a narrow alley, and turned sharply down another, till they came out upon the harbour.

"Oh, how pretty!"

The tide was up, the red-brown sails of the fishing fleet made a picturesque spot of colour against the blue of sea and sky, while the gulls winged their way to and fro, screaming as they darted down upon their prey.

But Miss Sinclair did not answer. She was hurrying along the water front, past several old houses and stores, towards the spot where a flight of outside wooden steps led to the upper floor of a building, a door which was bright blue, and on the upper panels a great painted sea-gull with outstretched wings, and underneath the word "Studio."

"Sea-gull Studio!" Iris gasped the name, remembering how Miss Sinclair's letters had been addressed. But surely this could not be where she lived—the home which Iris expected to share?

But it was. There was not the least doubt upon that point. Miss Sinclair climbed the outside wooden steps with ease, unlocked the door, and left it open, without even looking round to see if Iris had followed her. She flung off her tussore coat, tossed it on to a lounge which actually concealed the outline of a camp bedstead, and going to the window gave one glance at the view,

seized her brush, and applied herself to the painting upon the easel.

"Make yourself at home," she said absently; "another room in there!"

Iris did not answer. She was still standing on the threshold, gazing round the studio with feelings akin to dismay. The place was large and lofty—obviously the upper floor of an old warehouse or fish store in the days before the first of the artists discovered the beauties of the coast, and the desirability of living on the spot. Three sides of the room had stone walls, carefully concealed by artistic hangings and curtains; the fourth was just a wooden partition covered with pictures. Iris obeyed the invitation to see what was "in there," and found herself in what was evidently Miss Sinclair's own bedroom. Everything had been arranged to save space—and Iris had never seen a room more crowded in her life—nor more untidy. Her heart sank as she took off her hat and coat and washed off the dust of her long night journey. She decided in her own mind that living the simple life and roughing it in an artist's studio would have the charm of novelty, at least! Whether there were any other hidden "charms" to be revealed in this kind of existence, Iris had no idea.

As she tidied her rich masses of copper-brown hair, the girl began to feel that a meal would be a decided acquisition. It was a good bit after eight o'clock now, and her breakfast on the journey had been a very early one indeed.

She had noticed in the big front studio a gas stove and crockery shelf, cunningly screened off in one corner—was it possible this served as a kitchen, after the fashion of the city bachelor girl's flat? When Iris went back, Miss Sinclair was painting as if her very life depended on it. Evidently the artist was a woman of one idea, and much too absorbed in her work to think of anything so mundane as a meal, while the right light lasted.

Iris sat down quietly on a shabby Chesterfield and waited, watching Miss Sinclair's busy brush with amazement and admiration.

To look out of the window was to see the winging gulls across the sunlit harbour—the wide-sweeping coast with the fringe of sand and the island lighthouse of Godrevy standing sentinel over the bay. To look at Miss Sinclair's canvas was to see it all again depicted faithfully by brush and colour. Iris forgot everything for the moment in the fascination of watching the growing beauty of the painting. At last the light changed suddenly, as a dark cloud blotted out the sun. Miss Sinclair put down her brush and sighed, as one who is loath to leave a task she loved.

"There! I shall not be able to catch it any more this morning. Well, Iris?" It was as if she had forgotten the girl's existence until now. "Sorry! My ways are not your ways, I expect, but I simply had to get that bit in. What about

breakfast?”

“Well, I had something very early on the train. I’ve almost forgotten. I expect you’ve had yours, Aunt Myra?”

“Not a bit of it. What do you take me for? I’m an artist first, and a human being afterwards, I think—when I’m in the mood for painting. One simply must catch the same light and colour, of course. I was up at sunrise, I just swallowed a cup of coffee, and haven’t lost a minute since—except meeting you!” While she spoke Miss Sinclair was bustling to and fro, getting a meal as deftly as if there were no such things as unfinished pictures in the world.

She drew up a folding table beside the Chesterfield, and when Iris sprang up to help she showed her where room had been found to cunningly hide table napery and cutlery, and how easy it was to turn out a dainty breakfast in a few moments by means of the screened-off gas stove.

The coffee percolator was soon bubbling merrily, its cheerful aroma and the appetising frizzle of bacon and eggs mingled with the all-pervading odour of the oil paint on palette and easel.

“I expect all this seems very Bohemian and happy-go-lucky to you, Iris,” said Miss Sinclair easily; “but you don’t know what a relief it is, after years of being ground down to school time-tables, to be able to have my meals when I want them and not leave my work at the critical moment, because I know a bell will ring. I had more years than I care to think about teaching girls who, for the most part, didn’t care whether they learned to draw or not. It was a compulsory subject at the school, and I had many who couldn’t draw a line. So when I was old enough to claim a modest pension and to retire from teaching, I first resolved to come down here, to live the simple life and paint—paint all I had dreamed of painting during the drab years in South London. So here I am, as happy as the day is long, because I am bound by no ties or time. It is just—freedom! Of course, most members of the artists’ colony here have nice homes, and studios near the shore as well. But I can’t really afford that; this upper room has always been enough for me—until now. When I heard that it was my brother’s wish that you and I should share a home if anything happened to him, I resolved to try and find a nice little bungalow, either here or at Carbis Bay—which is next door—but so far I’ve had no time. James’ death must have been very sudden in the end?”

“It was. Even now I can hardly bear to remember that evening.”

“Don’t try,” said Miss Sinclair kindly; “some day you will feel like telling me—but not now. The shock was great—and too recent. Besides, you have had a long night journey, on top of travelling from Geneva. If you can do with

a share of this for the present, we must see what we can do about a nice little house later on. But this picture simply must be finished. I am sending it to the Academy, of course. By the way, you are here in good time for our Show Day—you'll be interested in that. Till then, it's to the work—and we must make shift as best we can."

Chapter VIII

The Accident

"MAKING shift" proved a very good watch-word to start with!

So thought Iris during the days which followed. Fortunately she was a girl who could quickly adapt herself to new conditions, and like most who hail from good homes in the North Country, she had a very fair idea of the needs of a household.

As for Miss Sinclair, until the picture was finished, it was evident she could think of nothing else. Meals could go, work might be left—nothing mattered, save that the big canvas of "Our Bay" should be finished in time!

As for Iris, she was thankful enough for the opportunity of getting busy. More than all else, she had dreaded coming to a place where she would have no duties and no interests. A comfortable home in Millchester with dependable servants meant that the house could nearly be left to run itself. Since her adopted mother's death, Iris had little to do but give orders and see that they were carried out.

Then had come the long sojourn amid the comforts of foreign hotels, where she had had nothing to do but keep James Sinclair company and attend to his lightest wants.

Well, that task of love was ended now—ended for ever. Iris blessed his wisdom in arranging for her to take up the threads of life again in wholly new surroundings. To find that she could discover plenty to do, and really be of use—well, that was just as it should be!

So Iris, from the first morning, slipped into the way of doing all that was required—save for the buxom widow of a fisherman, who was glad to come in now and then and do the rougher work. But to make a real onslaught in the studio was as much as Mrs. Jacka's "place" was worth. Miss Sinclair fidgeted nervously every time she came, for fear any of her artist's impedimenta should be ruthlessly "tidied up."

With Iris it was different. She moved about noiselessly, and had sense enough to leave things that were of vital import untouched. She shrewdly guessed that Miss Sinclair had been not a little neglectful of herself of late—snatching an odd meal anyhow, and not troubling to cook properly.

All this was altered now. It had been arranged by James Sinclair that his sister was to receive a small legacy under his will, also an ample sum to cover Iris' expenses. So there was no harassing question of ways and means. Iris soon learned her way along Fore Street, High Street and Tregenna Hill, to the various shops, and to prepare their simple meals.

Miss Sinclair insisted on Iris sleeping in the room which had been her own. She preferred for the present to make shift with the camp bed in the "studio." Just now her nights were short. She was often up before sunrise to catch the particular light she needed for part of her picture—details she filled in later in the day.

Then there came an hour, when even Miss Sinclair herself was satisfied—that is, as far as an artist is ever really satisfied with her own work.

She put in more hours of close work than ever, and then at last, one day, she stood back from her easel, brush in hand, and gave a sigh of relief.

"Finished, Aunt Myra?"

"At last! Now I shall have a day or two's freedom to put a finishing touch to a couple of other pictures before Show Day."

"Then I hope you will rest!"

"Rest!" said Miss Sinclair energetically, "not a bit of it. All my life I have just longed for time to paint—paint—and still paint, and not try to teach children who could never learn to draw a line! Now my time is my own, and I mean to make the most of it. Child!"

She suddenly turned to Iris, and placed her arm round her shoulders affectionately.

"I've neglected you shamefully since you came, and you have been an angel! Most girls would have wanted to gad about and drag me out gadding, too! Here you have been content to share this ramshackle loft without a murmur, and spend your time making my home ship-shape! But to-morrow—to-morrow we will celebrate the finishing of my picture by a picnic."

Miss Sinclair was as good as her word. She made no attempt to be up with the sun, however, next morning. Perhaps she was glad enough of the extra rest, after weeks of strenuous work. But after an early lunch, they packed up a dainty sandwich tea, and, armed with Iris' camera, sallied forth through the quaint fishing quarters of the tiny port. Then, skirting Porthmeor beach, they took the narrow path to the open cliffs and climbed to the "Look-out" above Clodgy Point.

Iris had explored the immediate locality of St. Ives on her own, but she had never walked as far as this. The beauty of the “Five Points,” seen for the first time, was a thing to be remembered—one headland after another thrusting itself out into the restless Atlantic, lofty cliffs whose base the sea never quits.

It was a glorious day in early spring. Two keen nature lovers like themselves found endless interest in the wild flowers which come out so early in the mild west, and give promise of summer’s prodigal abundance later on. The sea birds were skimming low over the waves, perhaps the advance guard of the flocks that would be making their way to the safe sanctuary of the Scilly Islands for nesting later on.

They walked a good bit farther than they at first intended—the breeze was so fresh and free, and the air so bracing, while every few yards of the coast seemed to reveal some tempting beauty spot only just ahead. Here a little stream gurgled its way down from the high moor, and dropped like a Silver Thread waterfall into the deep waters of the sea. There was a tiny strip of beach, and perhaps a break-neck path, only to be attempted by those who had cool heads and strong limbs—some, indeed, so precipitous that only a coastguard bent on life-saving would be likely to make the attempt.

At last a tempting flat stone, and a patch of soft, springy turf, invited a rest. Miss Sinclair could not resist transferring something of the beauty of that bit of coast to her sketch-book—to be finished off in colour later on. So her pencil got busy for a rough and rapid drawing, while Iris unstrapped her camera again, and unpacked the lunch basket. Then, as so often happens on the western cliff-tops and sea-beaches, they had scarcely unwrapped the sandwiches, when down swooped a sea-gull and perched on the grass right in front of them.

“As tame as any barnyard fowl!” laughed Iris. “Look at its sharp, bright eyes fixed on us! I’m going to get a snapshot of him!”

“No one would believe how tame the sea-gulls are round here,” said Miss Sinclair, throwing a tempting morsel within reach of the expectant bird. “It speaks well for the treatment they get from visitors and residents alike! I’ve had them come circling down and perch close in front of me in several places. Land’s End, Kynance Cove and Bedruthan Steps—we must visit all these together directly the long days come. As it is, we must not linger, or it will mean having to negotiate these boulder-strewn cliffs in the dusk! It’s much later than I thought already!”

Finishing their picnic meal, and sharing the last crumbs with the sea-gull and the companions who had joined him, Miss Sinclair hastily added a few

lines to her sketch, while Iris packed the basket. Then, as the sun sank slowly over the wide Atlantic, they retraced their steps along the cliff path.

Before they reached the zig-zag path which winds in and out on the cliff tops above Clodgy, Miss Sinclair turned into a grassy track over the moorland.

"This is more direct—we shall reach the narrow lane to St. Ives by Porthmeor Beach without having to follow the winding cliff path. It's a bit rough, so many boulders!"

"As if giants had been playing marbles, and left them behind," said Iris. "One no longer wonders at the quaint legends that one meets with at every turn."

They reached the top of a moor-clad hill, where the ground sloped sharply to the edge of the cliffs. A rough "hedge"—in Cornwall, a low wall of undressed stones built up without mortar, and covered with the luxuriant plant growth of centuries of time.

"There's no actual stile here, but we can get over quite easily," said Miss Sinclair. "I'll go first, as you're not so used to this kind of thing as I am!"

True to her word, Miss Sinclair scrambled up to the broad grassy top by means of a stone ledge. Then she began to clamber down the other side of the low wall, which was rather steeper, as it ended in a muddy ditch.

Then, exactly how it happened she herself never afterwards knew. Balancing one foot on a mossy boulder for support, she was just stepping down to a stone below when her foot slipped, and she fell prone into the ditch with a startled cry of pain.

Iris scrambled over somehow, and got down safely, bending over her in concern.

"Aunt Myra! What has happened? Are you hurt?"

Miss Sinclair's lips were tightly set.

"My—my knee! It twisted under me—oh!"

Trying to move was agony, but she herself knew the effort must be made. With Iris' help, she crawled out of the ditch, and sat on a boulder on the moor.

Iris whisked out a linen cloth from the lunch basket, and dipping her handkerchief into the trickling spring in the ditch, she bent over the injured limb.

At first, Miss Sinclair declared she could not bear it touched, but common-sense and necessity prevailed. She winced when Iris tried to render first-aid.

Already the knee was swelling visibly. The dripping cold handkerchief pad and carefully adjusted bandage, however, brought her momentary relief. Then she tried to stand. But to put her foot to the ground was impossible. She sank back half-fainting with the pain.

Then the two exchanged glances of dismay. The same thought struck them both.

Not a house was in sight from that spot. The “Look-Out” above Clodgy Point was still far ahead, and St. Ives a long way farther off. No one was about—the gulls and cormorants had the coast to themselves—the moor inland was deserted.

“I—I can’t walk, Iris,” said Miss Sinclair, “and the sun will be dipping into the sea in another few minutes, and then—dusk. What can we do?”

“We crossed a rough cart track about a quarter of a mile back,” said Iris, as recollection suddenly returned, born of the moment’s desperate need. “I wondered at the time if it ran down to the cliff edge from some hamlet or farm inland.”

“It does!” cried Miss Sinclair joyfully. “I remember now. I have tramped these cliffs before, and once in a storm I went up one of those tracks, and found my way to the main North Coast road!”

“I’ll run up through the fields—I’m sure to find a farm. If they are not on the ’phone, I’ll ask them to bring their trap and drive you back to St. Ives! Courage, auntie! We’ll soon have you comfortable in your lounge at home, and that knee properly seen to!”

Chapter IX

A Predicament

BUT though Iris spoke cheerfully, hoping to keep Miss Sinclair's courage up in spite of her pain, her heart sank as she left the suffering woman alone and darted across the field—slanting in an upward direction to save time, for if she made her way back to the cart track they had left, it might mean delay, and darkness was coming on.

Iris had been long enough in Cornwall to have no fear of being accused of trespassing upon these moorland fields—most of them wide stretches reclaimed at the cost of infinite labour from the wild scrub-covered waste, and even now too boulder-strewn to be available for anything else save rough pasturage. Over one field and up the next, still climbing higher—then to her joy, Iris saw a herd of cows grazing peacefully in a field where the grass was fresh and rich.

Cows meant a farm—and not very far off at that. She had not the slightest fear of the sleek, well-cared-for creatures, who merely raised mildly-surprised eyes as she panted up hill to the gate she could see at the far corner of the field.

She reached it breathless, and then to her joy found she had actually cut into the cart track at right angles, and thus saved a long detour round.

A little farther on, and one of the familiar, solid, stone-built farms came in sight—standing alone, with nothing near but buildings.

Iris ran up quickly, and knocking at the door, explained their plight to the buxom, kindly Cornish woman who opened the door.

"Don't say!" she said, holding up her hands aghast. "That be a bra cawdle! Feyther!"

The farmer came out, munching his half-finished tea, and nodded in sympathy.

"Sure tes—we belong to have a trap. Just you wait, my maid, I'll catch Bess—she be up to t'croft, and harness her up."

"Come in, my handsome!" said his wife kindly. "Could 'ee eat a bit pasty, or a saffron bun? No? Well, you'm sure ready for a dish o' tay!"

She led the way into the spotless old kitchen, with beamed ceiling, sanded

brick floor, and deal table, scrubbed so white that the missing table cloth was certainly not needed.

Crockery and glass that would have brought a gleam to a collector's eyes was being used as if it were the cheapest pottery. Iris had never before had a glimpse of real Cornish farmhouse fare—abundant clotted cream and golden butter, huge pasties, and cake that gleamed as yellow as the saffron crocus which coloured it. But it was only afterwards that Iris remembered all these details, though her eye noted them unconsciously at the time.

Through the window she could see the twilight creeping across the sky—and Myra Sinclair was alone down there upon the moor, alone and bearing untold pain.

"Here be feyther! Come your way, and jump up, my maid!" said the kindly woman, and to her relief the girl heard the sound of horsehoofs, and a trap clattered up to the door, followed by a brawny youth.

"Point the way you came across t'fields to Issy here," said the farmer; "he'll cut down-along, and take a hurdle from the croft. We may be glad o' it. We must drive down by t'road till we come to t'gate."

Iris thankfully obeyed, setting the young man in the right direction, and bidding him call out aloud directly he was within earshot of where she had left Miss Sinclair. Iris scrambled up in the light trap beside the farmer, and they started off. It was the roughest road that Iris had ever experienced. The trap swayed and jolted. What would it be like for Miss Sinclair, suffering as she was?

But there was nothing for it but to make the best of a bad job.

It was almost dark by the time that the trap had found its way by a more devious route to the ditch where Miss Sinclair had fallen. "Issy" had already reached her, and relieved her of her greatest anxiety—lest Iris herself should have been lost upon the desolate moor.

Miss Sinclair had to summon all her courage to endure being lifted to the hurdle, and then carried to the trap. The jolting on the drive up the farm road was terrible—but she preferred not to stop at the house. The kindly farmer was only too willing to drive her direct back to St. Ives. But it was a drive to be remembered. Once the splendid coast road was reached the going was smoother, but by the time Miss Sinclair had been carried up the outside stairs to her loft-studio, her strength was gone.

She just managed to thank the farmer, and ask him to leave a message at the doctor's as he went home, then she sank back in the comfortable depths of

the big Chesterfield couch and fainted.

Of course, there began for Iris at that moment some of the busiest days she had ever spent in her life.

The doctor pronounced Miss Sinclair's injury to be one which might be tedious, as well as painful. He insisted on complete rest for a time, and then he hoped that no permanent lameness might result.

"So that is that!" said Miss Sinclair grimly, when his verdict had been given and he had gone his way. "Could anything be more unfortunate? Here I am with Show Day just ahead, and two other prospective Academy pictures to be touched up!"

"You must be content to make your 'home' on that sofa, Aunt Myra," said Iris, "and let me do all the fetching and carrying that has to be done! I can bring your easel and your paints when you are fit to touch them. Don't you think things might have been a lot worse? Suppose—suppose it had been your arm—your right arm? Or that any bones had been broken? Suppose it had happened at a still lonelier spot, where there was no farm within reach? Suppose—oh, maybe I ought not to say it—but, suppose it had happened before I came, when you were here alone?"

Miss Sinclair nodded, and her eyes filled.

"I never thought of that—you are right!"

"Daddy used to say that—that God overrules things for us, if we let Him!" said Iris softly. "I'm afraid I don't know much about these things—I wish I did! But daddy just lived as a true man of God should live, and I often think over what he said."

Miss Sinclair nodded. The habit of long years of reserve was not easily broken. There was silence for a time, then Iris stooped over the couch and kissed Myra Sinclair's brow.

"I know one thing—you are going to have the rest you need, and somebody to care for you! Wait until the news of your accident gets about, Aunt Myra! You will have every member of the St. Ives artists' colony coming up to the studio to see the 'sea-gull' who has for the moment had one of her wings clipped!"

Chapter X
Show Day

IRIS was right.

For the first day or so, Miss Sinclair was suffering too much to welcome conversation. It was Iris who had to open the door at the top of the ladder-like steps, and answer anxious inquiries. But thanks to rest and treatment, the pain in Miss Sinclair's injured knee subsided marvellously. She was a healthy woman, who had never overtaxed her strength, and now she had her reward.

She was soon able to receive one or two of her fellow-artists, and enjoy a talk concerning their hopes and aims, while Iris hovered about, forestalling any want before Miss Sinclair had time to express it.

She was able, too, to put the finishing touches to the pictures she hoped to submit to the Academy, though, as she herself declared, it was not easy to paint when reclining on a couch, with one of her limbs entirely out of action!

It was now that Iris discovered how inconvenient the studio was in anything like illness. A loft over a former boat store, it served its purpose admirably for a busy artist in spring and summer time. But it was tiring to climb up and down those steep wooden outside steps to get what was required, and to live a life of perpetual makeshift in a place where anything like the ordinary conveniences of a home were lacking. Iris had learned something of the knack of waiting on an invalid, and Miss Sinclair found her smallest needs anticipated. But the girl herself found it no light task to do all that was required, and she often sighed in secret for the convenient little bungalow of which Myra Sinclair had spoken.

Well, of course, that idea must be relegated to the future, but Iris was turning over the matter in her own mind, and cherishing a project of her own upon the subject.

"Show Day" came round before Miss Sinclair could do more than take a few steps across to her easel by the window, and back again. But that great Day of days meant that every studio was thrown open to all and sundry. Anybody and everybody in St. Ives—and out of it, since special excursions were run—could come climbing up the steps to "Sea-Gull," crowd the room, and pass comments as they liked upon paintings which had cost the artist

weeks of work. Miss Sinclair was not a bit fit for that, so she gratefully accepted the generous offer of a fellow artist to display Miss Sinclair's three pictures with her own in one of the quaint "lofts" which overlooked Porthmeor Beach at the farther end of the town—perhaps the most coveted position of any for a studio.

It was a real trial to Miss Sinclair not to be able to receive the usual crowd of artistic and non-artistic visitors who thronged the place.

"You must go the round of the studios, Iris," she insisted. "Not only will 'Show Day' be a novelty for you, but you will hear some delightfully naive comments from the dear people of St. Ives! We live among them all the year round, squat on their door-steps on our camp stools, and get in their way. We paint them, too, if we can find the model we want, and they take it all in good part, and even feel honoured very often! Now it's their turn!"

Iris thought of the words later on, as, settling Miss Sinclair comfortably upon her couch, she took the "Map Programme" in her hand, and sallied forth to make the round of the studios. From an artist's point of view, everything had been arranged to show the pictures at their best. Every easel placed just where the right light fell upon it, to display it to the best advantage. Iris would have loved to linger long in some of the studios. Though her own attainments with brush and pencil were very modest indeed, she was completely fascinated.

At last she reached a studio where she happened to find the painter alone.

"Oh, how beautiful!" She stopped short, lost in admiration of a wonderful sea study—a big canvas. Shining green translucent waves, breaking upon a bit of storm-riven coast. The artist had seen her in Miss Sinclair's company, and nodded affably.

"You like it?"

"It's—it's wonderful!" gasped Iris, "because—oh, I suppose I ought not to say so, as I can hardly draw a line—but it looks exactly like what it is meant to be—a real rough sea; not like something else."

"Like a picture turned upside down!" laughed the artist whimsically, not at all displeased.

"Yes, that's what I mean," she said. "Oh, how I wish Aunt Myra could have seen all these before they go up to the Academy!"

The artist's face was full of sympathy.

"Hard luck on her, that accident," he said. "Tell her I've been round to see

her pictures which are showing in Miss Vandeleur's studio. I congratulate Miss Sinclair on her work."

"Oh," said Iris quickly, "she'd be ever so pleased if you'd go up to Sea-Gull Studio and tell her so, presently. I was to ask any one who could to run in and see her this afternoon. It's the only thing that will compensate her for all she's missing on 'Show Day.' It's great! And the comments of the dear St. Ives people are too sweet for anything. In one studio a woman went into raptures over a picture of her own fisher cottage—in one of the quaint streets! How proud she was to think one of the painters had singled it out for notice!"

Iris stepped back, for a lady and gentleman entered the studio, and claimed the artist's attention. The girl lingered for another look at those glorious waves—waves so realistic, so transparent, and so true, it hardly seemed possible they were the work of a painter's brush. She could not, of course, help hearing the conversation as the artist greeted the newcomers, people he knew, who had come from a distance.

"We heard a rumour you were leaving St. Ives before long?" said the lady in a low tone.

"Well, I hope to be able to retain my studio, and rough it here from time to time. But I shall have to sell my bungalow. Needs must! Owing to the slump in shares, I've nearly lost all my money, during the last few years. If I can sell my bungalow for a good sum—stock, lock, and barrel, as it stands—I shall go to Italy. Living is cheap and there's plenty of scope for me to get busy with my brush on new ground! I've an important commission to do some pictures in Rome."

"Somebody was telling me your bungalow was the prettiest they had ever seen."

"No wonder!" sighed the artist regretfully. "I had it built to my own design for my mother and myself—not in St. Ives. It overlooks Carbis Bay, and I had a studio made to my liking. To me it's been a veritable gem of a home. But my mother has married again, an old lover of her youth—quite a romance! And as I say, I must get to Italy, and in any case I've painted Cornwall for years, so needs must! I shall have to sell my home! But selling a house is not as easy as it sounds, now!"

Iris' breath came and went quickly. It was not for nothing she lingered till the artist's friends had gone, and then she turned to him quickly. A number of local folk were crowding in, so her voice was almost a whisper.

"I couldn't help hearing," she said. "Will you mind telling me where your

home is? Can I see it—to-morrow? I—I want to buy a bungalow!”

If Iris had declared her intention of purchasing the Royal Academy outright, he could hardly have looked more surprised.

“I mean it,” she said. “I am living with Miss Sinclair, of course, but the studio is hardly a—a real home. She’s been on the lookout, but——!”

Iris broke off suddenly. It was not for her to reveal that she knew quite well it would be beyond the reach of possibility for Miss Sinclair to purchase a furnished home outright. “I have just lost my father,” the name slipped out naturally, as usual, and Iris did not try to check it. “He left me enough to—to pay my expenses, and a house in Millchester that I do not want. I shall never go back there to live. My solicitor will sell that, if I tell him I want to buy one here. Please—give me the address!”

“ ‘Golden Dawn.’ It’s on the hill slope, this side of the little station at Carbis Bay. To my mind it’s the choicest spot on earth. But, I say, if you take a fancy to the place, there’ll be a lot of business to settle.”

“And I don’t look old enough to transact business?” said Iris smiling. “You’re right. I should not dream of doing so. Besides, I’m not of age just yet. ‘Golden Dawn’ sounds lovely! I will write to my solicitor in Millchester when I’ve seen your bungalow, and if he can’t come down himself, he’ll write to somebody—a—a surveyor, isn’t it?—who will see it before I do the business with you!”

“Well, much as I love the place, I shall be only too glad to sell it quickly,” he said. “To-morrow morning, then?”

“I’ll come out by train, and get back as soon as possible. Aunt Myra can do nothing yet. You are calling to see her by and by? Please, not a word to her about the bungalow! That’s my secret!”

“Then it shall be a secret well kept as far as I am concerned,” said he. “Carbis Bay is only five minutes from here, and there’s a train at half-past ten. Shall I expect you by that?”

“Thank you. I will come!”

By this time a number of people were trooping in, and Iris slipped away. She must leave the remaining studios until the afternoon.

But Iris was thinking a great deal more about “Golden Dawn” than about pictures during the next few hours. Her thoughts were on the bungalow.

There were many visitors to see Miss Sinclair that afternoon, including the

owner of “Golden Dawn.”

As Iris helped to entertain the invalid’s guests, she found her thoughts straying to the bungalow just beyond the next bay—its very name sounded like the house of her dreams! She waited with what patience she could until next morning. Then, making some excuse to Miss Sinclair for a short absence, Iris took the train to the next little station, and found the artist himself waiting for her at Carbis Bay.

He led her by a short-cut to the bungalow—a path through a valley where ferns made a riot with wild flowers, and a little stream from far up the moors tumbled and gurgled its way to the sands and sea.

The bungalow was perched in its own pretty garden on the hill slope, with a road leading behind and beyond, up to the main St. Ives highway. At the gate Iris stood entranced. It was the home of her dreams, indeed! A glass-covered veranda ran round two sides of the little bungalow, giving an uninterrupted view of the glories of the bay and Cornish coast beyond. The artist pointed out to her the distant headlands far away . . . the hills on the Hinterland that reared rugged crests against the sky.

Indoors, all was as cosy and compact as the heart of a woman could wish. Comfortable and convenient, just enough room for two people who would live there, and no more. The owner answered Iris’ questions, and explained to her the minutest details of the place. When she had seen all there was to see, and turned towards the station again, the artist smiled.

“I must congratulate you upon a clear head for business—and keen insight into what a home ought to be!” he said. “Will you let me know what you decide?”

“I have decided!” said Iris promptly. “I know it is exactly the place Aunt Myra has had in her mind. Will you please give me the first refusal of ‘Golden Dawn’ for the sum you have named? I am going straight home to write to my solicitor, and tell him my mind is quite made up. I am going to buy your bungalow as it stands, and give Miss Sinclair the surprise of her life!”

Chapter XI
“Golden Dawn”

“MANY happy returns of the day!”

Iris greeted Miss Sinclair with a gorgeous basket of Cornish spring flowers.

“My dear, what beauties! The very sight of them makes me feel better! How I have missed seeing the flower-fields this last fortnight!”

“I’m sure of it, Aunt Myra, though I must say your generous artist friends have done their level best to make up for it, by bringing you all the best that even Cornwall can show! It’s a revelation to me, to see such flowers so early in spring. They are weeks and weeks earlier than ours in Millchester. But now for a birthday treat! The doctor said yesterday there was no need for him to see you again, unless you sent for him, so I asked him if it would hurt you to go for a car drive! No, don’t protest, Aunt Myra, this is my affair. I have ordered a car to be here at eleven—and made the chauffeur understand that he will have to help you down these outside steps. They are my *bête noire*, as you know, and reminiscent of the days when this place was just a loft!”

“I’ve been dreading those steps,” sighed Miss Sinclair, “and longing more and more for that little bungalow of my dreams. I almost think I must spend dear James’ legacy on buying a place—since he also arranged for you being a ‘paying guest’—and, incidentally, doing all the work as well, it seems to me!”

“Not a bit of it! What should I do with myself if I did not lend you a hand? It was a good thing I was here, though. Now, let me help you to get ready! Mrs. Jacka will be here, too, so you can be carried to the car, if you like.”

A sudden thought struck Miss Sinclair.

“But, Iris! have you forgotten? Hadn’t you an interview with somebody from Truro this morning?”

“I’ve ’phoned him—and arranged for that a little later,” said the girl, turning away to hide a smile.

Iris was trying hard to suppress her excitement. She was happier than she had been for many a long day, as she tried to picture Miss Sinclair’s surprise when her great secret was revealed.

It was a glorious day. Used to the drab, dark months in the north, to Iris the west in spring was a revelation.

Sorely against her will, Miss Sinclair was assisted down the quaint wooden ladder which led to her upper-storey abode. Used to a life of independence and authority over others, it galled her beyond bearing to be compelled to depend on other people. But once she was comfortably settled in the car which Iris had engaged, Miss Sinclair forgot everything in the sheer delight of being out of doors once more.

It was a perfect day, and Iris had chosen the hour carefully enough to allow a good drive round before the time came for the purpose she had in view. Along the North Coast road for a bit, then inland across the moors, returning by Lelant and the main highway that runs above Carbis Bay. Miss Sinclair had not the least doubt that they were going straight home, another couple of miles would find them back at “Sea-Gull Studio” again.

Then a surprising thing happened!

The car suddenly slowed down, and turned down a side road, which was rather rough in comparison, and steep. There was a new-looking house here and there, standing in its own pretty garden, while it was evident that the track wound downwards to the wooded valley that passed under the railway viaduct, where a little stream babbled on its way until it tumbled joyously across the sands into the waiting arms of the sea.

“Iris! He’s going wrong—stop him! This isn’t the way!”

“It’s all right, Aunt Myra. I told him I wanted to call at a house down here. Here we are!”

The car stopped outside the prettiest little bungalow Miss Sinclair had ever seen. She had never actually been down this by-road before, and the choice little homesteads that had sprung up were all alike new to her.

“Golden Dawn!” She read the name on the beaten copper plate wonderingly. “Why, I’ve heard that name—one of our Artist Club members lives here—Anthony Brushe.”

“I daresay he’s somewhere about,” said Iris demurely. “I want to see him for a minute.”

“You? Do you know him?”

“I just met him on Show Day, that’s all,” said Iris. “I’d like you to come in, too, Aunt Myra. Will you let the chauffeur help you, as well as me?”

It was but a few steps along the garden path where gorgeous spring flowers ran riot in the sunshine, then they reached the veranda, where deck chairs were placed in tempting fashion.

“What a view!” said Miss Sinclair. “An ideal spot—especially for an artist!”

“You like it? I see the French window is open, Aunt Myra! Here’s Mr. Brushe himself.”

The artist came round from the back of the house and greeted them warmly.

“This is an honour, Miss Sinclair! I understand it is the first time you have been out since your unlucky tumble!”

“Mr. Brushe, will you let Aunt Myra look round your bungalow? I believe she has fallen in love with it already! If you will give her your arm——!”

Miss Sinclair stared, as well she might. It was so unlike Iris to suggest what seemed rather a liberty. But Anthony Brushe was in no way disconcerted.

“You shall see every nook and cranny, Miss Sinclair!” he said heartily; “and by then I hope you will rest on the veranda for a bit, and enjoy the view—as I have done!”

The glance he exchanged with Iris puzzled the elder woman. What was the secret between these two? Could it be possible that this middle-aged man, whose hair was beginning to show threads of silver, had, during the time she had been laid aside, gained the friendship of this girl in her ’teens? But she remembered hearing that Anthony Brushe was a widower, whose heart had long ago been buried in his young wife’s grave. For years since then he had lived only for his mother, who had just married again—an old lover of her youth.

Since the bungalow was as compact, labour-saving, and well furnished as an exhibition model, all on one floor, it did not take Miss Sinclair very long to limp slowly into every room, and after a lingering glance at the studio, to finally sink into one of the deck chairs on the veranda.

“Well, if I’m not actually breaking the tenth commandment, I’m afraid I’m cracking it—badly!” she said quietly. “I envy you your little home, Mr. Brushe—it’s my ideal!”

He nodded and took out his watch.

“If you ladies will excuse me for a moment—I must slip across by the path

to the station. I'm expecting some one by train!"

Miss Sinclair rose.

"Oh, then, we must go, of course. Besides, the car is waiting for us!"

"Don't go for a moment, I beseech you," he said, and turning to Iris, pointed through the French window to the living room.

"There are cups and a biscuit barrel on the tray on the table. There is coffee simmering in the percolator on the gas stove in my little kitchen. Will you see that Miss Sinclair has some? I shall not be away many moments!"

He strode towards the front gate before Miss Sinclair or Iris could protest.

The girl saw the puzzled look on her aunt's face, and promptly vanished into the house, returning a moment later with the coffee.

"Well, Aunt Myra, what do you think of 'Golden Dawn?' "

"Think of it? It's just the house of my dreams!"

"Then, you—you could be happy living here?"

"Happy! Living here! Iris, what are you driving at? The bungalow belongs to Anthony Brushe!"

Iris shook her head, and her delicious little trill of laughter was like music.

"No, Aunt Myra. After to-day 'Golden Dawn' belongs to—*me*!"

"To—you!"

The girl nodded.

"Let me explain! I've often heard you say your heart was set on a bungalow—so was mine! That studio of yours ought to have been called 'The Make-Shift,' not the 'Sea-Gull!' On Show Day I happened to hear Mr. Brushe telling somebody he was obliged to sell it, and was going abroad. As a matter of fact, he's got some good commissions to paint in Italy. I came to see the place, and I asked him to give me the first refusal of his home—furniture and all. As I'm not of age yet, I had to write to my lawyers. Besides, our old home in Millchester is on my hands—or was. But the man who bought father's mill wanted it, and has paid more than enough for me to buy 'Golden Dawn' without touching my little income! So, you see, it's our home—yours and mine! Your troublesome knee will never have to climb that ladder to your studio again. I'm so glad!"

Miss Sinclair was speechless. Something unaccustomed and unheard of, something quite unfamiliar, was gathering in each of her eyes. By and by a

tear-drop crept slowly down her cheek.

"As a matter of fact, auntie," Iris went on, "we have come here this morning to clinch matters. I could not very well make the final settlement until you had approved of my future home—and yours! There are just one or two papers to sign, and my lawyer's cheque to hand over. Indeed, Mr. Brushe has gone to the station to meet the solicitor who is arranging everything. Here they come!"

Half an hour later everything was settled.

Iris put away her fountain pen, and rose with a sigh of relief.

"I'm sorry for you, losing such a lovely little home, Mr. Brushe, but I'm more thankful than I can say that 'Golden Dawn' is really mine—stock, lock, and barrel."

Then Miss Sinclair did an unusual thing for one who as a rule was abrupt and undemonstrative. She turned and clasped Iris in her arms.

"God bless you, child, you have given me my heart's desire!"

Chapter XII

The Picture

It had been a night to be remembered, even by those who dwelt within sound of the sea, and in sight of the iron-bound cliffs of wild west Cornwall.

Tucked snugly, as it was, into the side of the slope of the wooded valley above the shore, even the delightful bungalow home of Miss Sinclair and her niece came in for a share of the tumult that raged without.

The place was too well built to suffer in itself, and the fact that it was all on one floor meant they felt little or nothing of the onslaught of the storm.

Only the roar of the wind and waves on the beach far below kept both Iris and her aunt awake far into the night.

Some few months had passed since that memorable day when “Golden Dawn” passed into the possession of Iris Sinclair. The wisdom of her choice of it as a home had soon been apparent, for the mischief in Miss Sinclair’s knee threatened to be troublesome for a long time yet. She had been an active woman, devoted to long walks in search of subjects for her brush.

Now she would have to go slow for a time. It was out of the question for her to go on using the quaint outside stairs to the loft that had served her for studio and home—even when she began to hobble about again. Besides, there was nothing to wait for. Anthony Brushe took his departure at once. Iris and Mrs. Jacka went over to undertake the gleeful task of getting “Golden Dawn” ready for immediate use.

Indeed, there was very little to be done, save add the dainty feminine touches which mean so much to a home. Then Miss Sinclair’s belongings were moved from St. Ives, all her artist’s material settled in the studio of the bungalow overlooking the bay. Iris sent to Millchester for such of her own possessions which had been stored for her, her piano and books and the hundred and one little items which are precious to a girl.

It had been a day of days in the lives of both of them, when Iris had driven over with Miss Sinclair, and together they had settled down under their own “roof-tree.”

Since Miss Sinclair could still only walk a little way, Iris suggested that in

fine weather they should have all their meals on the veranda, so that her aunt could practically live in the open air.

The last half of that spring proved temptingly lovely, and the summer months were a sheer delight. Iris was in her element running the simple little home. Every morning she slipped on her swimming dress and bathing robe, raced down the path through the valley to the shore, and across the sunlit sands for the swim which had been to her a sheer joy from childhood.

So the long golden days of summer passed. Miss Sinclair grew gradually stronger, and able to walk better. Then it was her delight to take Iris for a short run by train or motor-bus, and show her what the Cornish moors really looked like when robed in the royal purple of the heather. Indeed, Miss Sinclair set to work on a wonderful moorland painting, which Iris laughingly declared would be "the picture of the year" at the next Academy. As it was, Miss Sinclair was triumphant and gratified that the painting she was finishing when Iris arrived had not only been "hung" on the walls of that exclusive exhibition, but had been sold for a fair sum.

But summers cannot last for ever, even in favoured Cornwall. Early autumn brought up drenching rain clouds from the Atlantic—then fogs—and, at last, a gale which left even old sailors wondering whether the tempest would not almost be worthy to be classed with that terror of the tropics, "Twelve on the Beaufort Scale!"

Iris had lived in a North Midland city, and only seen the sea in a calmer mood. To her it was a thing of awe to see the bay a seething mass of white-capped rollers, over which the wind moaned and shrieked in fury. She ventured into St. Ives through the rain-drenched streets, and climbed to the gale-swept "Island" above. Here, sheltered from the tearing blast by the hoary walls of the age-old chapel, she watched the mighty Atlantic rollers, as they rushed their headlong race to the shore.

She had never before seen the sight of unleashed fury of the sea, and it sent her home breathless and exhausted. For Iris there would be henceforth a new meaning in the prayer—

"Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea."

Night seemed to bring back the storm in redoubled fury. Neither the artist nor her niece had at first much sleep; then, as often happens, the gale blew itself out all suddenly. The wind died away, and only the sobbing protest of the sea which the wind had roused to anger broke the stillness of the night.

Perhaps it was the very contrast of that stillness, after the roar of the storm, that woke Iris much earlier than usual. The first streak of dawn seemed to be breaking over the hills across the bay.

Iris felt certain she would not be able to sleep again, so she slipped on a lovely silk dressing robe which had been one of James Sinclair's last gifts. The pale, opalescent folds shimmered with varied hues, as the light struck it—its colouring was wonderful. Miss Sinclair's artist eye had often likened it to a delicately beautiful mingling of the softest rainbow tints, which set off Iris' eyes and hair to perfection.

The girl went into the spotless little kitchen, where the tray for morning tea stood ready. It was the work of a few minutes to bring the kettle to the boil, and then carry the tray into Miss Sinclair's room. It was their custom to enjoy that early cup of tea together.

Iris drew back the dark-blue curtains, and opened the French window, which gave an uninterrupted view of the sea. Last night the storm had sobbed and raged like a passionate child. With the turn of the tide, however, the tempest had ceased as suddenly as it had begun. Now the last of the black clouds were passing away to the east, and it seemed as if the coming dawn would bring once more a sky of matchless blue, while the kiss of the rising sun would still the surge of the sea.

To the north and west the heavens were still purple-dark with night. Away across the beautiful bay the lighthouse on Godrevy Island still winked and twinkled its warning beam, while North Cliff stood up black and bleak from the sea—a faint line of foam at the base showing where the waves still thundered and tossed their hoary manes to break in clouds of spray.

But dawn was just at hand, and after that—the sunrise! The autumn night was far spent—in fact, it was almost gone. A pale, pearly glow had crept up behind the high hills that rose steeply beyond the sandy ridge—Phillack Towans. The light crept higher and higher in the sky—primrose and azure, mauve and silver, mingling in the clearest opal tints—merging slowly with the splendour of pink, crimson, lake and gold.

Iris stood at the window, entranced. One slender arm was still raised, holding back the curtain. The glow of the coming sunrise caught the tint of gold in her hair—the sheen of the opalescent folds of silk she wore.

"Iris! Don't move!"

Miss Sinclair's voice had a tense note in it that the girl had never heard before.

“Don’t move! I beg of you! Oh, if only I can be quick enough to get it!”

She still limped slightly, but she moved that morning more quickly than she had done since her fall above Clodgy Point. In a trice she had slipped into the adjoining studio-room, returning with her large rough sketch-book, canvas, a pencil, and colours.

“Stand! Oh, stand—just as you are! Iris, it’s going to be wonderful!”

Iris obeyed, and stood motionless. She was used to the vagaries and enthusiasms of an artist by this time.

Miss Sinclair had flung her painting overall over her dressing-gown. She sat down in a chair—moved it more than once—asked Iris to lift her arm ever so little, then her pencil worked at lightning speed. Afterwards she took palette and brush, and sought to get the exact shades she wanted.

Meanwhile the glow in the eastern sky waxed into the radiance of an autumn sunrise. As Iris stood framed in the window, she was the embodiment of girlhood on the threshold of Life’s morning. The wide open sea of wondrous blue ahead—a sea unknown, uncharted for her as yet. And above and beyond all, falling round her like a cloud of glory that mingled with the colour of the silken folds—the beauty of the sunlit morn!

At last the red-gold sun appeared, then the sun, rising higher and higher. The flood of colour was more than the eye could bear to see . . . it would be beyond the power of any painter to discover a pigment that would transfer it to canvas!

With a sigh Miss Sinclair laid down her palette and brush.

“That must be all! The sun is too high up now. Thank you, Iris! But I have got enough to go on with for to-day. Will you think I am imposing too great a task on you if I ask you to come and stand there again—just so—at this hour to-morrow morning? Perhaps other mornings, too, when there is promise of such sunrise as this! I know now how Anthony Brushe came to name his bungalow! But he couldn’t paint the picture I want to paint—he hadn’t got *you*! I shall call it—‘Golden Dawn!’ ”

Chapter XIII
“What is Thy Name?”

“IRIS, don’t you often wonder who you really are and what is your name?”

Miss Sinclair’s busy brush was laid aside for a moment, as she took up a tube and squeezed out a long, coiling “worm” of paint upon her palette.

Iris, standing in that same position by the window at morning’s dawn, started, and the delicately moulded face turned white, then crimson.

When at last the answer came, it was very low. “I—I don’t dare to think!”

“You are afraid there might be a story behind it all that you are better off without knowing?” said Miss Sinclair gently.

Iris did not reply. She could not. Every imaginable possibility and impossibility had chased and re-chased itself through her mind ever since that night when James Sinclair had first told her the truth.

“Well, of course,” Miss Sinclair went on, “there is just that. I mean, one cannot rule out the idea that you may have belonged to people of whom you could only be ashamed—deservedly so. Indeed, the very fact that whoever left you among the Iris plants deliberately wanted to get rid of you, makes it certain that at that moment you were in the hands of people who had their own ends to serve. You were a burden to them, and they cared nothing for the fact that a tiny child was left out in a drenching storm to take its chance. I know James rushed out at once into the garden, and hunted in vain for them—so that they had evidently gone off and left you without caring whether you were found or not. But has it ever occurred to you to think that it could hardly have been your own mother who left you there?”

Iris nodded. “I’ve wondered, of course.”

“I don’t think it was your mother—unless she had been so cruelly wronged that she was in such desperate plight she could not possibly keep you. If she were starving, and could do nothing for you, she may have thought she was doing the kindest thing in leaving you on the threshold of what she could see was a good, substantial home. Yet you were well nourished, and had been well cared for, so James often said. So, if dire necessity led any one to part with

you, they had done their best for you up to a certain point. I know James left no stone unturned to find out who had deserted you—but without avail. Somehow I think his wife was glad you were never claimed. To her you were almost as dear as the child she lost."

Miss Sinclair had taken up her brush again, and was looking at the girl with an artist's critical eye for beauty.

Iris was a refined and good-looking girl. There was not the least doubt about that. When she had arrived in the previous spring, she had looked worn with sorrow, a good deal of confinement indoors, and all the anxiety of caring for an invalid. But the air and sea bathing, regular rest and abundant simple fare of Cornwall had worked wonders. Iris gave promise of perfect womanhood.

Myra Sinclair had from the very necessity of the case taken notice of the tiniest details of the girl's appearance as she painted day by day. Weeks had passed, and autumn was merging into winter—that is, if those mild and wonderful months in the west can be truly termed winter at all!

The idea of her great picture which had come to her with that morning's dawn gave promise of being a thing of beauty and a joy for ever!

Iris had not been compelled to endure the tedium of very long standing at a time, of course. After that first morning, when once Miss Sinclair had got the idea on which she had set her heart, there was much she could do, at other times, besides the actual figure of the girl herself.

But Iris had caught the spirit of the thing too thoroughly to mind the self-discipline of standing motionless when required. The weather proved kind, and there were many mornings of golden dawn, when the superb colouring of sea and sky over St. Ives Bay were enough to reduce any artist to despair.

As a rule, they talked little during the hours when Miss Sinclair's brush was busy, so Iris wondered why the usual silence had been broken—and in such unusual fashion. It was the first time, since her coming, that Miss Sinclair had ever made the slightest reference to the girl's unknown parentage.

"What made you think of—of all that, just now, auntie?" she ventured. "Of course, if there is one question that comes back to me with painful insistence again and again, it is 'Who am I, and what is my real name?' "

"Well, I'll tell you, Iris. Perhaps it will be some comfort to you. The old tag has it, 'What's in a name?' But we all know that there's a very great deal in its answer sometimes. All the time I've been trying to get you—yes, *you*, just as you are—on to my canvas. I have been more and more convinced that if you

knew your real name, you would find your father and mother were not folk of whom you need be ashamed, after all."

"Why?" Iris started, and forgetting her pose, faced round suddenly. "Oh, I'm sorry!" she said humbly, resuming her position once more.

"You need not be, as it happens. I can do without you now for a bit. Besides, you have been standing long enough for the time being. I have got on well to-day, and put in a few touches that have made all the difference. Come and look."

She moved her easel so that the picture showed in the best light. Iris gasped, wonderingly. Then she laughed.

"Auntie, I am going to scold you! You have made me ever so much better looking than I really am!"

"You think so? That may be a matter of opinion," said Miss Sinclair meaningly. "To me you are the embodiment of a girl standing on the threshold of life. I hope for you the 'Golden Dawn' of a really happy life, too!"

"But what has your picture of me got to do with my—my real name?"

"Everything," said Miss Sinclair. "Each time I study your face, from my point of view, I feel convinced that your mother was most likely a woman who possessed both good looks and good breeding. Your features are so essentially girlish and feminine, too, that I think it is most likely you resemble your mother and not your father—of course, I cannot be sure! Slender, well-shaped hands, and that little shell-like ear which nestles close to your head—to me they are all proofs positive that there is good heritage and refinement somewhere. A woman who must have looked as you look—and been very much what you are now, would never have been driven to desert her baby in an Iris bed on a wild, wet night!"

"But if you are right, that only deepens the mystery," said Iris sadly. "Father—I must go on calling him that!—left no stone unturned to discover if I had been stolen, or anything like that. He advertised, and notified the authorities."

"I know. You were never claimed. There may have been all sorts of reasons for that! Well, there, my dear, we shall never solve the problem by talking about it, I suppose. I wonder if we shall ever learn the truth?"

Iris made no reply. She had wondered until wondering had made the bitter heartache almost beyond bearing. But there was no getting any farther.

Miss Sinclair had no need of her "model" for the rest of that day, so Iris

resolved to go into St. Ives early in the afternoon, do some needful shopping, and call upon one or two friends with messages from her aunt. All this took her rather longer than she expected, as one of Miss Sinclair's friends was to be found in her artist's studio at Porthmeor, at the far end of the town.

The dusk of an early winter afternoon was closing in, as Iris hurried back through the narrow streets of the fishing quarter. Heavy rain clouds were driving up from the Atlantic; in a moment the girl was caught in a drenching downpour.

The doorway of one of the chapels stood open. Iris darted across, to shelter in the porch until the shower was over. Inside the building all was very still. Iris had not the least idea that a meeting was in progress, or that it happened to be a moment of silent prayer. Then suddenly she heard a slight rustle, as if people were settling down to listen to an address. The inner door was ajar, and Iris started suddenly. Clear and distinct came the sound of the question in a lady's voice: "What is thy name?"

Chapter XIV

The Question Answered

"WHAT is thy name?"

Iris could scarcely have been more startled if some one had walked straight out of the mission church and asked her that question direct! It was as if the lady who was speaking at that afternoon meeting knew all about the unseen listener in the porch—knew, too, all that had been under discussion between aunt and niece that morning.

"What is your name?" the speaker went on. "I am going to ask you to answer that question—not to me, but to God. The Lord Jesus asked it of a man who couldn't answer it himself—he was possessed by evil spirits, and they answered for him! They called themselves a legion—there were many—so many that the man's identity and personality had been blotted out. Have you never heard of a man—or a woman, alas!—who has so utterly given themselves up to evil, that the evil that they do clings to them like a name? Why did the tender, loving Lord ask that question? Because He wanted to reach the real man behind the devils. To do that, He first of all awakened his memory! His name had been lost when the demons entered into him. But—he remembered the name his mother called him by: the name by which he was known in his home by the lake shore in boyhood. Since then, Satan had done his very worst for this poor man, and got him into his clutches altogether. Then the folk in the village had had a try, and put him in chains. But with maniacal strength he had burst all the bonds that society had bound him with, and gone to live, of all places, in the local cemetery! The tombs cut in the rock were his only home now. So he was in sorry plight indeed when the Lord Jesus came that way, and began His great work by that simple question, What is thy name?

"You know the rest of the story—we have just read it, in God's Word. The devils were turned out, and the Lord Jesus came into that man's heart, as Saviour, Lord, and King. He was sent home to witness to the Great Healer, Who had not only dealt with his body, but his soul.

"But what is *your* name? Some of us feel very proud of our names—our ancestors were people of sterling worth, and the names they have passed on to us are amongst the oldest in this West Country—and that means the very oldest family names in England! Yet there is one name which is older than all, and that is the one given to us by God, unless, like the poor man at Gadara, we

have had a personal meeting with the Lord Jesus Christ, and changed our name—at the Cross of Calvary. 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' That brings each one of us in under His description of—sinner! It does not make any difference to the fact, whether we have broken every one of God's commandments, or only one—one sin is enough to count us as sinners in His holy eye, needing therefore the cleansing Blood of Christ. At Calvary we may become sinners saved by grace, children of God, because He has made us so!

"Then all the names of His redeemed are written in what His Word calls the Lamb's Book of Life. I want to ask you here and now—Is your name written there? If not, why not? Will you answer that question to-day? What is your name? God knows! Take Him at His word, and let Him make it His own!"

"Lord, I care not for riches, either silver or gold,
I would make sure of Heaven, I would enter Thy fold.
In the Book of Thy Kingdom with its pages so fair,
Tell me, Jesus, my Saviour, is my name written there?
Lord, my sins they are many, like the sands of the sea,
But Thy Blood, oh, my Saviour, is sufficient for me.
For Thy promise is written, in bright letters that glow,
'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.'
Is my name written there, in its page white and fair?
Tell me, Jesus, my Saviour, is my name written there?"

The shower was passing, and Iris knew she had barely sufficient time for the long walk through the town and up the hill to catch her train.

But as she slipped out of the porch that ringing chorus went with her on her way: "What is thy name? God knows!"

The girl's blue eyes were brimming with tears, as she found the words she had heard echoing and re-echoing in her heart. Yes, God knew—knew who she was, the nameless waif from the flower-bed. There was something more. Iris had never in her life heard a message so simple and so plain. "Take Him at His word . . . let Him make you one of His!"

Iris had the carriage to herself during the few moments' run to the next station. She was glad. They were minutes spent alone with God. She had been feeling after Him, if haply she might find Him, ever since that night when the man she had known as her father had been snatched away from her side so suddenly.

Now, at last, she knew her name—in God's sight. She was a sinner needing a Saviour—and seeking Him, too!

"Yes, His promise is written, in bright letters that glow,
'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow!' "

"Lord, I claim the promise of Thy Word, and make it mine! Write my name in the Lamb's Book of Life. Thou knowest my real name! Thou wilt know what to write. I give myself to Thee, and take Thy Name as mine."

Chapter XV
Finished

"At last!" Miss Sinclair laid down her brush, and stood back from the easel to survey her finished picture.

"Golden Dawn" was as perfect and complete as her artist's skill could make it. Somehow she felt that never again would she be able to paint such a picture as this.

For one thing, she had never before attempted a picture of this size, with just one full-length figure as the central—indeed, the only attraction. She had known from the first that it was an ambitious subject, only worthy of a master hand. But from that first moment when Iris had stood there bathed in the gold of autumn sunrise, Myra Sinclair had known that here before her was the subject for the picture she had all her life longed to paint.

It had been a labour of love, and taken a long time. Nor had she kept on working at that one canvas all the time. She had been commissioned to paint one or two smaller pictures, which had taken up her time during the daylight hours of the winter months.

So she had left to the early spring days the task of completing her portrait of Iris—for such the picture really was. Now her task was done.

Miss Sinclair could hear the girl moving about in the dainty little kitchen of the bungalow. Iris was singing, as she often did, while she busied herself with the lighter tasks of the home, leaving the hardest of the work to Mrs. Jacka, who still came over from St. Ives when required.

> "Yes, my name's written there, on Thy page white and fair,
> In the Book of Thy Kingdom, yes, my name's written there."

Myra Sinclair's eyes grew soft.

"Poor child! And she doesn't really know what her name is! But, as she has said more than once, God knows! How fond she is of that chorus! There has been a new look in her eyes, and a new happiness in her heart, too, since that autumn day when she first heard those words!"

It was true. Nor had Iris kept her new-found peace and joy to herself. She had taken the first opportunity of going over to the little chapel in the narrow

street of St. Ives again. Discovering the name of the lady who had been speaking that afternoon, she found to her joy that she was living not very far from "Golden Dawn" bungalow itself. A missionary in a tropical country for many years, Miss Archer had come, as many others do, to spend her days of retirement in the mild West Country—but not in idleness. Already she was well known, and a great deal in demand in the neighbourhood as a speaker, and wherever she went God blessed the message from her lips.

Her joy can be imagined when Iris told her how she had been an unseen listener in the porch that autumn day, and how the words she had heard had been God's own message to her heart. Naturally, a warm friendship struck up between Iris and the retired missionary. She it was who persuaded the girl to realise from the very first she had been "saved to serve," and not for herself alone.

So Iris walked across the beautiful cliff path every Sunday afternoon, and began to teach a small class of the fishermen's lads. Perhaps it was the happiest hour in all the week. But not even to Miss Archer did Iris reveal the fact that her message had been so singularly appropriate because of the fact that she did not really know her own name!

Winter had passed—that is, such "winter" as Cornwall ever knows, washed as it is on three sides by the Atlantic, warmed by the Gulf Stream.

Before very long, artists' Show Day would be coming round again! Miss Sinclair had a couple of other pictures to her credit in readiness to submit to the Royal Academy.

"In the Book of Thy Kingdom,
Yes, my name's written there!"

Iris was singing happily as she prepared their midday meal, a task she always undertook, when she heard Miss Sinclair come to the door, and call her name.

"Yes, Aunt Myra?"

"Can you come for a minute?"

Iris left the task she had in hand and went into the studio.

"I have finished—at last!"

The girl went forward. The light from the open French window fell full upon the painting on the easel, revealing its full beauty of colouring.

"It's—it's wonderful, auntie! I shall be congratulating you upon 'The

Picture of the Year' when the Academy opens in London."

Miss Sinclair laughed. "Flatterer! I've no hope of that. Perhaps it won't even be 'hung!' "

"As I've told you before, you've made me far too good-looking!"

Myra Sinclair shook her head.

"I think not. Others will soon decide that. Aren't you looking forward with a good deal of amusement to 'Show Day?' My pictures will probably have to be shown in St. Ives—we can't expect folk to come over to Carbis Bay to see them. People will recognise my 'model,' seeing you have been in and out among them for a year!"

"A whole year! Can it be possible?" said Iris thoughtfully.

She was silent for a moment, looking at the picture. How James Sinclair would have loved to see it! But he had been taken to see the King in His beauty—and Iris, left desolate as she had been at first, had found a happy home—above all, learned to know the Name that is above every name, even though she still had no idea of her own.

Would that day ever come?

Chapter XVI

The Face in the Crowd Again

WHAT a contrast to Cornwall when, a few weeks later they found themselves in London. London, the city of history and mystery, of pleasure and pain, gain and loss—the city of idle wealth, and the pitiful idleness of the unemployed!

Iris had spent so little time in London that nearly everything possessed the charm of novelty for her.

No one save Iris herself had seen the picture of "Golden Dawn" until the Show Day of the St. Ives artists revealed it to any one who cared to go to the studio where it was exhibited. Then its success had been overwhelming. Those who, as artists themselves, possessed the knowledge and skill which gave them the right to criticise, were the first to be full of congratulations. Equally delightful, too, were the comments of the St. Ives folk and visitors who tramped in and out of everybody's studio as they liked all day long. Of course, those who lived in the neighbourhood of the little fishing town realised that Miss Sinclair had been singularly fortunate in her model!

Then the picture had been submitted to the Royal Academy. Iris had never for a moment had any doubt as to the result. When Miss Sinclair knew "Golden Dawn" was accepted for exhibition, her triumph was complete.

Of course, it was necessary for her to be on the spot, for many reasons. So Iris and her aunt left the bungalow in Mrs. Jacka's care, and took up their quarters in a quiet little Bloomsbury hotel.

"Opening Day" of the Royal Academy found them going round the famous galleries. "Golden Dawn" had been hung in a good position, and seemed to be attracting attention. But to-day, aunt and niece were devoting their time to looking at the works of other people, for this year's pictures were voted to be among the best ever seen.

But nothing is more tiring than sight-seeing—especially when there is a crowd. After making the round of several of the galleries, Miss Sinclair declared she did not want to see another picture that day, and Iris quite agreed.

After the magnificent freshness of North Cornwall, the air in London seemed stale and lifeless, the noise insufferable.

Iris was more than content to turn away from the pictures, and follow Miss Sinclair towards the great main entrance leading to Piccadilly. They had come early when very few were about. It was very different now. It was the most "fashionable" hour of sight-seeing for fashionable folk.

Crowds of the smartest of smart London were thronging into the building. It was no easy matter to enter the Academy at that moment. But it seemed still more difficult to have to meet the advancing throng, and make one's way out. At last they were free!

Iris drew a breath of relief as they reached the main entrance at last, and found themselves in Piccadilly. Here they were swallowed up in the throng—only intent on finding the stop for a Southampton Row motor 'bus.

The crowd was densest just there, and progress slow, but at last they reached the stop. A mass of people were waiting. The 'bus they wanted bore down and stopped. They got aboard it with difficulty . . . the 'bus started . . .

Neither Iris nor her aunt heard a gasp of astonishment and dismay. Neither of them saw a lady who was coming from the opposite direction suddenly stop short, regardless of the crowd, and gaze at Iris as she sprang on to the 'bus, which immediately went on its way.

"It's the girl!" gasped the lady; "the girl on the boat. I should have known her anywhere!"

"What girl?" asked her husband.

"The one I told you about! Dick was with me on the quay at Boulogne last year. He'd met her—in a crowd—near Paris. He noticed the likeness—at once. Oh, can't we find her—discover who she is?"

"My dear," he protested gently, "there's no hope of following that 'bus. By this time the girl is just swallowed up among the millions in London."

His voice was tender. He knew—none better—what was at the back of that vibrant note of pain in her voice. Had not he, too, shared that agony?

"My dear Anne, it's hopeless—a mere likeness! It may not be the same girl you saw on the boat. Besides, what chance is there—here in England? It happened half the world away!"

But woman-like, she was unconvinced.

"A woman's intuition outstrips a man's cool reason—sometimes," she said breathlessly, and there was a sob in her voice as she spoke. "Besides, I—I have a feeling I can't explain! If only we had come along a minute sooner, to stop

her getting on that ’bus! At least I could have implored her to tell me her name!”

“Come, my dear.” He took her arm, and gently piloted her along the crowded pavement until they reached the great entrance court of Burlington House. But for Mrs. Marchant the keen interest of Opening Day at the Royal Academy was gone.

Mechanically she allowed her husband to take her round the crowded saloons. She saw none of the pictures before her. All she could see was the vision of a girlish face, framed in a simple spring hat, trimmed with a single flower—a blue velvet pansy—that matched the eyes beneath it. Mrs. Marchant needed none to tell her that, given the difference in years, that face—those eyes—were matched by her own. It was the “Face in the Crowd!”

They went on until they reached a point where several people were gathered in front of a picture in one of the saloons. While Mr. Marchant turned the page in his catalogue, somebody in front moved away—and the picture was revealed. Mrs. Marchant uttered a cry.

“Golden Dawn!” read Mr. Marchant absently. “Why, my dear!”

His wife was going forward with outstretched hands.

“John! It’s the girl herself!” cried his wife; “and her name is Dawn! My little Dawn—my baby!”

“JOHN! IT’S THE GIRL HERSELF!” CRIED HIS WIFE; “AND HER NAME IS DAWN!”
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John Marchant led his wife to the nearest seat, and bent over her anxiously. Her face was white with emotion, her lips moved voicelessly. At last she managed to gasp: “The name! The artist’s name! Find it out either from the

picture or the catalogue. . . . Get the address, and, oh, don't—don't let any one have that picture, whatever it costs. Can't you see? Don't you understand?"

Keen, clever business man as he was, John Marchant realised at that moment that there were times when a woman's imagination leaps the impassable gulf of reason, and the impossible becomes possible.

"Wait here, my dear," he said gently. "Whatever you do, don't move from this seat, or we shall miss one another in the crowd. I will see what I can do."

But first of all he went once more towards the picture, and stood gazing at it, with eyes that slowly filled with tears. She was right—he remembered now how often she had been right, when he had pitted his cold reason against her woman's heart.

"Golden Dawn!" If ever a name fitted the picture that bore it, it was there before him. The first promise of the coming sunrise over the wild ridge of hills—crimson and pink and gold, mingling in a flood of glory that flamed the sky, and reflected a thousand tints upon the sea beneath. The French window wide open, framing the figure of a beautiful girl, her long clinging robe of silk shimmering with pale opalescent colours, that mingled together like the softest of rainbow hues.

The girl was gazing towards the sea and sky, and her eyes had a far-off look in them as of one who saw a vision of the future—the future of that womanhood on whose threshold she was standing in her glorious youth and beauty. The draperies had fallen back from one shapely arm, as she held it outstretched, to draw back the curtain of rich dark-blue, which made a perfect background. It was as if the girl might be trying to draw back the veil which hid from her the future.

John Marchant saw all this—saw, too, something else. Man as he was, he found that his eyes were full of tears. No wonder; for there came back to him a vision of the past, when, long years ago, he had wooed and won the girl who had been his loving and much loved wife.

She was right. That picture before him might almost have been a painting of Anne, his wife, as she was when he had won her love!

How could the likeness be explained, unless——?

Conscious that curious eyes were watching him, he turned away abruptly. The name of the picture in the catalogue gave him a clue—but "Myra Sinclair" neatly signed across the corner of the painting told him nothing—it was the work of a woman's hand; he told himself he might have guessed it.

If his wife had not urged him to make a bid for the picture, he knew he would have done so of his own accord. How could he allow a likeness so marvellous and so wonderful to pass into strange hands? Especially if Anne was right—why, it might be——!

At last he secured an option of the picture, and also found himself in possession of Miss Sinclair's address, and started when he saw the name of her Cornish home: "Golden Dawn," Carbis Bay!

"My dear, I can do no more," he said soothingly. "We will send a telegram to the artist, saying I am anxious to purchase her picture; but that we crave the favour of a personal interview with her, as we are keenly interested in the subject."

"I feel as if I'd like to take the next train to Cornwall!" said Mrs. Marchant, as they came out of the Royal Academy. They had seen enough. They had no desire to look at anything more.

"We can go to Cornwall if the artist is there!" said Mr. Marchant, "but—since you recognised the girl getting on a 'bus in Piccadilly an hour ago—who knows but that wherever the girl of 'Golden Dawn' may be, the artist may be with her? I am convinced that the solution of the problem lies somewhere close at hand—here in London!"

Chapter XVII

The Other End of the ’Phone

“Will I do?”

Iris entered Miss Sinclair’s room that evening with a roguish smile, just before the hour when the gong would sound for dinner.

Aunt and niece had paid a visit to one of the Oxford Street emporiums before returning to the quiet little hotel off Russell Square where they were staying. Iris had purchased a simple crepe-de-chine frock of creamy white, and was anxious for Miss Sinclair’s opinion before going downstairs.

“Perfection!” said that lady warmly. “You could not have chosen anything which suited you better! All it wants is just—this!”

Miss Sinclair took from a vase a couple of rose-buds and fastened them on Iris’ shoulder. Then they went downstairs and took their places at the small separate table set apart for their use.

Dinner was nearly over, when a maid entered with a salver, on which lay a telegram addressed to Miss Myra Sinclair.

“If you please, madam, there is something to pay.”

“To pay—on a telegram? That’s odd, surely,” said Iris.

“Presumably re-directed from Carbis Bay—you remember we arranged that before we left? Here, Iris, take my bag, and look out the money, while I see what it’s all about!”

She handed her dainty meshed bag to Iris, and tore open the tawny orange envelope.

“I hope ‘Golden Dawn’ hasn’t been burnt to the ground!” said the girl.

“Oh, ‘Golden Dawn’ is sold!”

“Sold!” Iris stared aghast. Miss Sinclair laughed outright.

“You’re thinking of the house! I’m thinking of my picture! Sold! Isn’t it lovely? Pay the money, Iris—there’s no answer!”

“No answer?” said the girl in a low tone, when the maid had disappeared.

“No! There’s something here I don’t quite understand—more in it than meets the eye. Read it.”

Iris took the sheet from her hand.

“Wish purchase picture ‘Golden Dawn’ at price stated. Particularly wish interview with you. Personal matter regarding your model. John Marchant, Great Midland Hotel, London.”

“ ‘Personal matter regarding model!’ ” Iris read the words aloud. “Does he mean—can he mean——?”

“You!” nodded Miss Sinclair. “That’s pretty obvious, isn’t it?”

“So I’m just not going to telegraph—and give him an address which may bring him here hot-foot! Who knows but he may be a foolishly susceptible young man, anxious to make your acquaintance? Such things have happened, and it might be somebody most undesirable, from whom I am bound to protect you. He may have fancied my subject was an artists’ model who gets her living by sitting for painters, and perhaps is quite used to meeting strangers.”

“But, auntie! If your picture is practically sold!”

“That can be arranged in the usual way, without dragging you in,” said Miss Sinclair firmly. “No, Mr. John Marchant, you have to learn that ‘Miss Golden Dawn’ is under the protection of her gorgon of an aunt, be he rich or poor, young or old, fat or lean!”

Iris laughed outright.

“How good you are! But there may be no nonsense of that kind in his request. I’m all agog to know. It sounds romantic, anyway!”

Miss Sinclair nodded, as she picked up the telegram, read it again, and glanced thoughtfully at Iris. “ ‘Personal matter regarding your model!’ Well, those suggestive words might mean anything!”

Never for a moment could she forget that Iris was a nameless waif, her parentage unknown. Suppose——?

“But it’s no use supposing!” said Miss Sinclair aloud.

“Have you finished? Well, then, let us go at once, and see if we can get hold of this good man!”

“You’re going to his hotel?”

“Not yet,” laughed Miss Sinclair. “You forget we are within three-quarters of a mile of him!”

Iris laughed.

“How stupid of me! The ‘Great Midland’ is on the Euston Road, isn’t it? Naturally, he only got hold of your home address through the catalogue, and wired there. Now what’s the next step?”

“I am going to ring him up on the ’phone, my dear! You can come and listen to the confab., if you like. Remember, Miss Sinclair can be very dignified indeed, when she has need to be! So don’t be surprised at anything!”

But, after all, it was Miss Sinclair herself who was going to be surprised. Indeed, it was a very wondering and agitated lady who left the call box of the private hotel a little later on.

She and Iris entered it together, and found the hotel number in the telephone book.

“Great Midland Hotel? Yes? You have a Mr. John Marchant staying there. Is he alone? . . . His wife is staying there, too?”

Miss Sinclair’s face registered several degrees of distinct relief. Evidently the would-be purchaser of Iris’ portrait was not a callow, impressionable youth.

“Is he in? Yes? Will you kindly tell him he is wanted on the ’phone—at once?”

“He’s in,” said Miss Sinclair, while she waited. “Now, I wonder——?”

Much more quickly than she had expected, Miss Sinclair heard a man’s voice at the other end.

“Mr. John Marchant?” she said coolly. “Am I addressing the sender of a telegram to Miss Sinclair, at Carbis Bay, about a picture on exhibition at the Royal Academy?”

“Yes, yes,” came in eager tones; “but how do you know? Where are you speaking from?”

Miss Sinclair ignored the second question, but answered the first.

“It so happens that Miss Sinclair is in London for the Opening Day, and your telegram was re-directed back to her. You ask for a personal interview. But that is hardly necessary, as Miss Sinclair has arranged for the sale of her picture through——.”

Then suddenly something happened at the other end of the wire. The man was about to speak, when apparently he was thrust aside, and a woman’s voice came over the telephone.

“It is a woman speaking!” she cried in accents that trembled. “I am John Marchant’s wife. I know it is a woman I am speaking to! Am I right in supposing that it is the artist, Miss Myra Sinclair herself?”

“Well, yes, you are right,” admitted that lady.

“I guessed—I knew! Then don’t keep the truth from a sister-woman who must know—what you alone can tell. Who is that lovely girl you have painted as ‘Golden Dawn?’ Where does she live? Who are her people—her parents? Where is she at this moment? I saw her face in a crowd at Boulogne last year—I saw her outside the Royal Academy, in Piccadilly, this afternoon. Again, just her face in a crowd. I lost her, for she sprang at that moment on a ’bus. Tell me, where is she?”

“Here, beside me!” was the startling answer. “Why are you so eager?”

“Oh, I must see her!” The voice was almost a sob. “Have you a private room wherever you are staying? No? Well, we have No. 73 here at the Great Midland. Will you come round and see me, and bring her—Dawn!—Dawn! Promise me you will come now, at once! I believe I have more right to her than you have—than any one!”

Chapter XVIII
“Dawn”

THERE is something very exasperating to the third person, who can only hear the one-sided conversation that is taking place over the telephone.

So it was that Iris looked in wonder at Miss Sinclair, when she replaced the receiver, and nodded to the girl to precede her out of the telephone box.

“Why, auntie, what is it?”

Miss Sinclair’s face wore a startled look, and her eyes were dim with emotion.

“I can’t tell you, now! The lady at the other end was Mr. John Marchant’s wife. She urgent—insistent—she thinks she knows——!” Miss Sinclair realised that she was getting a bit incoherent; she pulled herself together with a tremendous effort, saying: “She wants me to go round to the Great Midland Hotel at once—and take you with me!”

“To see if I am like the picture?” said Iris.

Miss Sinclair did not answer. She could not. She felt sure that there was much more in this than had come to her ears over the ’phone.

“*I believe I have more right to her than you—than any one!*”

Those words, uttered in a voice choked by deep emotion, could only mean one thing. What if——? But it would never do to raise false hopes, or give Iris the slightest hint that the great problem of her life might be on the eve of being solved.

From Russell Square to the Great Midland Hotel was not more than twenty minutes’ walk. But Miss Sinclair promptly summoned a taxi. There are moments in life when one cannot afford even a quarter of an hour’s delay. This was one.

Soon the taxi stopped before the entrance of a busy hotel near one of the big stations, where the railways run north. They entered the vestibule, and were promptly shot up in a lift to the first floor.

“Number seventy-three.”

Almost before the attendant had knocked the door was flung open from

within by an impatient hand.

On the threshold stood a man of middle age, whose hair was prematurely silver.

“Mr. John Marchant?” said Miss Sinclair.

He nodded, and stood aside for her to enter, motioning her towards a woman who stood in the centre of the room, gazing towards the door with wide open eyes, her bosom heaving with emotion.

But Anne Marchant had no eyes for Myra Sinclair. Her glance went past her and beyond, to the girl whose light open coat revealed the soft folds of a creamy silk frock, the rose-buds nestling beneath her throat.

As if by common instinct the other actors in the drama drew aside—John Marchant’s face working strangely, as he glanced first at his wife, then at the girl before them.

As for Myra Sinclair, she knew she was forgotten, and drew back.

It was a tense moment of anxiety: perhaps at that moment she held the most important threads in the story. Her strength seemed to leave her suddenly, and she sank upon a nearby lounge.

“Dawn!”

Mrs. Marchant breathed the word half as a question, half as an assurance. The girl stood still transfixed, staring at the stranger. Then suddenly a vague memory stirred. Where—where was it she had met the startled, questioning look of these kind eyes? Where had she seen that face before?

Somewhere—and the lady had not been alone! Another face seemed to frame itself out of the shadows of previous days, and to be ranged in memory’s portrait gallery, alongside that of the woman before her.

Suddenly Iris knew. The young man in the crowd, halting in his execrable French—the brief exchange of badinage and words of guidance! Then he and she had parted in the crowded French street, never, of course, to meet again. Yet, though not actually meeting, they had seen each other once more. Parted by the space between the quayside and the cross-channel steamer slowly pulling away from the pier, they had looked into each other’s eyes and smiled, exchanging a waved good-bye until those in the boat could no longer distinguish the watchers on the quay!

Had there been a longing in the heart of both these two who did not know each other’s names, that they could have had a moment, if only a moment, to

exchange a spoken word?

But by that young man's side on Boulogne quay there had stood a woman whose eyes were instinctive with mother love. Suddenly Iris knew. Those eyes were looking into her own now!

Instinctively she glanced round the room, seeking. Where was he—the son, as she had supposed him to be, as he and this lady had stood that day side by side? But there was no one else in the room, save Myra Sinclair and John Marchant.

Iris gave herself a little shake and smiled. There was a tense feeling in the atmosphere she did not understand. But she was conscious of it. It was there.

"You call me 'Dawn?' " she said gently. "You mean, you like auntie's picture of me? She called it 'Golden Dawn,' you know."

Mrs. Marchant did not answer for a moment. She was still gazing at Iris eagerly, hungrily, as if she would devour every feature of that girlish face. With a sudden movement, she put her hand to the lace of her soft grey evening frock, a gold chain hung round her neck. Whatever was suspended from it was hidden in the folds of lace. It was a tiny gold-rimmed photograph. She held it out towards Iris.

"Have you ever seen one like that before? Or a picture of a little child like that?"

Iris drew closer and bent her head. It was the coloured photograph of a head of a baby—with eyes of wonderful blue!

"No——," said Iris, though even to herself her voice sounded strange.

"But I have!"

Neither Mrs. Marchant nor Iris had noticed that Myra Sinclair had risen from the lounge and was standing by her niece's side.

"Yes, I have seen—a photograph very much like that. Not the same: but it was, I think, a portrait of the same child, and taken not very long after yours."

"Where? Whose picture was it? Who is this girl here? What is her name—to you?"

Mrs. Marchant's trembling lips put the question. Then suddenly her knees threatened to give way, and she tottered to the sofa.

Miss Sinclair sat down beside her while Iris stood wondering before them.

"To me—she has been Iris Sinclair, my brother's adopted child. Until just

before his death, she herself had no idea that she was not really his daughter. But I knew. I had known all the time. The story is a long one. I will tell it in as few words as I can. My brother and his wife, James and Margaret Sinclair, had lost their own—and only—babe. One wild March night, of rain and storm, they suddenly heard between the gusts the cry of a little child. It came from the garden. They found her in the Iris bed, and took her into their home—and their hearts. All efforts from that day to this have failed to find out who she was. When he was dying, my brother revealed to her that he had no idea of her real name. He stood to her in a father's stead—he provided for her when he died, and made her guardianship my care. That is all."

"Where was this? And when?" It was John Marchant who asked the questions.

"Iris is about twenty. James and Margaret regarded her as a few months old when they found her—not older than three months anyway."

"And you saw——?"

"I saw her photo, taken when they advertised far and wide, before they gave up the search they felt it was right to make. Yet in their hearts they loved her from the first, and longed to keep her. I went there on a visit the following week, and saw the child. In later years, my brother was a well-known man in Millchester, where they moved soon after; no one there knew that Iris was not his own daughter. But when Iris came to them, they were living about fifty miles away, near another northern town, Rossop."

"Rossop! Why, that's Yorkshire! And Draconfels——!"

Mrs. Marchant and her husband exchanged puzzled glances.

"I think it is time we told you why we begged you to come here—and bring your—your niece with you," said John Marchant.

"I am a business man, partner in a firm with big foreign interests, especially South Africa. Twenty years ago I was out there—doing big business here and there, and things were in a critical state, owing to the misappropriations by a man of mixed origin I had long suspected—and at last dismissed. His name was Draconfels. He had an English wife. After his dismissal he showed no open resentment, but took up some casual work and lived on in the neighbourhood. It was just then that my only child was born. We called her Anne Dawnay—her mother's maiden name. It was immediately shortened into Dawn. That picture shows her as she was when a few weeks old. Then I had to go to Rhodesia, and leave my wife and child. Business took me longer than I thought. Draconfels had done me more ill than I was aware

of, till I visited other places, yet the wrong was not such as could bring him within reach of the law. By that time Draconfels was dismissed and alone. His wife had gone down to Cape Town on her way home for a visit to England.

"While away, I got a frantic wire from my wife. Dawn had disappeared. My wife had been asleep on the veranda of our home one hot evening, the baby in its cot beside her. She woke to find the cradle empty. We have lost all trace of our little girl from that day to this!"

He glanced meaningly at the girl as he spoke.

"Of course, there was frantic search till dark—through the night—and the nights and days that followed—but in vain. Rewards offered—the law invoked—a hue and cry for miles meant only that we drew blank everywhere. You can imagine the utter agony of it all. There was the bare possibility of the child having been carried off by some prowling animal—but there was no trace of blood. Nor had any dangerous wild creature been reported from the neighbourhood. Every one tried to help. Even Draconfels, whom I had discharged, came forward and appeared to join heartily in the search for our babe. His wife was already on her way to England."

"But was she?"

Mrs. Marchant sprang up suddenly.

"John, have you forgotten? We never really suspected them—then. She came from the north, and I am sure that once—one of the few occasions I spoke to her—she mentioned Rossop! Suppose—suppose—it was all planned? For her to sail by a later boat—to hide in Cape Town, perhaps to creep back and receive the stolen child from somebody. Draconfels had the name, as we discovered, for blackmailing people in his power, and making them do his bidding. What would be easier than for their revenge to have been completed by passing our child off as her own on the liner—and getting rid of it as soon as ever she landed in England? She was her husband's slave. Her parents lived near Rossop! You remember he left the place a few weeks later. His coming forward to help search was a blind! He knew we should never dream the child was already far away from Africa!"

For a moment she stood gazing at the startled girl, with all her heart in her eyes.

"I'm satisfied," she whispered. "I knew. I felt from that moment on the quay in France, that the close likeness between us meant we were—mother and daughter! But others must be convinced. I know one proof which will be positive. My little Dawn—my lost baby—had a tiny triangular mark in the

crook of her left elbow."

White to the lips, the girl drew off her coat with trembling hands and thrust up the silken sleeve beneath. In silence, she held out her well-rounded arm, bared to the shoulder. There, in the hollow, inside the elbow-joint, was a tiny three-cornered mark!

A cry of love and longing—a cry of rapture and joy that would live in the ears of those who heard it for ever, and Anne Marchant's arms were clasped around the girl. She pressed her to her heart, as if she would never let her go.

"Dawn! My baby! My beautiful girl! God in Heaven, I thank Thee!"

Strained heart to heart, there was silence. Then the girl whispered, "Thank God! I have at last a name—and a mother!"

Chapter XIX
“What Will Dick Say”

A MAY morning of sheer delight, in one of the fairest spots of the “Garden of England”—Kent.

Though the month of May had nearly run, it had been a late season, and there was still a riot of pink and white blossom in the orchards, although cherry and apple, plum and pear, had already commenced to drop showers of petals on the lawn beneath.

Swinging in a hammock under a big pear tree, one dainty foot touching the ground now and then in order to keep herself gently moving, Anne Dawnay Marchant was looking out on life, and finding it very good.

Good? So good that there were moments when Iris wondered if there could be anything better—or best—in comparison with all that had come to her.

A name—a home—a mother and father who were trying to do all they could to make up to her for the years she had been lost to them—and they to her.

Dawn—Iris, of course, was known now by her rightful name—felt that she would always look upon May-time and May Day as the most wonderful of all her life.

The Royal Academy had opened on the first of May, when “Golden Dawn” had been unveiled to the public eye. Then had followed swiftly on the heels of each other the wonderful happenings which had united her to her mother and father, who had long ago given her up as lost to them for ever—perhaps dead! There had been so much to hear, so much to tell, so much to try to discover.

John Marchant and his wife were only in London for a day or two—urgent business with foreign clients had required his presence.

They were returning to their own country house near Sevenoaks the very next day. Of course their new-found daughter went with them, and Miss Sinclair was urged to be their guest, instead of staying alone in London.

“ ‘Upways’—our home—must always be a second home for you in future,” said Mrs. Marchant. “We can never, never repay all we owe to you—and to your brother who cared for our child. At least you must come back with us for a time. Our car can run you up to town for any art business you need to

do. It was only crowded hours of appointments with business men coming to England, or leaving, that decided us to spend a couple of nights on the spot at the Great Midland. That afternoon we went to the Academy was John's only free time. How wonderful it has all been! Those first words of the Christian creed, 'I believe in God,' will be more real to me than ever!"

So the very next morning Dawn found herself ensconced luxuriously in her parents' car—her mother by her side, and Myra Sinclair opposite, gliding through South London, and then out into the open country, where the birds sang joyously, and the Kentish hills reflected every tone and tint of spring-tide glory.

Dawn gave a little gasp of wonder when she saw her father's home—a picturesque old house set in acres of garden on the slope of a hill.

Behind and beyond were the famed Kent woods, aglow with bursting bud and spring-tide green, while in the glades beneath, massed primroses lifted their fresh, pure blossoms, besides sheets upon sheets of bluebells—indeed, "a bit of Heaven up-springing through the earth!"

Hand in hand, mother and daughter wandered through the rooms of the beautiful home—a home no longer empty! Dawn was bidden to choose the room she liked best for her own. It was at the corner of the house—looking north and west across the wide river-valley, where lay one of the most picturesque Kentish villages clustered round the hoary stone church spire.

There were lush water meadows of the little river, and beyond, broad pastures and dense woods sloped steeply upwards to the hill-top, with its crown of beeches.

To Dawn it all seemed at first like a wonderful dream, from which there must be an awakening—an awakening to find herself back in the bungalow beside the Cornish sea, asking herself the one question which had hammered ceaselessly in her brain: "What is my real name?"

Well, at last she knew. She was no longer the deserted, unknown waif of the Iris bed in the garden! She had a home—a father, and a mother who had borne her name before her!

That May-time month had passed to its last day—a month among the flowers of Kent, in a home which was her own.

Snow-blossom was falling in a shower about her, as she swung that morning under the flower-laden pear-tree. It had been a later season, but now the petals were dropping on her dress—her hair—the crimson cushion beneath her head.

Iris was singing softly—what wonder?

"Light after darkness,
Gain after loss,
Strength after weakness,
Crown after cross.
Sweet after bitter,
Hope after fears,
Home after wandering,
Praise after tears.

"Near after distant,
Gleam after gloom,
Love after loneliness,
Life after tomb.
After long agony,
Rapture of bliss,
Right was the pathway,
Leading to this."

Her heart was full of joyous song to-day. Suddenly she ceased, and lay back on the cushion looking up at the blossoms above her head, where the sunshine glinted through.

"Yes, God has been good! One thing has fitted in with another. I think it all began that Shrove Tuesday, right outside Paris, when I met Dick Hilder—I didn't even know his name then!"

Iris smiled happily. She had heard Dick's name often enough since she came to Upways!

"What will Dick say?" had been a pretty frequent question during this last wonderful month. There was a fine photo of him in the drawing-room of her home. Dawn had recognised it at once, and wondered—many things!

They had exchanged a few sentences, laughed together over Dick's atrocious blunders with French—then waved to each other while the inexorable sea gradually parted a channel steamer from the shore, and as far as either of them knew, each had passed out of the life of the other—for ever!

Then—well, of course, it was all too wonderful to find that the sweet-faced woman beside Dick on the Boulogne quay was not his mother—but her own!

Dick was merely the son of her father's first cousin, and so to her a first cousin "once removed," or was it twice, or thrice? It muddled her head to try

and think about the relationship—but, after all, what did it matter?

But what did matter—and what brought a shadow of anxiety to Dawn's face, was the fact that the discovery of their long-lost daughter might put him on a rather different footing with her parents.

John and Anne Marchant had taken him into their home and their hearts—treated him as a son. He had been given an important share in business affairs, with the prospect of a partnership in a firm with huge Colonial interests.

Of course, her coming would make no difference to that. But would it be easy for him to receive Dawn on the new footing of the actual daughter of the house, where he had hitherto been an adopted son?

Well, time would prove. Dawn could see that the position might be very difficult for him, indeed for them both.

As a matter of fact, the question, "What will Dick say?" had cropped up that morning at the breakfast table. Dick had been to India on the firm's business, and was expected home overland at any time. He had been travelling from place to place, and though John Marchant's firm had, of necessity, kept in touch with him by cable, there would have been no time to send him a long letter explaining the joyful happenings of that wonderful May Day.

"Better let him come home, and we can tell him then," Mrs. Marchant had declared. "Dick was standing beside me when I first saw Dawn on the cross-channel boat, and I recognised her likeness to myself as a girl, and took her to my heart straight away! A mother's instinct rarely errs. Somehow I knew that face in the crowd belonged to my long-lost Dawn! As for Dick——!"

Mrs. Marchant's eyes had rested on the radiant face of the girl sitting at her right hand.

"What would Dick say?"

Well, Mrs. Marchant shrewdly wondered if there might not be in future quite another answer to that question! If so, it would answer a good many other questions, too!

Myra Sinclair was still staying on at "Upways." She had prolonged her visit in order to capture for her canvas some of the beauty of the Kent valleys and hills, when decked with the bridal blossom of the orchards.

To-day it so happened that she had gone to London to buy some special artists' materials she wanted. Mrs. Marchant was busy over some accounts of a women's Meeting she conducted in the village once a week.

So Dawn had betaken herself to the hammock with a book, after tenderly bending down and kissing “Mother.” How doubly sweet and beautiful the name, now that she bestowed it on some one to whom it belonged by right!

But blossom-laden Kent is too beautiful to be shared with any book that was ever written! Dawn found her eyes wandering from the snowy petals that showered about her to the place where the velvet lawn dropped sharply towards the valley, giving a glimpse of the silver threads of the river, the village, and the richly wooded park, that climbed steeply to the beeches on the crest of the opposite hill.

She did not hear a footstep on a narrow path that led up from the valley and through the grounds to the house. It was a short-cut to “Upways” from the village and branch line station.

The path wound round the lawn behind the hammock that swung beneath the tree.

Some one who was coming along that path stopped short at the sight of a figure in the hammock—of course, it could only be one person, he knew that quite well! He would give the mistress of “Upways” a surprise.

His footsteps were noiseless on the velvet lawn. He came forward slowly, and then stopped short in sheer amazement. It was not Mrs. Marchant at all, but a girl—a stranger!

No, not a stranger!

Then came to Dawn that odd and unaccountable consciousness that she was no longer alone. Some one was near, watching her. She turned her head suddenly. Her feet slid to the lawn, and she sprang up forgetting for the moment that though she knew quite well that Dick was expected soon, he had not the least idea he was going to meet her here.

He stood transfixed.

“You!” he said, as if he could not believe the evidence of his eyes. “You—here! Oh, what it means to see you again!”

Dawn’s cheeks crimsoned. Then she recovered her self-possession, and held out her hand.

“I—I am so glad you have come—home!”

He dropped beside her on the lawn, his eyes full of joy—and something more.

“I don’t understand,” he said, with quiet determination. “How is it that you

are here? I can't believe it is you—that you are 'wealy weal,' as the child said. Are you staying in my home? Why, I don't even know your name. What is it?"

"I think I can answer both of your questions at once. I am Dawn Marchant."

Chapter XX

Dick Asks Another Question

"SAY that again, please!"

Dick sat up suddenly and gazed at the girl as if he could not believe he had heard aright.

"It is true. I am Dawn Marchant—Anne Dawnay Marchant in full."

Dick drew a long breath. He knew—none better—the story of the awful catastrophe which had overtaken John Marchant and his wife in far away Africa, long years before—knew, too, that they had long given up hope that their child would ever be found again.

He feasted his eyes on Dawn's fair face. Could this thing be true? Of course, he remembered now! Mrs. Marchant's agitated clutch on his arm at Boulogne—her eager query as to who was the girl who was smiling at Dick from the crowded deck, as the space between boat and shore widened in tantalizing fashion. He remembered, too, how the woman beside him had declared the girl resembled herself in days gone by. Yes, and he had noticed it was true!

But to find this girl—the one who had so often been in his thoughts, here in his home—actually installed as the daughter of the house——!

"I think," he said, dropping weakly to the grass, "that there is a long story behind all this. I had better hear it!"

"I think you had," smiled Dawn. "But first of all, won't you go indoors first and see—mother?"

How sweet and new the name sounded as she uttered it! But Dick shook his head.

"Not yet . . . not just yet. I want you to tell me the story yourself, right from the beginning."

So Dawn told him—not noticing perhaps that he edged closer to her, while the wonderful story was being told, until, as she sat on the edge of the hammock, looking down upon him, he was lying on the grass close to her feet.

"Marvellous!" he said, when Dawn's low voice, vibrant with deep emotion, ceased at last; "the most wonderful story that I ever heard. Of course,

Cousin John searched all over South Africa. It never occurred to him you had been taken to England!”

“Dawn!”

He stood upright, and she rose to her feet. Perhaps both of them were conscious in that moment of something new—something wholly unexpected and wholly beautiful and strange.

“Dawn! My—my third cousin, is it? Or fourth? No matter! Thank God! oh, thank God, we have met again!”

Then tenderly, reverently, he bent his tall head, and his lips lingered for a moment on her broad, white brow.

“Dawn, yours is a wonderful story! But—this is not the end. Please God, it is only the beginning.”

Dick Hilder was right. The home on the hill near Sevenoaks held no happier hearts than those who had been so strangely reunited. Dawn settled down happily in her surroundings, and Myra Sinclair went back to Cornwall, promising a return visit very soon.

It was her suggestion before she left that to make assurance doubly sure, John Marchant and his wife should try for their own satisfaction to trace the guilty couple who had stolen their child. They were still at a loss to know exactly how the cruel robbery had been carried out. Though Mrs. Marchant had guessed pretty nearly how it happened, there were gaps still to be filled.

Besides, but for the fact that Dawn had grown up so marvellously like her mother in her girlhood, she might never have been traced at all.

So once more inquiries were set afoot. The name Draconfels was unusual. Surely somebody in Rossop would remember a local woman who had gone abroad and married a man of that name?

But inquiries in the northern town drew blank. If the woman had returned to her old home, she might have done so under an assumed name.

It was Dick who suggested a wide-spread advertisement, and, at John Marchant’s request, saw to its insertion in the principal English papers and their “Overseas” Editions, as well as a few selected Colonial and American papers.

“DRACONFELS.—Any one knowing the present address of Jan Draconfels, or his wife Martha, who formerly lived near Rossop, England, will

be rewarded. The girl Dawn is with her parents. No legal action will be taken in the matter.— JOHN MARCHANT, 999 St. Mary Axe, London."

Hundreds of thousands of newspaper readers all over the world must have seen that advertisement. It brought only one reply. But that was the only one that mattered.

Weeks passed, and John Marchant had given up hoping for anything to come of it. Then he found at his office one morning a letter with a South American postmark. It bore neither date nor address. But it was signed—Martha Draconfels.

In it the writer laid bare the story of a woman's wrongs at the hands of a dastardly blackguard. A husband who, as Mrs. Marchant guessed, had forced her by threats and brutality to do his bidding. To escape him, she planned to visit her aged parents—vowing in her secret heart she would never put herself into Jan Draconfels' power again. She had reached Cape Town, when he sent her peremptory orders to wait till the next boat. He was sending down a child for her to take care of on the voyage to England—she would be well paid for passing it off as her own child just to save trouble, and take it to her home until he sent her fresh instructions. Her husband had been discharged just before Dawn was born. She had never seen the child, nor guessed how deep and vindictive was his hate to his English employer. Too terrified to disobey, and never suspecting the truth, Mrs. Draconfels did as he ordered. She grew to love the child on board, and did her best for it. Arriving at her home, she found both her parents very ill, and caring for them as well as Dawn, she had had her hands more than full. A few weeks later her father died.

Then to her dismay Jan Draconfels suddenly turned up—declaring he had followed her home because he was tired of South Africa. One night while she was sitting by her sick mother, he had taken Dawn away with him and gone she knew not where. When he returned next day he declared he had taken the child to its own people—that there was a secret concerning it which its family were most anxious should not be known. Nursing her mother, who died soon after, the woman had seen no advertisements and had no chance of discovering whether or not her husband had spoken the truth. Directly after her mother's funeral, he had hurried her away from the neighbourhood, and they had gone straight to the United States. Here he had gone from bad to worse, and died as the result of a drunken brawl. When dying he had told her of his revenge on John Marchant, and that he had left the stolen child at a good home. That was all she knew. She had feared to try and find out any more, and long years would have made it impossible.

Too ashamed of the name she bore, to bear it herself any longer, she had

reverted to her maiden name, joined an American steamer as stewardess, and had since voyaged to nearly every corner of the world.

“Don’t try to find me. I have told you all I know,” she wrote. “That the advertisement says the child Dawn is safe with her parents again proves that the wrong of long years ago is righted—at last. I thank God for it. I ask Him to forgive me for my weakness in submitting to the will of an evil man. I can only hope he was sorry at the last. Perhaps, if you are happy, and all is well, you can even find it in your heart to forgive the unhappy woman whom you knew as Martha Draconfels.”

There were tears in Dawn’s eyes as she read the letter John Marchant had placed in her hand. Dick Hilder read it, too, leaning over the shoulder of the girl he loved.

Yes, he had loved her ever since that moment when he had first looked into those eyes of deep “true blue.” The moment had come when he meant to tell her so.

Drawing her arm in his, he led Dawn out into the garden, where the sun was setting in all its glory over the beeches on the hill across the valley.

“Dawn! God meant to give us to each other, and He has done it. You know what is in my heart! I want to make you mine—all mine. May I?”

Dawn lifted her face, and those glorious eyes of hers met his. He read his answer there. There was no need of words.

He bent and kissed her lips. Then he folded her to his heart.

“In our joy, we can find it in our hearts to forgive—even those who did such cruel wrong. Yes, it is because God loved that we are forgiven—because Christ died!” whispered Dawn. “For God is Love!”

THE END

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CROWN OCTAVO SIZE

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TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *The Face in the Crowd* by Grace Pettman]