



CHAPTER II.

Roderick Jardine was not, I hope, a worse young fellow than most others of his age, or less soft-hearted.

Yet when he had fairly made good to his good, tearful mother—who, he knew well, would do anything in the world for her except to let him do what he did for himself—this starting once over, he breathed more freely than he had done for many weeks.

His "wild-goose chase" had resolved itself into a deliberate purpose, or as much so as was possible to his nature, and at his age. He had not been to Blackhall—he hardly knew why, except that his mother had thrown a good many impediments in the way of the journey, so that perceiving that she did not like it, he gave it up. But he had a long correspondence with Mr. Black, the old factor there, who knew all the family affairs.

From him Roderick discovered that there had been, half a century back, three branches of Jardines—represented by Silence Jardine, Archibald Jardine, and Henry Jardine, his father. Thence Archibald had suddenly disappeared abroad, taking his little patrimony. After many years he was heard of as a "pateur" in some Swiss canton; no very great change, he having been intended for the Scotch Church; and he was said to be married, with a family. But he had never revived acquaintance with either of his cousins, and what were his present circumstances, whether he were alive or dead, nobody knew.

He had only been able to catch one clew whereby he might find his cousin. Mr. Black, the Blackhall factor, a strong Free Church man, had taken some interest in a similar disruption in the Swiss Church; and in one of the controversial writers therein, a "professor" or "pastor" or both—the good man's ideas on the subject were mighty at Neuchâtel. To this Mr. Reyner Roderick brought a letter of introduction, but, on delivering it, found the family were still at their summer retreat in the Jura Mountains. So he decided to make the best of bad business, and amuse himself till they came back.

He knew the language—that was one comfort—and he was not of the stolid Saxon temperament, which refuses to take in any new ideas, or to see any perfection in things, to which it is unaccustomed. He was a true Celt, impressionable and flexible by nature, ready to love, quick to hate, until the experience of life should teach caution in the one and tolerance in the other. "The world will go hard with you, my boy," his father had sometimes said, half tenderly, half pensively; and Roderick, shaking his black curls, had only laughed, afraid of nothing.

Nor was he discouraged or afraid now. In fact, he rather enjoyed this dropping from the clouds—oh, what soaking clouds!—into the place and new people. Not so very often, after all, for when on Sunday morning he followed the dripping multitude up the steep street which led to the cathedral—now a Protestant church—he found everything so like home that but for the language he could have imagined himself "sitting under" his mother's favorite minister at Richerden. Only when the psalm arose, to a quaint and beautiful tune, and it was a beautiful psalm, too, for he read it out of his neighbor's book, beginning—
"Grand Dieu, non te louons, nous t'ad-
rons. Selonur."

It contrasted favorably with the nasal hymns which so tormented him in Scotland. It was sung not badly, especially by one pure high soprano, a few seats behind, a voice so good that he vainly tried to catch sight of the singer; and in its sweet musical French it seemed to express what he missed so often at home, the sense of cheerfulness in religion. To the last verse—
"Nous louons, O Dieu, d'u'en la grande
bonté."

Tu sent puit nous aider dans notre ad-
versité.

Rendre nos jours heureux et notre ame
contente.

the invisible singer behind gave such

pathos that it went right to his heart.

The young man called often "irreligious" by his mother, because his religion lay very deep down, longed earnestly for those jous heureux, that contente, and would let it, by any means, he could attain to the like—he, all alone, with nobody to help him to be good, hundred ready to allure him to be bad.

It was a small thing, one of those trifling incidents which befall us all—only some of us note them and others do not; but long afterward he remembered it with a strange solemnity, like a person who, believing he was walking in his own way, on his own feet, finds out that hands unseen, unfelt, have been leading him all the while.

Plunging back through the muddy streets—"hômes"—what a ridiculous word—to the dreary hotel, Roderick made up his mind to give one day's more chance to the weather, and to the absent Professeur Reyner, upon whom all his familiars chattered, the gay, animated, enthusiastic, for everybody seemed to know everybody in this innocent little town. If, on the morrow, it did not cease raining, and some token did not come in to his letter and card, Roderick resolved to change his quarters, and try "fresh woods and pastures new"—take, in short, to pleasure instead of duty, and pursue the search after this vague distant cousin no more.

But the next day in rising, behold a change! And such a change!

The mist had entirely lifted off from the lake. Its wide bosom lay, still gray, but motionless and clear in the soft dawn. And beyond, their intense purple sharply distinct against the bright amber of the sky, was the long line of Alps. Through one deep indentation, between the Jungfrau and the Fünfthorn, the sun was slowly rising, dyeing the snows rose-color, and then, as a moment later, the clouds, purpling in a sudden stream of light right across the lake—that golden path of rays, "which always feels like a bridge wherein delived souls might walk—they to us or we to them"—that on earth we see no more.

Roderick, as he gazed, was conscious of the same sensation which had come over him a few days before—that intuition of approaching fate—*à bâs ou baïe*; which by those who have it not is esteemed mere fancy, and supremely ridiculous; and even those who have it need to be rather afraid of it, as a very imaginative person would be less in fear of the ghosts he

fully decorated table, with its dainty china, flowers, and fruit. One missed a little the bright English fire, and the stove gave a certain closeness to the room—a sense of warm darkness, which, however, was not unpleasant; there was a sort of mystery about it, and youth likes mystery. Roderick glanced round him at the party, evidently quite a family party.

It was an odd thing, a very odd thing; but dropping down as it from the clouds upon this little town which a week ago was to him a mere dot on the map, he felt himself quite at home there—a Cambridge man and a man of fortune—more at home than he had ever been in his life. And when re-entering his salons he found a few other guests, scarcely visible in the dim light, and was introduced expressively to a "Mees Somebody from Edinburgh," who responded with painful blushes, in the broadest of Scotch accents, he heartily wished his own country-people were—well, that they were all at home!

"And here, monsieur," continued his host, leading him up to another lady, middle-aged—"here is one of our best friends, though but newly settled near us, who I doubt not will have the pleasure of conversing with you in your own tongue—Monsieur Ardon—Madame—"

Roderick was so amused by the transformation of his own name that he scarcely caught the lady's, but he was too shy still either to correct the mistake or to ask for her other.

"Monsieur Reyner was very polite," said his neighbor, still smiling in French. "But he forgets that it is my daughter who knows English so well; her papa took the greatest pains to teach her. For me—I was always too busy, and too stupid. Besides, with a slight sigh, which directed Roderick's attention from the gentle face to the widow's mourning—though not exactly "weeds"—"my husband loved French best. It was the language of our old town, with whom he could have thrown buns to the bears, the important personages—"rentiers" on their own account; still better, when inquiring his way to Terrasse, and finding the view hopeless, the mountains beginning again "couverts," he had to content himself with admiring the river which flows below it, circling the pretty town like a tender arm. Still just a little dull. Not that Roderick liked his own company on the contrary, he preferred it to that of most people he met—but he had had enough of it lately. 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