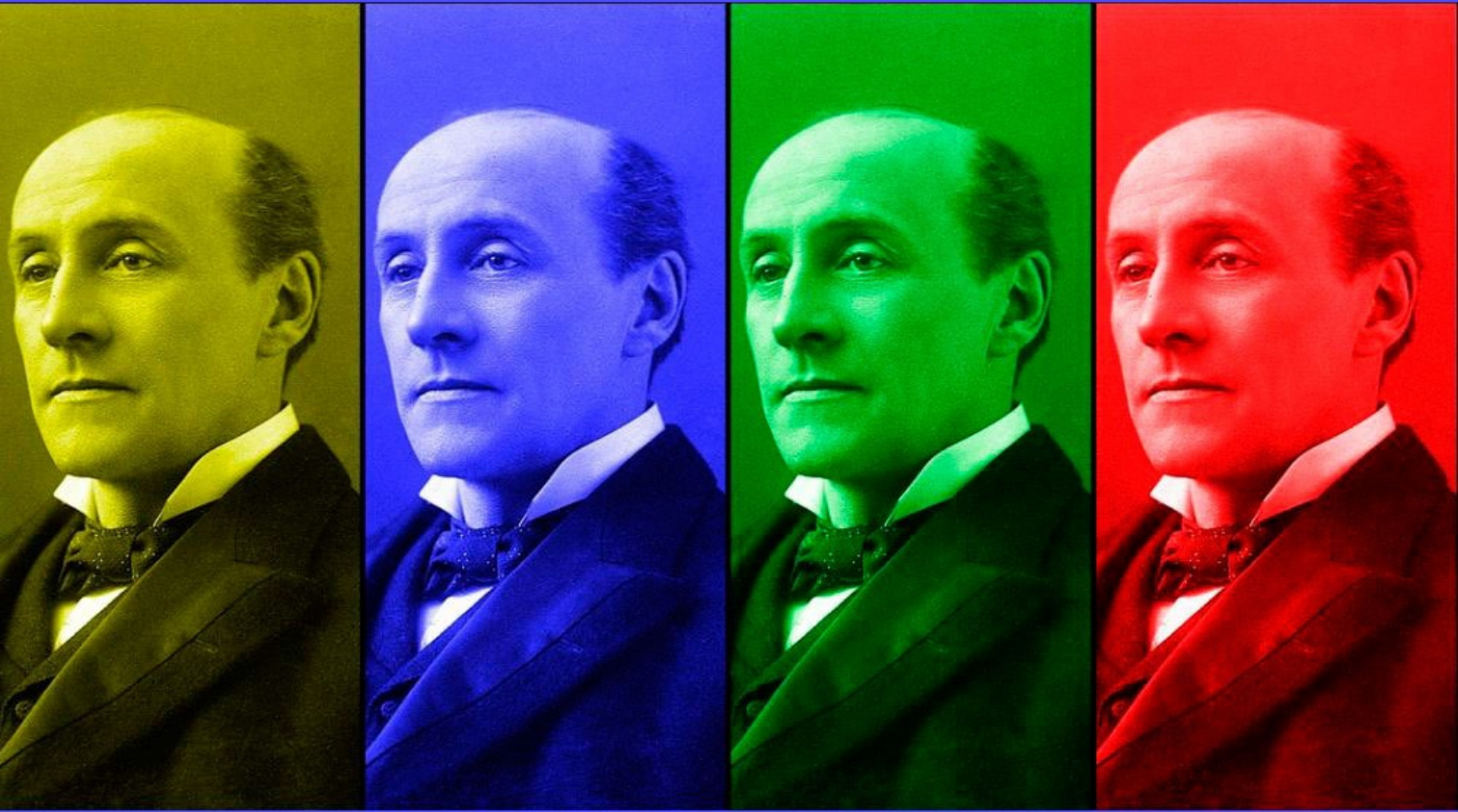


ANTHONY HOPE



PHROSO

BIOGRAPHICALLY ANNOTATED

Phroso

A Romance

Contents:

Anthony Hope – His Life And Work

Phroso

Chapter I - A Long Thing Ending In Poulos

Chapter II - A Conservative Country

Chapter III - The Fever Of Neopalia

Chapter IV - A Raid And A Raider

Chapter V - The Cottage On The Hill

Chapter VI - The Poem Of One-Eyed Alexander

Chapter VII - The Secret Of The Stefanopouloi

Chapter VIII - A Knife At A Rope

Chapter IX - Hats Off To St Tryphon!

Chapter X - The Justice Of The Island

Chapter XI - The Last Card

Chapter XII Law And Order

Chapter XIII - The Smiles Of Mouraki Pasha

Chapter XIV - A Stroke In The Game

Chapter XV - A Strange Escape

Chapter XVI - An Unfinished Letter

Chapter XVII - In The Jaws Of The Trap

Chapter XVIII - The Unknown Friend

Chapter XIX - The Armenian Dog!

Chapter XX - A Public Promise
Chapter XXI - A Word Of Various Meanings
Chapter XXII - One More Run
Chapter XXIII - The Island In A Calm

*Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck
86450 Altenmünster, Loschberg 9
Deutschland*

ISBN: 9783849647971

*www.jazzybee-verlag.de
www.facebook.com/jazzybeeverlag
admin@jazzybee-verlag.de*

Anthony Hope - His Life And Work

By Frederick Taber Cooper

It is a sufficiently pleasant task to undertake to write a brief appreciation of Mr. Anthony Hope. The prevailing urbanity of his manner, the sustained sparkle of his wit, the agreeable expectation that he arouses of something stimulating about to happen, largely disarm criticism. Besides, he does not seem to demand to be taken too

seriously; he is not a preacher or reformer, he is not trying to revolutionize the world; he is too well pleased with men and women as they actually are, to desire to make them something different. In short, he is a suave and charming public entertainer, and like all wise entertainers he alters the character of his program in accordance with the fluctuations of public taste. And being both versatile and farsighted he is usually in the van of each new movement. *The God in the Car*, his story of gigantic land speculations in South Africa, with the Herculean figure whom he chooses to disguise under the name of "Juggernaut," appeared in 1894, thus antedating by five years *The Colossus*, by Morley Roberts. *Phroso*, with its romantic setting among the islands of modern Greece, anticipated by a year Mr. E. F. Benson's analogous attempts, *The Vintage* and *The Capsina*. When the revival of the English historical novel was at its height, he succeeded once more in coming in ahead of his competitors, and *Simon Dale*, which appeared in 1898 and is a study of Restoration manners, with *Nell Gwynn* for its central interest, led the way for *The Orange Girl* by Sir Walter Besant, issued in 1899, and F. Frankfort Moore's *Nell Gwynn, Comedian*, which was not published until 1900.

But although he so cleverly adapts himself to the trend of public taste, Mr. Anthony Hope is not an innovator; he adapts but does not originate. Yet it is no uncommon thing to hear him erroneously praised for having created two new and widely popular types of fiction, the *Zenda* type and that of *The Dolly Dialogues*. Now, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, as we remember at once when we stop to think, is not the first up-to-date sword and buckler story of an imaginary principality; it was preceded, by nearly a decade, by Stevenson's *Prince Otto*; and the only reason that it so often gets the credit of being the forerunner of its class is simply because it was done with a defter, lighter touch, a

more spontaneous inspiration. Similarly, *The Dolly Dialogues* are not the first attempt to imitate in English the sparkle and the piquancy of the Gallic dialogue in the form that "Gyp" and Henri Lavedan have made familiar. Although it is quite likely that at that time Anthony Hope had never even heard of it, *The Story of the Gadsbys* had at least three years the start of *The Dolly Dialogues*, and even though it was done with a heavier hand, it succeeded in getting a greater effectiveness out of the type.

But, after all, statistics of this sort, while interesting to a person of precise and inquiring mind, have little or no bearing upon the sources of enjoyment which a surprisingly large number of people undoubtedly find in Mr. Hope's writings. And there is variety enough among them to suit all tastes. He began in a spirit of blithe and irresponsible romanticism; he has gradually come, in his later years, to look upon life in a rather matter-of-fact way and to picture, by choice, the more serious problems of life in the social world to which he belongs. Yet his novels, even the most ambitious of them, never suggest the ponderousness of a novel-with-a-purpose; he never forgets what is expected from a conscientious entertainer. And one reason why he so uniformly succeeds is that he is an exceedingly good craftsman; he has mastered the sheer mechanics of his art. It is never wise for a novelist, whatever his literary creed may be, to be wantonly scornful of technique. There are just a few erratic geniuses who, because they have in them certain big thoughts that are struggling for utterance and apparently cannot be uttered in the simple usual way, boldly break the established rules and make new ones to suit their needs. To draw an offhand parallel, they are somewhat in the position of a man who, although untrained in public speaking, is listened to indulgently because of the importance of what he has to say. But your public entertainer enjoys no such license; and the lighter and

more irresponsible his theme the more perfect must be his execution. And it is because Mr. Hope possesses that magic touch of the born story teller, that such delightful triflings as *The Dolly Dialogues* and *The Indiscretion of the Duchess* seem to linger in the memory with perennial youth, while many another weightier volume has faded out with the passage of years.

Accordingly, Mr. Hope belongs to that order of novelists about whom it is not only more enjoyable but more profitable to gossip genially than to weigh strictly in the balance. It is so easy to become garrulous over volumes that have worn well and afford many a pleasant hour of relaxation. It would be purposeless to take up serially each one of his many volumes, analyze and pigeonhole it according to its relative value. The better and the franker thing to do is to admit that there are certain volumes by Mr. Hope which gave the present writer genuine pleasure, and certain others that gave him no pleasure at all, and that those falling under the first division are the only ones which it seems worth while to discuss. In his earlier period the mere mention of Anthony Hope conjured up scenes of spirited adventure, reckless daring, gallant heroes combining the good breeding, the patrician ease, the assured manner of the better class of young Englishmen possessing the double advantage of birth and education, who, nevertheless, despite their studied reserve and immaculateness of dress, are plunged by a whim of fate into adventures of extraordinary daring and sublime audacity, adventures that would have taxed the prowess of Dumas's Immortal Three. It is a clever formula, this trick of taking certain types of familiar everyday people straight out of prosaic actuality and compelling them, whether they will or no, to perform romantic deeds against a romantic background. This peculiar combination was certainly a happy thought. It appealed to that latent thirst for

adventure which we almost all possess; it unconsciously flattered the reader with a new sense of daring, a feeling that he too, if thus suddenly and surprisingly transported into Zendaland, might similarly rise to the occasion and achieve great deeds. There is no purpose served by analyzing once again the story of *The Prisoner of Zenda*. It is one of those stories the artificiality of which stands out glaringly the moment one starts to lay its bones bare.

Any story which depends upon the chance resemblance of two human beings, a resemblance so close, so misleading, that even the wife of one of the two is at a loss to distinguish them, takes on, when stated briefly, apart from the glamour of the tale itself, an air of palpable falsity to life. And yet the fact remains that tens of thousands of readers have lost themselves, forgotten time and space, in their utter absorption in the dilemma of the Princess Flavia, who finds in Rudolph Rassendyl all the qualities which might have made it possible for her to love her husband, if only he had been as close a replica of Rassendyl morally as he was physically.

I do not mind admitting that personally I revert more frequently to *The Dolly Dialogues* than to any other volume by Mr. Hope. This is not merely because of the delicate touch and epigrammatic neatness for which they have been so universally praised. Superficially considered they are a series of encounters between a sparkling and fascinating little lady and a sedate and nimble-witted gentleman, whom it is insinuated that the Lady Dolly has jilted. Now, the real fascination about these brilliant exchanges of repartee lies chiefly in the subtle and yet elusive implications that we are always on the point of reading between the lines, and yet never quite get in their entirety. That Mr. Carter has long been a worshiper at the shrine of Lady Dolly, that he has many a time felt a pang of regret that his fortune in life

has made him ineligible, that he considers her husband not half grateful enough to Providence and that his own assumed air of sentimental resignation has in it a little touch of genuine regret, all this we get pretty clearly. And yet, we are well aware, all the time, that Mr. Carter, in spite of an occasional twinge of envy, would not change his condition if he could; that, although he may not be precisely aware of it, he is already confirmed in his bachelor habits; that he likes his freedom from responsibility, his harmless, unprofitable daily routine, his favorite corner in his favorite club, his innocent philandering with various young women, married and unmarried. He may, at times, deceive the Lady Dolly into commiserating him and blaming herself as a thoughtless coquette, but never for very long at a time. The whole thing is a sort of grown-up game of make-believe in which the players get a curious transitory, almost illogical enjoyment in feigning broken hearts and blighted lives. And yet there is just enough truth underlying it all to suggest that Mr. Hope was capable of more serious work than he had yet done. There was, for instance, everywhere a pervading suggestion of the infinite number of contradictory motives and impulses that determine every human action, and the impossibility which every man and woman must admit to themselves of deciding just how much gladness and how much regret is entailed in every least little thing that they do.

Almost without warning Mr. Hope proved that the vague promise of more serious work was well founded, by producing what, I think, the sober judgment of posterity will recognize as his most ambitious and most enduring work, Quisante. Alexander Quisante, from whom the volume takes its name, is not an Englishman either by birth or ancestry. He comes of antecedents almost unknown beyond the fact that they are a mixture of French and

Spanish. With scanty means he comes, an absolute outsider, preparing to lay siege to the political and social world of London. In every way he finds himself handicapped. The foreordained course of education through which the English ruling classes pass as a matter of course and by which their prejudices and points of view are determined, has not been his privilege. In addition to this he lacks that inborn refinement which sometimes makes up for good breeding and social experience. His taste is often exceedingly bad; his manner is alternately too subservient and too arrogant. Of the higher standards of morality he has no perception; he is the typical adventurer, unscrupulous, insincere, monumentally selfish. But, to offset all this, his intellect is quite extraordinary; his brain is an instrument marvelously under control, and he uses it at his pleasure, to bring the lesser intellects about him under his dominion. Above all, he has the gift of eloquence; and when he chooses to give full rein to his rhetorical powers, he can sway his audience at will, and thrill and sweep them with him through the whole gamut of human emotions. Of the men and women whom he meets, fully one-half are antagonized and repelled; the others give him an unquestioning, almost slavish devotion. But he has a personality which cannot leave negative results; it must breed love or hate.

The other character in the book who shares the central interest is Lady May Gaston, a woman who, by birth and training, participates in all those special privileges of rank and caste, all the traditions of her order from which Quisante is shut out. There is another man, one in her own class, who would be glad to make her his wife. He is in all respects the sort of man whom she is expected to marry; and she is not wholly indifferent to him. But she meets Quisante, and, from the first, comes under the spell of his dominant personality. There is much in him from which she

shrinks. His social ineptitude, his faculty for doing the wrong thing, or the right thing at the wrong time, makes her shudder. Although fascinated, she is not blinded. She sees his vulgarities, she questions his sincerity, she even doubts whether he is deserving of her respect. Nevertheless, the spectacular, flamboyant brilliancy of the man dominates her better judgment, and in spite of her relatives' remonstrances, in spite of warnings from a member of Quisante's own family, she marries him, unable to resist the almost hypnotic spell cast over her by this man, who is something of a charlatan and something of a cad. The greater part of the book concerns itself with the story of the married life of this curiously ill-assorted couple; of his success in the public eye; of her gradual disillusionment, which, bitter though it is in its completeness, finds her somewhat apathetic, unable to feel the resentment that she knows she ought, unable to acknowledge that she regrets her choice. This, indeed, is the most interesting aspect of the book, the domination, mentally and morally, of a woman of rare sensitiveness and infinite possibilities by a man with whom companionship inevitably means deterioration.

The next of Mr. Anthony Hope's volumes, which personally appealed to the present writer, is entitled *A Servant of the Public*, and is enjoyable chiefly because of the tantalizing witchery of its heroine. Ora Pinsent is a young actress, who has taken London by storm. She has a husband somewhere, it is said, "whose name does not matter"; indeed, it matters so little that it does not prevent her from letting Ashley Mead make ardent love to her, one Sunday afternoon, though all the while she "preserves wonderfully the air of not being responsible for the thing, of neither accepting nor rejecting, of being quite passive, of having it just happen to her." Thus with a single pen stroke Mr. Hope has set the woman unmistakably before us. Throughout the

book she practices the art of having things just happen to her, the art of dodging responsibility. With Ashley she drifts, dangerously one thinks, at first, until one sees how easily she checks his ardor when she chooses, with a nervous laugh, and a low whispered " Don't, don't make love to me any more now." She talks much solemn nonsense about her duty to the husband whose name does not matter, and about her intention to renounce Ashley, although one realizes that there is really nothing to renounce, nor ever will be. And when the time comes for her company to leave London and start on their American tour, here also she plays the passive role, neither accepting nor rejecting. It is only when the weary months of her absence are over and she comes back as the wife of her leading man, that Ashley begins to see her as she really is; only then that he feels her power over him has ceased; only then that he can say, " I no longer love her, but I wish to God I did! " It is not easy to convey an impression of a woman's charm, when it lies not in what she says, but in the way she says it; not in what she does, but in the way she does it. But this is precisely what Anthony Hope has done triumphantly in his portraiture of Ora Pinsent, Ora, with her upturned face, with its habitual expression of expecting to be kissed, is one of the heroines in contemporary fiction that will not easily be forgotten.

Helena's Path deserves something more than a passing word of commendation, for it is an excellent example of Mr. Hope's deftness in doing a very slight thing extremely well. It has an outward framework of actuality, the atmosphere of present day English country life; yet into this he has infused a certain spirit of old-time chivalry and homage that gives to his whole picture something of the grace and charm of a Watteau landscape. The whole theme of the volume, which is scarcely more than a novelette, concerns itself with a right of way. The hero's estates lie somewhere

on the east coast of England; but between his land and the strip of beach where he and his fathers before him have for generations been in the habit of bathing lies the property which the heroine has recently purchased; and, unaware of any right of way, she closes up the gate through which it is his habit to pass for his daily swim. He writes courteously but firmly, insisting on his right. She answers in the same spirit, emphatically denying it. He refuses to be robbed of his legal rights, even by a pretty woman; she refuses to yield, at a command, what she would have graciously granted to a prayer. As neither side chooses to adopt legal measures, a state of mimic war ensues, in which he continues to invade the enemy's territory, while she continues to barricade and entrench. And all the while, although they have not once met face to face, each is quietly falling in love with the other, so that when finally honorable terms of peace are concluded, it is already a foregone conclusion that the whole dainty little comedy will end with oaths of fealty and bestowal of favors worthy of a knight and a lady of the olden times.

With the passage of years, however, the author of *The Dotty Dialogues* has tended to give us fewer and fewer of these dainty trifles and more and more of his serious and careful social studies. In this class belongs *The Great Miss Driver*, and there is no exaggeration in saying that since the publication of *Quisante* it is easily the biggest, best-rounded, and altogether worthiest book he has written. And yet, the first thing you are apt to think of is that the germ idea of the story goes straight back to *The Dolly Dialogues*; that in a superficial way, yes, and perhaps in a deeper way, too, there is a certain rather absurd similarity between them; just as though the author, having once made a pleasant little comedy out of a certain situation, had ever since been turning over in his mind the possibility of using it in a bigger and more serious way, until eventually he

evolved the present volume. Not that Jennie Driver, heiress to Breysgate Priory, bears any close resemblance to Lady Mickleham beyond the very feminine desire for conquest, any more than the Mr. Austin of the one story is a close relative of Mr. Carter in the other. The resemblance lies in this, that both stories are told in the first person by the man who in his secret heart loves the woman of whom he writes, but knows that because he is poor, because he has the natural instinct of an old bachelor, because, also, she has given her heart elsewhere, he must remain content to look upon her joys and sorrows in the capacity of a friend, and not that of a lover. To this extent *The Great Miss Driver* may be defined as *The Dolly Dialogues* rendered in a different tempo.

Yet, such a definition gives no hint of the strength, the variety, the vital interest of this story. In the character of Jennie Driver Mr. Hope has given us a woman whose ruling passion is to hold sway, to fascinate and bend to her will every one who comes within her sphere. And because of this desire she can never bear to lose the allegiance of any man, no matter how mean and unworthy he has proved himself; and herein lies the source of her life's tragedy. She is not content to be merely the richest woman in the county, to play the part of Lady Bountiful, and build memorials and endow institutions with fabulous sums; she wants also to be a social leader with undisputed right to take precedence over all the other ladies of the community, and this she could do if she married Lord Fillingford, whom she respects, and who badly needs her fortune; but not if she should marry Leonard Octon, big, brusque, rather brutal, who is cut by the whole county, and whom she happens to love. It is a rather unique situation in fiction for a woman to be forced into publicly slighting the one man on earth that she cares for; still more unique for a woman who is pledged to marry one man to be secretly meeting

the other man, and thus atoning for deliberately cutting him whenever they meet in public. And, surely, it was a rather audacious thing for Mr. Hope to attempt to make us feel that in spite of her double-dealing Jennie Driver is a rather big and fine and splendid sort of woman; that she would have kept faith with Fillingford had he been big enough to trust her when appearances were heavily against her; and that in defying convention and scandalizing the little world she lives in by fleeing with Octon to Paris, she is doing the one big, brave, inevitable act. Yet, that is precisely what the author does succeed in making us feel; and when because Fate intervenes and wrecks the last chance of Jennie's happiness through the death of Octon, we not only sympathize with her bitterness toward the narrow-minded social circle that had forced her lover into exile, but we also glory with her in the big, carefully planned and altogether adequate revenge by which she forces the county to pay tardy homage to the name of Octon.

Notwithstanding the statement made at the beginning of this chapter, to the effect that Mr. Anthony Hope does not write problem novels, the volume entitled Mrs. Maxon Protests comes critically near the border-line. Mrs. Maxon is simply one more young woman who has discovered marriage to be something vastly different from what she had imagined; and her difficulty is of the variety which she regards as almost humiliatingly commonplace namely, incompatibility. Her husband happens to be one of those narrow, self-satisfied, dictatorial men, with old-fashioned ideas about women in general and a rooted conviction that a man has a high moral responsibility for his wife's conduct and must mould her in all fashions to his own way of thinking. Mrs. Maxon bears the strain for five years; then she consults a lawyer. She learns that while she cannot get a divorce in England, she can leave her husband and he

cannot force her to come back. At the time of their separation, or to be more accurate, her desertion of him for Maxon refuses to take the matter seriously there is no other man in her life; but in the weeks that follow during which she stays at the country home of some friends with lax ideas of life and a houseful of curious and often irregular people, she suddenly surprises herself by falling in love with a certain Godfrey Ledstone and promptly scandalizes society by eloping with him openly and unashamed. The rest of the book traces, with a clear-sightedness that Mr. Hope has not always shown in his books, the subsequent career of a woman who thinks that by the force of her own example she can bring the whole world over to her way of thinking. He does not spare us any of her disillusionings, her humiliations, her heartache and loneliness. But through it all she is learning, strangely and cruelly learning, much that is exceedingly good for her. She is learning, for instance, that charity and sympathy and understanding are often found where least expected. She is learning, too, that there are many other standards in this world as well as her own and that they are just as reasonable and perhaps nobler. She learns that one of the best men she has ever had the good fortune to meet, loving her, pitying her, utterly disapproving of her, would nevertheless have made her his wife in spite of the scandal that had preceded and followed her divorce but for one reason: he is an army officer, and a woman with a taint upon her name would lower the social tone of his regiment and be in some degree a menace to the moral tone of the younger set. It is a temptation to analyze at some length the separate episodes of this rather unusual book throughout the years while Mrs. Maxon is slowly finding her way out of the quagmire of her own making into a belated peace and happiness. Yet, after all, what the book stands for is so admirably summed up in the concluding paragraph that one cannot do it a greater service than to

close with one brief quotation. It is a satisfaction to find a book written upon this theme which, while recognizing that there is much to be said on both sides, shows neither vindictiveness toward the woman nor a misplaced championship that would exalt her into a martyr.

In the small circle of those with whom she had shared the issues of destiny she had unsettled much; of a certainty she had settled nothing. Things were just as much in solution as ever; the welter was not abated. Man being imperfect, laws must be made. Man being imperfect, laws must be broken or ever new laws will be made. Winnie Maxon had broken a law and asked a question. When thousands do the like, the Giant, after giving the first comers a box on the ear, may at last put his hand to his own and ponderously consider.

Such are the volumes chosen as a matter of personal preference, out of the generous series that Mr. Hope has so industriously turned out, during a score of years. Another reader's choice might be different, and who shall say whether it would not be as well justified? Because, the first duty of a public entertainer is to entertain; and, taking this for a criterion, the most that any one can say of his own knowledge is, such-and-such volumes have entertained me. It is obvious that Mr. Hope's own preference is for his more serious work, that with the passage of years he has grown more willing to allow the books of his romantic period to fade from sight. Yet, by doing this, he challenges a harder competition, a stricter measurement against a host of rivals. There has been no one to give us a second Prisoner of Zenda, excepting Mr. Hope himself, notwithstanding that many another writer has tried his best. But it would be easy to name a dozen contemporary novelists who could give us the annals of another Servant of the People, or chronicle some further Intrusions of Peggy, and one or two who,

perhaps, could do it better. Mr. Hope is not one of the great novelists of his generation; but he is never mediocre, and even in his uninspired moments never dull. His *Prisoner of Zenda* and his *Dolly Dialogues* were both gems of the first water; his *Quisante* certainly suffers nothing by comparison with George Gissing's *Charlatan*, separated from it by barely a year. As a chronicler of English manners he is certainly of rather more importance than Mr. E. F. Benson or Mr. Maarten Maartens, although not in the same class with Galsworthy, Bennett, or W. H. Maxwell. He will be remembered, I think, somewhat as William Black and Marion Crawford are remembered, as having preserved a wholesome optimism, an unshaken belief in human nature, and as having done his part to keep the tone of the modern novel clean and wholesome.

Phroso

Chapter I - A Long Thing Ending In Poulos

‘**QUOT** homines tot sententiæ;’ so many men, so many fancies. My fancy was for an island. Perhaps boyhood’s glamour hung yet round sea-girt rocks, and ‘faery lands forlorn,’ still beckoned me; perhaps I felt that London was too full, the Highlands rather fuller, the Swiss mountains

most insufferably crowded of them all. Money can buy company, and it can buy retirement. The latter service I asked now of the moderate wealth with which my poor cousin Tom's death had endowed me. Everybody was good enough to suppose that I rejoiced at Tom's death, whereas I was particularly sorry for it, and was not consoled even by the prospect of the island. My friends understood this wish for an island as little as they appreciated my feelings about poor Tom. Beatrice was most emphatic in declaring that 'a horrid little island' had no charms for her, and that she would never set foot in it. This declaration was rather annoying, because I had imagined myself, spending my honeymoon with Beatrice on the island; but life is not all honeymoon, and I decided to have the island none the less. Besides I was not to be married for a year. Mrs Kennett Hipgrave had insisted on this delay in order that we might be sure that we knew our own hearts. And as I may say without unfairness that Mrs Hipgrave was to a considerable degree responsible for the engagement—she asserted the fact herself with much pride—I thought that she had a right to some voice in the date of the marriage. Moreover the postponement just gave me the time to go over and settle affairs in the island.

For I had bought it. It cost me seven thousand five hundred and fifty pounds, rather a fancy price but I could not haggle with the old lord—half to be paid to the lord's bankers in London, and the second half to him in Neopalia, when he delivered possession to me. The Turkish Government had sanctioned the sale, and I had agreed to pay a hundred pounds yearly as tribute. This sum I was entitled, in my turn, to levy on the inhabitants.

'In fact, my dear lord,' said old Mason to me when I called on him in Lincoln's Inn Fields, 'the whole affair is settled. I congratulate you on having got just what was your whim. You are over a hundred miles from the nearest land—

Rhodes, you see.' (He laid a map before me.) 'You are off the steamship tracks; the Austrian Lloyds to Alexandria leave you far to the northeast. You are equally remote from any submarine cable; here on the southwest, from Alexandria to Candia, is the nearest. You will have to fetch your letters.'

'I shouldn't think of doing such a thing,' said I indignantly.

'Then you'll only get them once in three months. Neopalía is extremely rugged and picturesque. It is nine miles long and five broad. It grows cotton, wine, oil and a little corn. The people are quite unsophisticated, but very good-hearted.'

'And,' said I, 'there are only three hundred and seventy of them, all told. I really think I shall do very well there.'

'I've no doubt you will. By the way, treat the old gentleman kindly. He's terribly cut up at having to sell. "My dear island," he writes, "is second to my dead son's honour, and to nothing else." His son, you know, Lord Wheatley, was a bad lot, a very bad lot indeed.'

'He left a heap of unpaid debts, didn't he?'

'Yes, gambling debts. He spent his time knocking about Paris and London with his cousin Constantine—by no means an improving companion, if report speaks truly. And your money is to pay the debts, you know.'

'Poor old chap,' said I. I sympathised with him in the loss of his island.

'Here's the house, you see,' said Mason, turning to the map and dismissing the sorrows of the old lord of Neopalía.

‘About the middle of the island, nearly a thousand feet above the sea. I’m afraid it’s a tumble-down old place, and will swallow a lot of money without looking much better for the dose. To put it into repair for the reception of the future Lady Wheatley would cost—’

‘The future Lady Wheatley says she won’t go there on any account,’ I interrupted.

‘But, my very dear lord,’ cried he, aghast, ‘if she won’t—’

‘She won’t, and there’s an end of it, Mr Mason. Well, good day. I’m to have possession in a month?’

‘In a month to the very day—on the 7th of May.’

‘All right; I shall be there to take it.’

Escaping from the legal quarter, I made my way to my sister’s house in Cavendish Square. She had a party, and I was bound to go by brotherly duty. As luck would have it, however, I was rewarded for my virtue (and if that’s not luck in this huddle-muddle world I don’t know what is); the Turkish Ambassador dropped in, and presently James came and took me up to him. My brother-in-law, James Cardew, is always anxious that I should know the right people. The Pasha received me with great kindness.

‘You are the purchaser of Neopalía, aren’t you?’ he asked, after a little conversation. ‘The matter came before me officially.’

‘I’m much obliged,’ said I, ‘for your ready consent to the transfer.’

‘Oh, it’s nothing to us. In fact our tribute, such as it is, will be safer. Well, I’m sure I hope you’ll settle in comfortably.’

‘Oh, I shall be all right. I know the Greeks very well, you see—been there a lot, and, of course, I talk the tongue, because I spent two years hunting antiquities in the Morea and some of the islands.’

The Pasha stroked his beard, as he observed in a calm tone:

‘The last time a Stefanopoulos tried to sell Neopalía, the people killed him, and turned the purchaser—he was a Frenchman, a Baron d’Ezonville—adrift in an open boat, with nothing on but his shirt’.

‘Good heavens! Was that recently?’

‘No; two hundred years ago. But it’s a conservative part of the world, you know.’ And his Excellency smiled.

‘They were described to me as good-hearted folk,’ said I; ‘unsophisticated, of course, but good-hearted.’

‘They think that the island is theirs, you see,’ he explained, ‘and that the lord has no business to sell it. They may be good-hearted, Lord Wheatley, but they are tenacious of their rights.’

‘But they can’t have any rights,’ I expostulated.

‘None at all,’ he assented. ‘But a man is never so tenacious of his rights as when he hasn’t any. However, *autres temps autres mœurs*; I don’t suppose you’ll have any trouble of that kind. Certainly I hope not, my dear lord.’

‘Surely your Government will see to that?’ I suggested.

His Excellency looked at me; then, although by nature a grave man, he gave a low humorous chuckle and regarded me with visible amusement.

‘Oh, of course, you can rely on that, Lord Wheatley,’ said he.

‘That is a diplomatic assurance, your Excellency?’ I ventured to suggest, with a smile.

‘It is unofficial,’ said he, ‘but as binding as if it were official. Our Governor in that district of the empire is a very active man—yes, a decidedly active man.’

The only result of this conversation was that when I was buying my sporting guns in St James’s Street the next day I purchased a couple of pairs of revolvers at the same time. It is well to be on the safe side, and, although I attached little importance to the by-gone outrage of which the Ambassador spoke, I did not suppose that the police service would be very efficient. In fact I thought it prudent to be ready for any trouble that the old-world notions of the Neopilians might occasion. But in my heart I meant to be very popular with them. For I cherished the generous design of paying the whole tribute out of my own pocket, and of disestablishing in Neopalía what seems to be the only institution in no danger of such treatment here—the tax-gatherer. If they understood that intention of mine, they would hardly be so short short-sighted as to set me adrift in my shirt like a second Baron d’Ezonville, or so unjust as to kill poor old Stefanopoulos as they had killed his ancestor. Besides, as I comforted myself by repeating, they were a good-hearted race; unsophisticated, of course, but thoroughly good-hearted.

My cousin, young Denny Swinton, was to dine with me that evening at the Optimum. Denny (a familiar form of Dennis) was the only member of the family who sympathised thoroughly with me about Neopalia. He was wild with interest in the island, and I looked forward to telling him all I had heard about it. I knew he would listen, for he was to go with me and help me to take possession. The boy had almost wept on my neck when I asked him to come; he had just left Woolwich, and was not to join his battalion for six months; he was thus, as he put it, 'at a loose end,' and succeeded in persuading his parents that he ought to learn modern Greek. General Swinton was rather cold about the project; he said that Denny had spent ten years on ancient Greek, and knew nothing about it, and probably would not learn much of the newer sort in three months; but his wife thought it would be a nice trip for Denny. Well, it turned out to be a very nice trip for Denny; but if Mrs Swinton had known—however, if it comes to that, I might just as well exclaim, 'If I had known myself!'

Denny had taken a table next but one to the west end of the room, and was drumming his fingers impatiently on the cloth when I entered. He wanted both his dinner and the latest news about Neopalia; so I sat down and made haste to satisfy him in both respects. Travelling with equal steps through the two matters, we had reached the first *entrée* and the fate of the murdered Stefanopoulos (which Denny, for some reason, declared was 'a lark'), when two people came in and sat down at the table beyond ours and next to the wall, where two chairs had been tilted up in token of pre-engagement. The man—for the pair were man and woman—was tall and powerfully built; his complexion was dark, and he had good regular features; he looked also as if he had a bit of a temper somewhere about him. I was conscious of having seen him before, and suddenly recollected that by a curious chance I had run up against

him twice in St James's Street that very day. The lady was handsome; she had an Italian cast of face, and moved with much grace; her manner was rather elaborate, and, when she spoke to the waiter, I detected a pronounced foreign accent. Taken together, they were a remarkable couple and presented a distinguished appearance. I believe I am not a conceited man, but I could not help wondering whether their thoughts paid me a similar compliment. For I certainly detected both of them casting more than one curious glance towards our table; and when the man whispered once to a waiter, I was sure that I formed the subject of his question; perhaps he also remembered our two encounters.

'I wonder if there's any chance of a row!' said Denny in a tone that sounded wistful. 'Going to take anybody with you, Charley?'

'Only Watkins; I must have him; he always knows where everything is; and I've told Hogvardt, my old dragoman, to meet us in Rhodes. He'll talk their own language to the beggars, you know.'

'But he's a German, isn't he?'

'He thinks so,' I answered. 'He's not certain, you know. Anyhow, he chatters Greek like a parrot. He's a pretty good man in a row, too. But there won't be a row, you know.'

'I suppose there won't,' admitted Denny ruefully.

'For my own part,' said I meekly, 'as I'm going for the sake of quiet, I hope there won't.'

In the interest of conversation I had forgotten our neighbours; but now, a lull occurring in Denny's questions and surmises, I heard the lady's voice. She began a

sentence—and began it in Greek! That was a little unexpected; but it was more strange that her companion cut her short, saying very peremptorily, ‘Don’t talk Greek: talk Italian.’ This he said in Italian, and I, though no great hand at that language, understood so much. Now why shouldn’t the lady talk Greek, if Greek were the language that came naturally to her tongue? It would be as good a shield against eavesdroppers as most languages; unless indeed I, who was known to be an amateur of Greece and Greek things, were looked upon as a possible listener. Recollecting the glances which I had detected, recollecting again those chance meetings, I ventured on a covert gaze at the lady. Her handsome face expressed a mixture of anger, alarm, and entreaty. The man was speaking to her now in low urgent tones; he raised his hand once, and brought it down on the table as though to emphasise some declaration—perhaps some promise—which he was making. She regarded him with half-angry distrustful eyes. He seemed to repeat his words and she flung at him in a tone that grew suddenly louder, and in words that I could translate:

‘Enough! I’ll see to that. I shall come too.’

Her heat stirred no answering fire in him. He dropped his emphatic manner, shrugged a tolerant ‘As you will,’ with eloquent shoulders, smiled at her, and, reaching across the table, patted her hand. She held it up before his eyes, and with the other hand pointed at a ring on her finger.

‘Yes, yes, my dearest,’ said he, and he was about to say more, when, glancing round, he caught my gaze retreating in hasty confusion to my plate. I dared not look up again, but I felt his scowl on me. I suppose that I deserved punishment for my eavesdropping.

‘And when can we get off, Charley?’ asked Denny in his clear young voice. My thoughts had wandered from him, and I paused for a moment as a man does when a question takes him unawares. There was silence at the next table also. The fancy seemed absurd, but it occurred to me that there too my answer was being waited for. Well, they could know if they liked; it was no secret.

‘In a fortnight,’ said I. ‘We’ll travel easily, and get there on the 7th of next month;—that’s the day on which I’m entitled to take over my kingdom. We shall go to Rhodes. Hogvardt will have got me a little yacht, and then—good-bye to all this!’ And a great longing for solitude and a natural life came over me as I looked round on the gilded cornices, the gilded mirrors, the gilded flower-vases, and the highly-gilded company of the Optimum.

I was roused from my pleasant dreams by a high vivacious voice, which I knew very well. Looking up, I saw Miss Hipgrave, her mother, and young Bennett Hamlyn standing before me. I disliked young Hamlyn, but he was always very civil to me.

‘Why, how early you two have dined!’ cried Beatrice. ‘You’re at the savoury, aren’t you? We’ve only just come.’

‘Are you going to dine?’ I asked, rising. ‘Take this table, we’re just off.’

‘Well, we may as well, mayn’t we?’ said my *fiancée*. ‘Sorry you’re going, though. Oh, yes, we’re going to dine with Mr Bennett Hamlyn. That’s what you’re for, isn’t it, Mr Hamlyn? Why, he’s not listening!’

He was not, strange to say, listening, although as a rule he listened to Beatrice with infinite attention and the most

deferential of smiles. But just now he was engaged in returning a bow which our neighbour at the next table had bestowed on him. The lady there had risen already and was making for the door. The man lingered and looked at Hamlyn, seeming inclined to back up his bow with a few words of greeting. Hamlyn's air was not, however, encouraging, and the stranger contented himself with a nod and a careless 'How are you?' and, with that, followed his companion. Hamlyn turned round, conscious that he had neglected Beatrice's remark and full of penitence for his momentary rudeness.

'I beg your pardon?' said he, with an apologetic smile.

'Oh,' answered she, 'I was only saying that men like you were invented to give dinners; you're a sort of automatic feeding-machine. You ought to stand open all day. Really I often miss you at lunch time.'

'My dear Beatrice!' said Mrs Kennett Hipgrave, with that peculiar lift of her brows which meant, 'How naughty the dear child is—oh, but how clever!'

'It's all right,' said Hamlyn meekly. 'I'm awfully happy to give you a dinner anyhow, Miss Beatrice.'

Now I had nothing to say on this subject, but I thought I would just make this remark:

'Miss Hipgrave,' said I, 'is very fond of a dinner.'

Beatrice laughed. She understood my little correction.

'He doesn't know any better, do you?' said she pleasantly to Hamlyn. 'We shall civilise him in time, though; then I

believe he'll be nicer than you, Charley, I really do. You're —'

'I shall be uncivilised by then,' said I.

'Oh, that wretched island!' cried Beatrice. 'You're really going?'

'Most undoubtedly. By the way, Hamlyn, who's your friend?'

Surely this was an innocent enough question, but little Hamlyn went red from the edge of his clipped whisker on the right to the edge of his mathematically equal whisker on the left.

'Friend!' said he in an angry tone; 'he's not a friend of mine. I only met him on the Riviera.'

'That,' I admitted, 'does not, happily, in itself constitute a friendship.'

'And he won a hundred louis of me in the train between Cannes and Monte Carlo.'

'Not bad going that,' observed Denny in an approving tone.

'Is he then *un grec*?' asked Mrs Hipgrave, who loves a scrap of French.

'In both senses, I believe,' answered Hamlyn viciously.

'And what's his name?' said I.

'Really I don't recollect,' said Hamlyn rather petulantly.

‘It doesn’t matter,’ observed Beatrice, attacking her oysters which had now made their appearance.

‘My dear Beatrice,’ I remonstrated, ‘you’re the most charming creature in the world, but not the only one. You mean that it doesn’t matter to you.’

‘Oh, don’t be tiresome. It doesn’t matter to you either, you know. Do go away and leave me to dine in peace.’

‘Half a minute!’ said Hamlyn. ‘I thought I’d got it just now, but it’s gone again. Look here, though, I believe it’s one of those long things that end in *poulos*.’

‘Oh, it ends in *poulos*, does it?’ said I in a meditative tone.

‘My dear Charley,’ said Beatrice, ‘I shall end in Bedlam if you’re so very tedious. What in the world I shall do when I’m married, I don’t know.’

‘My dearest!’ said Mrs Hipgrave, and a stage direction might add, *Business with brows as before*.

‘*Poulos*,’ I repeated thoughtfully.

‘Could it be Constantinopoulos?’ asked Hamlyn, with a nervous deference to my Hellenic learning.

‘It might conceivably,’ I hazarded, ‘be Constantine Stefanopoulos.’

‘Then,’ said Hamlyn, ‘I shouldn’t wonder if it was. Anyhow, the less you see of him, Wheatley, the better. Take my word for that.’

‘But,’ I objected—and I must admit that I have a habit of assuming that everybody follows my train of thought—‘it’s such a small place, that, if he goes, I shall be almost bound to meet him.’

‘What’s such a small place?’ cried Beatrice with emphasised despair.

‘Why, Neopalia, of course,’ said I.

‘Why should anybody, except you, be so insane as to go there?’ she asked.

‘If he’s the man I think, he comes from there,’ I explained, as I rose for the last time; for I had been getting up to go and sitting down again several times.

‘Then he’ll think twice before he goes back,’ pronounced Beatrice decisively; she was irreconcilable about my poor island.

Denny and I walked off together; as we went he observed:

‘I suppose that chap’s got no end of money?’

‘Stefan——?’ I began.

‘No, no. Hang it, you’re as bad as Miss Hipgrave says. I mean Bennett Hamlyn.’

‘Oh, yes, absolutely no end to it, I believe.’

Denny looked sagacious.

‘He’s very free with his dinners,’ he observed.