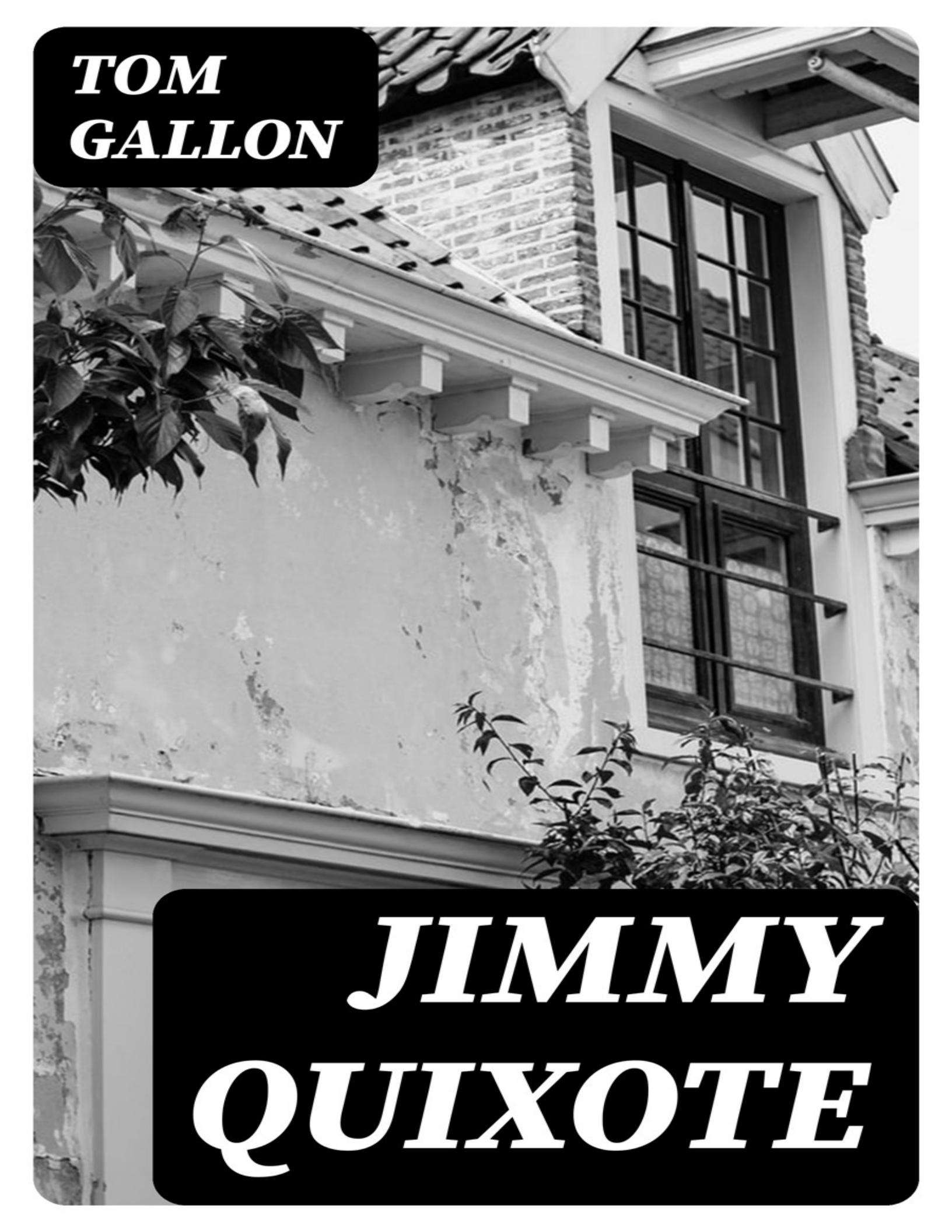


A black and white photograph of a building's exterior. The wall is made of brick on the upper part and has peeling plaster on the lower part. A window with a dark frame and multiple panes is visible on the right. A white gutter runs along the roofline. Some foliage is visible on the left and bottom right.

***TOM
GALLON***

***JIMMY
QUIXOTE***

Tom Gallon

Jimmy Quixote

A Novel

EAN 8596547218432

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CHAPTER I

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OLD PAUL'S BABIES

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"Old Paul" struggled back out of the big, roaring, bustling world one day in late July, and was rather glad to leave it behind him. Old Paul had been jostled and hurried and flurried and stared at in London; had drifted aimlessly into the wrong departments in shops, and had nearly bought the wrong things, and had more than once lost his way. For, indeed, it was a far cry to the days when Old Paul had known London well, and it had known him. And when it is remembered that he was clad in somewhat shabby country clothing, and that he went into the biggest shops, and with a total disregard for money bought the most extraordinary things, and insisted on carrying the greater number away with him, there is small wonder that he was stared at. Now, at the end of a hot and bustling day, he got out at the little local station at Daisley Cross, drew a deep breath of fresher, purer air, and smiled to think that he was near home.

A sympathetic porter, who had known him for some years, helped him to adjust the little cascade of parcels that tumbled out with Old Paul on to the platform; remarked that he was "main glad" to see Old Paul again—quite as though that gentleman had been absent for a few years, instead of merely for the length of a summer day. In the simplest fashion Old Paul borrowed some string from the porter, and contrived an ingenious arrangement of slings about his

broad shoulders wherewith to support certain refractory parcels; and, finally, something after the manner of a very hot and perspiring summer Father Christmas, started off for home.

The summer twilight was all about him as he breasted the hill at the end of the village, and came out on to the long sweep of road that led down into the valley; and so faced a prospect that had been homely and familiar to him for some years—and faced it with simple gratitude. On such a day as this, Old Paul always went back to that London he had known so many years before with misgivings, and always returned from it with an uplifting of his heart; and yet Old Paul turned to-night a face towards the twilight that was young and unlined. True, it may have been lined with unaccustomed wrinkles of perplexity in London that day; but all those lines were smoothed away now as he went on through the gathering dusk, tramping steadily, with the step of a man used to country roads and broad uplands. As he walked he pushed back the soft hat he wore, displaying a rather high forehead, and light brown hair growing a little thin; and he smiled to himself as at some problem that was exercising his mind—yet not exercising it in any troublesome way.

"I hope there's nothing I've forgotten," he muttered, glancing about him at the parcels which formed a sort of bulwark round his tall figure. "If I hadn't lost the paper when that very agreeable young woman was advising me about the length of Moira's frock, I should feel more certain in my own mind. I tried hard to remember most things—and I don't want another journey. The curtains for the study are hardly

dark enough; but then the man said they were a pleasing pattern. And, after all, I was most careful to tell him what they were wanted for. Well, we must hope for the best."

Twenty yards further on he stopped, and took off his hat, and dashed it quite unexpectedly and yet with no real violence to the ground. "Jimmy's boots!" he cried, and had turned and made off towards the station again before he realised that there was no possibility of getting to London again that night. Then, as he turned in the road and dusted his hat, a pleased smile gradually stole over his face; he tapped one of the parcels that hung from his arm.

"Of course—how very foolish of me!" he whispered. "But I'll own it gave me a turn for the moment; I could scarcely have faced Jimmy without his boots. How perfectly absurd! I stopped the cab and went back at the very last moment. Heigho! what a day it's been!"

So much of a day had it been out of the ordinary course of a quiet life, that Old Paul surreptitiously touched certain of the parcels as he strode along, and evidently mentally counted them more than once; shook his head doubtfully at the recollection of the lost list. Nevertheless, by the time he came to a low gate in an old wall the last doubt seemed to have cleared from his mind, and he went in with a smile on his face. Dark though it was by this time, he took his way unerringly by a path through what appeared to be a rambling old garden, and came to a rambling old house; lifted the simple latch of a door, and went into a little square hall; and was at home.

The scraping of a chair was heard instantly near at hand, and another door opened, and an old woman appeared,

looking out at him. He nodded and smiled at her cordially, yet with something of the abashed demeanour of a schoolboy who has returned home later than he should have done; there was an apologetic air about him as he slid the strings from his shoulders, and lowered the many parcels to the floor.

"I'm a little late, Patience," he said; "but that was the fault of the train. I don't think you'll find, Patience, that anything has been forgotten," he went on, evidently still mentally calculating the parcels. "I've been most careful. And the babies?"

"All of them up, if you please, and not so much as a show of bed about 'em," exclaimed the old woman, with a little resentful toss of her head. "I don't know what the world's comin' to," she went on, while she stooped over the parcels, and prodded one or two of them with a sharp forefinger. "Wasn't allowed in my young days—nor yours either, Master Paul."

"Ah—I'm glad they're up," said Old Paul, with a smile. "I've been looking forward to seeing them all the way home—counting the miles, as you might say. I can talk to them while I have my supper. I'm hungry, Patience—with a great and mighty hunger."

"Supper's nearly spoilt," she snapped. "I'm not sure that you deserve that I should have gone out of my way to make anything special—and then see it spoiling itself on my very hands. And why you're standin' about there, when by this time you might have been half through it, beats me," she added.

"I'll come at once, Patience—if you'll tell the babies," he said. "We can count the parcels afterwards."

He was moving across to a further door, when it was opened, and a man advanced towards him. A man much older than himself, clad in rusty black, and with a curious peevish, forlorn cast of countenance. A man with nervous trembling hands that fluttered over each other and about his lips, and even over his straggling hair. A man who came forward expectantly, with eyes only for the many parcels.

"My tobacco, Paul—you haven't forgotten my tobacco?" he asked, in a strange subdued voice.

"No; that was one of the things I made sure of first of all," replied Old Paul, in his cordial voice. "I'm sorry to be late, Anthony," he added apologetically, as he dropped on one knee and began searching among the parcels. "Now, did I make them put it up with the stockings—or did I——"

But Patience had a word to say. She stooped suddenly, and swept the parcels out of his hands; pointed with peremptory finger to the further door. "Tobacco can wait—though he *has* been growling about it all day—supper can't," she exclaimed. "And as to the selfishness of some folk—the least said about it the better."

Old Paul was moving towards the door of the dining-room; he stopped to look back, and to shake a protesting head at the woman. "Not selfishness, Patience," he said. "I wouldn't call it selfishness exactly. A woman doesn't always understand what tobacco means to a man. I think you'll find it with the stockings, Anthony," he added.

He passed into the room from which the other man had come, and saw set out there his supper. The old woman was

hard upon his heels; she fluttered about him nervously and anxiously, even while she still scolded at the thought of the spoilt meal. She thrust his chair forward, and watched him while he sat down leisurely and removed the cover from the dish; heaved a little quick sigh of satisfaction in response to his boyish sniff of delight. Indeed, as she stood near, after seeing that he had all he wanted, she made a little quick movement of the hands—almost a movement of motherly benediction—behind him. Then, as she was turning away, he laid down his knife and fork, and looked at her accusingly.

"The babies, Patience," he said. "We've forgotten the babies!"

"They'll need no telling," said the old woman; and, indeed, at that moment they swarmed into the room.

Perhaps in the manner of their coming, and in the style of their reception, might best be shown the dispositions of the three children who came to greet Old Paul. The first was a thin dark-eyed girl of some eight or nine years of age, and with hair that was almost black; she came in with a rush and with hair flying, eager to be first to greet the man; and so was caught in a moment in the embrace of his arm, with her cheek close against his, in silent contentment.

The second was a handsome boy of twelve or thirteen; he came more slowly, but none the less with a smile of greeting for the man, and with a hand outstretched to grasp Old Paul's disengaged hand; he leant shyly against the table, and swung the big hand backwards and forwards in his own while he looked at the man.

"It's been a beastly long day without you, Old Paul," was his greeting.

The third child came in sedately enough. She was very fair and somewhat fragile-looking, with wide open blue eyes and a very perfect child-like mouth. There was a daintiness about her that seemed to be in the very air through which she moved. She came to the other side of the table, and looked across at the man, and smiled.

"Old Paul's brought simply heaps of parcels," she said.

Old Paul laughed as he looked round at them. "Simply heaps and heaps of parcels," he said, giving the girl beside him a sudden squeeze. "I think you'll like your frock, Moira; two inches longer this time, my dear, according to measurements. It was such fun," he went on gleefully, glancing at the door, and lowering his voice. "I lost the list! I don't think I've forgotten anything, but if I have we shall hear of it—shan't we?"

He was like a big over-grown boy when he looked round upon them with that mischievous smile; they seemed thoroughly to understand the danger which threatened him, and to be ready enough to share it. He lowered his voice still more as he went on speaking, heedless of the supper that was cooling before him.

"But, dears, I had the greatest idea!" he whispered. "I found a shop where they sold shawls—the sort of shawls that Patience loves; they're difficult to get nowadays. And I bought one—of the most beautiful colours ever you saw. Someone'll be making love to Patience when they see her in it; it's a dream of a shawl. So that, you see, if I've forgotten anything, I've only got to give her that, and——"

The door opened quickly, and the autocrat of the household came in, in the shape of Patience. Immediately

Old Paul began to eat at a great rate, behaving quite badly, so far as table manners were concerned, in his anxiety to show that he was demolishing the supper; but he spared time between bites for a wink at the boy and at the dark-haired girl beside him. Of the younger, fairer child he seemed a little afraid, as though not quite understanding her. Patience, with a grunt, turned and left the room, colliding as she did so with the old man, who was coming in at the moment. He came in holding out a packet, and his face was a face of grief.

"You've got the medium, Paul—and I always smoke the full-flavoured," he whimpered. "And I've broken it now, so that they won't take it back. You might have remembered, Paul; it's little enough I ask of you, in all conscience."

"Tobacco's tobacco—and one sort's as good as another," flashed out the boy; but Old Paul laid a hand on his arm, and shook his head at him.

"You knew I'd run short, Paul," went on the complaining voice, "and I was so looking forward to it. All day long I've sucked an empty pipe and watched the clock; I couldn't work as usual, on account of missing it." He picked at the tobacco in the broken package, and shook his head despondingly.

"I'm sorry, Anthony—more sorry than I can say," said Old Paul humbly. "Now, if a pipe of mine would soothe you—or do you any good——"

"Much too strong for me," complained the old man. "I suppose I shall have to put up with this for a bit; but it's hard—it's very hard." He grumbled his way out of the room, still looking disdainfully at the big packet of tobacco he held.

Old Paul looked round at the children. "It was the list, dears," he said penitently. "I remember now he did say the full-flavoured, and I put it down; it only shows how careful anybody ought to be—doesn't it?"

He was almost dejected as he went on with his supper, while the children watched him; presently he found voice to ask a question. "What have you been doing all day?"

"Moir and I have been in the woods; we took sandwiches, and tried to think that you'd be coming any minute," said the boy.

"Yes—and Jimmy made me afraid, because he said anything might happen to you in London—and that you might never come back," said the girl of the dark eyes, watching the man wistfully.

"That was only in fun," retorted the boy.

"Never frighten people only in fun," said Old Paul gravely, as he put out a hand to the child as though to comfort her. "And Alice"—he looked across at the child on the other side of the table—"what has Alice been doing?"

There was a curious, subtle difference in his fashion of addressing the younger girl; it was not a want of cordiality, but rather as though he feared to offend her—desired, indeed, to win her good graces. She answered him demurely; her smile was as sweet and as gentle as her voice; but the words were not child-like at all.

"I thought it would be best for me to call and see the Baffalls," she replied.

Old Paul nodded, with a covert glance at the faces of the boy and girl on either side of him. "The little lady!" he murmured in admiration.

"They were very glad to see me, Old Paul," went on the child, "and Mr. Baffall saw me home afterwards." And be it noted that she spoke with no sense of priggishness or superiority, but rather with the air of one to whom the more formal events of life inevitably appealed.

Old Paul rose to his feet; he kept an arm about the slim body of the dark-eyed girl Moira. "Let's see the parcels," he said, with a gay laugh. "Oh—the shops I went into—and the stairs I climbed—and the lifts that rattled me up and down—and the people who wouldn't understand what I wanted!"

He swept them all out into the hall, there to find themselves confronted not only with the parcels, but with Patience, with a stern eye upon the clock.

"Time for bed!" she exclaimed, and the man stopped guiltily, with the children holding to him. In a hesitating nervous fashion, still with that guilty schoolboy aspect, he pleaded for them.

"Special occasion, Patience, you know—and though I wouldn't for the world gainsay anything you cared to suggest—still, if you didn't mind——"

"Ten minutes," said Patience quickly, and disappeared into her own quarters. Thereafter the thing resolved itself into a mere riot of Old Paul and the children and brown paper and string; and new wonders displayed every moment.

For Old Paul had brought home a medley. This had been one of his few excursions to London, carefully prepared for, and long looked forward to; a day on which he procured things for his household that should last for months to come. So much a business did Old Paul make of it, that here

was everything that had been suggested alike to Patience and to his own thoughtful eye for the needs of his people. Boots and stockings, according to sizes; linens and woollens, presently to be prepared by Patience; stout country suits for the boy and frocks for the girls. Even caps and hats had not been forgotten, while, in addition, even curtains and household necessities had been brought.

There was, too, a softer side to the purchases of the day. There was a cricket bat and a new fishing rod for Jimmy; books and toys and dolls for the girls. And, lastly, that shawl of many colours for Patience. He spread it out, with anxious glances at them in hope of their admiration.

"If you'd given her that," said Jimmy, with conviction, "she'd have made it twenty minutes at least!"

"I'm glad you like it," said Old Paul, with a sigh of relief. "There's a great deal of it for the money, and it is certainly bright; more than that, it smooths things with Patience. Not that I would have you think," he went on hurriedly, "that I have anything to say against Patience; but we have to be careful not to hurt her feelings."

At that very moment the woman marched in; she simply stood still in the hall, and looked at the clock. Old Paul stood up, with the shawl held behind him and trailing on the ground, and approached her meekly.

"Oh, Patience, it occurred to me to-day that there might be something——"

"Time's up!" snapped Patience, taking no notice of him.

"Something you would like from—from London. So I took the liberty of bringing you——" He held out the thing sheepishly, without daring to look at her.

She took it, and looked it over with the keen eye of one who knew the value of every thread in it; opened her hard mouth as though to make some caustic remark; and then broke down. Old Paul seemed to understand, and under the pretence of adjusting it about her shoulders, contrived to touch her cheek softly with one hand, and to whisper something in her ear. She forgot about the children and the clock, and hurried away, pulling the shawl about her as she went, as though the gaudy thing might embrace her with a touch of love.

She remembered her duties strongly enough presently, and came back with added bitterness to make up for that temporary weakness, and swept the children off to bed. Old Paul stood at the foot of the stairs, and called out messages to them as they went; then turned with a smile and a sigh into his own room, and started to light a pipe. He stretched his long figure in a chair, and sighed, and leaned back, and seemed to be dreaming about the day.

And then, after a little time, sat up in the attitude of one listening. He laid down the pipe, and kept his eyes fixed upon the door of the room; noted with a little exultant nod that the door was softly opening, and that someone was coming in. It was the dark-eyed girl Moira.

She had thrown a little dressing-gown over her nightdress; the little white, slim feet were bare. Once having peeped into the room, and seen that Old Paul was alone, she crept forward swiftly, and was in his arms in a moment. For this was their sacred hour; this the time when she innocently cheated old Patience, and crept from her bed to come to the man who was all her world. And they were quite

silent over it for a minute or two; sufficient for them that the quiet world held only themselves—this child and the man who loved her.

"My little maid!" he whispered at last. "So you've been in the woods all day—with Jimmy?"

She stirred in his arms, and seemed to nod her head. "But this is better than all the woods," she whispered. "This is the time you belong to me—and only to me."

"Hungry, jealous little maid!" he whispered again. "I'm afraid that big heart of yours aches sometimes for no cause. What will love do to you in the big world, Moira?"

"I don't understand," she whispered, looking at him in perplexity.

"Well that you shouldn't, little maid," was his reply; and he kissed her quickly as he spoke.

He watched her presently as she glided—a white shadow among grey ones—upstairs to her room, and came back to his chair and his pipe with a thoughtful frown upon his face. And in the smoke from his pipe seemed to trace out, in a shadowy fashion, something of who he was, and what he was, and how he came to be Old Paul of that big house at Daisley Cross.

Some years before Old Paul came to be known to the inhabitants of Daisley Cross, a certain Mr. Paul Nannock had been known fairly well in London. He was a tall, shy young man, with a painful habit of blushing, and an utter disbelief in himself and his own powers. Finding that the possession of considerable property smoothed the road of life for him, and rendered it unnecessary that he should put forth those powers, Mr. Paul Nannock drifted easily, and had rather a

good time in a mild way. People spoke of him with a shrug and a laugh; perhaps the chief thing said about him was that very negative one—that there was no harm in him. Perhaps it might have been better expressed by saying that Paul Nannock had never grown up; that he looked out at the world with the wide trusting eyes of a child, fully expecting to warm his hands at the comfortable fire of life, without any fear of getting burnt in the process.

Then, in an unlucky day, Paul discovered that he had a heart; found it beating uncomfortably, and causing him considerable trouble. The dark eyes of a woman had looked into the innocent blue eyes of Paul Nannock; and from that time, as you will not need to be told, the world was a different place—never to be the happy-go-lucky place it had been before. Paul Nannock was in love.

To do the man justice, he had never for a moment believed that there was any hope for him; that this beautiful and gracious girl could stoop from her height to touch him had appeared altogether out of the question. There was only in Paul's mind a deep feeling of gratitude to the kindly fate that had brought her into his life, and had taught him this wondrous lesson of love; he was never to forget that, and it was at all times to be a blessed memory to him. Henceforth all women were to be hallowed in his sight because of her; the world to be a finer place even than he had conceived it.

And then, in a curious way—a blundering, haphazard way that belonged to the man—he had blurted out the truth to her; and had walked that night straight into heaven! For—wonder of wonders never to be accounted for—she had told him that she loved him; and let it be said here that at that

time she did love him, and that there was never any thought in her mind of his money or his position or anything else. He was different from other men; the very earnestness and simplicity of him won her. For three marvellous months he walked with the gods in high places, and entered fully into the highest inheritance possible to man.

And then came the end of it. Paul had proved to be unexciting, in the sense that he was so easily found out; all his virtues were to be seen and known and loved at a glance; and there was no more of him to explore. As the heart of a woman craves for mystery, so here was no mystery to be unfolded; and she grew tired. Another man of richer promise in that respect came suddenly into her life and swept her away; and Paul Nannock walked the grey world alone.

So great and single-hearted had been his love and his purpose, that for the time the thing wrecked him; he wanted to be quit of London—that great place which reminded him always of her—and to get away somewhere to find peace. That brought him to Daisley Cross; and there he took an old rambling house known as Daisley Place; and for years lived there as a hermit. The people of the village grew to be familiar with the sight of the tall, gaunt man, striding silently through the woods and fields, and living all alone, save for that one old servant in the old house. Then one day Daisley Cross woke, and rubbed its eyes, and asked what had happened. For Paul Nannock had been seen walking through the woods with a child—an elfin-like black-eyed thing, the people said—perched high upon his shoulder.

It was her child. The man of possibilities had married her and deserted her; and at the time of her death, when she looked with clearer eyes back on the world she was leaving, she thought of her child, and she thought of the man she had loved and trusted. She sent for him; and, there being but one thing for Paul to do in such a case, he went to her straight; and he came away, when he had closed her eyes for the last time, bringing with him that small, frail replica of herself, to be his for ever after, and to be cherished for her sake. And that was the child Moira.

So far as the other "babies" were concerned, they may be said to have been supplementary, and quite accidental. Whether it came about that the big heart of Old Paul warmed with the advent of the child, or whether, as a laughing neighbour once expressed it, "baby collecting became a hobby with him," it is impossible to say; but certainly the other children dropped into Daisley Place as it were in the most casual fashion, and remained there. Jimmy had been discovered by the merest accident; had been brought to the very door, as it seemed, solely that Paul might befriend him.

Jimmy's parents had been mere acquaintances of Paul Nannock, and they had gone to the other side of the world on the business of life, leaving the boy at school, and leaving funds for him in the hands of a guardian; and it had happened that at the school they had given Paul's name as a reference. The ship in which the young parents sailed foundered, and was lost with all hands; and the time came when the schoolmaster wrote to Paul, having failed to get any satisfactory statement from the guardian, inquiring

what he should do. Paul took up the matter at once, carrying it through on behalf of the child with his usual energy, only to discover that the guardian had used every penny that had been left in his hands for his own purposes. Pressed hard by Paul on account of the boy, the man disappeared, and was, discovered in a mean hovel in Liverpool with a bullet in his brain. And the heart of Paul expanding over the lonely child, Jimmy had come into that curious house at Daisley Cross.

So far as Alice was concerned, her coming had about it a sense of comedy. Whether or not some whisper of Paul's eccentricities had by that time got abroad, it is impossible to say; certain it is that the mother of that prim little maid—known only quite casually in London to Paul—flung a telegram at him one day, and followed it within a few hours, accompanied by the child; expressed the keenest delight and admiration of the place; asserted that Alice was pining for the society of children of something near her own age, and hinted at the possibility of some arrangement being made—much as though Paul kept a species of *crèche*, or boarding establishment.

Finally, on the plea that urgent business called her to Paris for a day or two, and that she could not possibly take the child, and that there were no friends to whom she could be consigned, the lady actually left the girl there; she was to return in four days exactly. At the end of four days she telegraphed that she would be there in a week; wrote on the sixth day; and again, a week later, with profuse apologies and thanks, and the expressed hope that Alice was being a good girl; and was never after heard of. Certainly Paul was

not rigorous in his inquiries, and the child expressed no regret at the absence of her natural guardian; and there the matter ended. So to-night, as Old Paul sat there smoking his pipe, he seemed to see through the years that had grown softly about them all the changes that had come in himself, and the greater changes in his babies; and was well content. Something of that old hunger in his heart had been satisfied; something of the old hopes and dreams that once had blossomed about a woman blossomed now about these children; and that was as it should be. But most of all, they blossomed about Moira—for the sake, not only of the child, but of his dead love.

CHAPTER II

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AND OLD PAUL'S FRIENDS

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If any man in this commonplace, humdrum world of ours elects to live on other than humdrum and commonplace lines, the unexpected must perforce happen to him; for the unexpected is a very will-o'-the-wisp, darting hither and thither, and finding but few people ready to take it seriously. Therefore it was in the very nature of things that the unexpected, which had given to Old Paul three babies that never should have belonged to him, should give him someone else also. And that someone else was a certain Anthony Ditchburn.

We have already met him in a matter of tobacco; and we have seen that he was apparently something of a fixture in that queer house. He had become a fixture there in a curious way—in as curious a way as any of those which had brought the other inhabitants of the house into the care of Paul Nannock.

Vague hints had been dropped from time to time by Anthony Ditchburn as to his antecedents; vague suggestions of a university which had not treated him too well, and which had scoffed at certain scientific departures of his; there was here a talk of the shaking of dust from his feet, and a going out into the world. That he was cultured was beyond question; that he knew books better than he knew men was also beyond question; and that he had an absolute

disregard for anything and everything in the world save his own comfort was the most pregnant fact of all. And he had come to Daisley Place in this wise.

There had come a night, some years before, of heavy rain—a night when, to use a local phrase, "it wasn't fit for a dog to be out in." And on that night, while Old Paul sat musing over his fire, there had come a knock at the outer door—a surprising thing enough, in that out-of-the-way place and at that hour. Old Paul, a little startled, had gone to the door and had opened it, there to be confronted with Anthony Ditchburn, whose name he did not know, and whom he had never seen in his life before. The man being wet through, however, there seemed no great harm in his coming into the place and drying himself; and, in the process of the drying, his tongue being loosened with certain generous liquids, he displayed something of his culture; to the delight of Old Paul, with whom cultured people were rare in those days. They had talked far into the night, until it became the obvious thing for Old Paul to offer his guest a bed; and the offer had been graciously accepted. In the morning the necessary offer of breakfast was accepted in like fashion, and then Ditchburn stayed to lunch. To cut the mere chronicle of beds and meals short, let it be said at once that from that time he remained; for Old Paul had not the courage to turn him out, and felt that a hint on such a matter would have been a thing of gross discourtesy. Nor did he inquire anything beyond the name of his guest.

From time to time a certain great work on which Anthony Ditchburn was supposed to be engaged was referred to;

once, indeed, Paul was allowed to enter the room that had been assigned to the elder man, and to see a great mass of notes and memoranda; he had gazed at it with his hands on his hips, and his head on one side, and had felt rather proud that such a man should have condescended to come under his roof. Thereafter, when Anthony Ditchburn deplored the fact that certain books which were absolutely necessary to the completion of the great work could not be obtained, for lack of the necessary money, Old Paul suggested a simple matter of banking, with himself as the banker; and Anthony Ditchburn condescended to accept the suggestion, and declared that the monumental work should be dedicated to his benefactor.

Anthony Ditchburn had no money, and apparently no friends other than Paul. Occasionally it became necessary that his wardrobe should be replenished, and this was done at Paul's expense. Tobacco was the man's only luxury, outside what could be procured in the house itself; and tobacco was supplied by his host. For the rest, he was a peevish, self-opinionated old man, and a rank impostor. But Paul believed in him, and had a vague idea that he had caught a genius who added lustre to the house.

Anthony Ditchburn had come in out of the storm before the advent of the first of the babies; and the coming of Moira had upset him very completely. The man had been so comfortable; it had been a house of slippers and dressing-gowns—a place of pipes and easy chairs and dreams—the latter always intangible; and the presence of a girl, to whom this queer host of his appeared devoted, threatened disaster. It was a memorable night when Moira had been put

to bed by Patience (with Old Paul hovering about on the landing outside the door of the room, asking if he could do anything, or cook anything), and when, coming down, he had encountered the resentful old man. For Paul had a feeling that all the world rejoiced and sang with him that night, because of the advent of this dark-eyed baby.

Paul had been in a joyous mood; had caught Anthony Ditchburn by the shoulders, and had pushed him into the room, and laughingly suggested a toasting of the baby. Anthony had not objected to the toasting, but he strongly objected to the baby.

"She's mine!" Old Paul had whispered exultantly. "There isn't a soul can claim her, Anthony; she's going to grow up with me, and by God!"—the joyous voice was lowered to seriousness—"she shall have a better childhood and a sweeter womanhood than her mother ever knew."

"You don't know what you're doing," Anthony had snapped. "Boys are bad enough—but a girl! They grow up; they put on airs with their frocks—and silly ways as their skirts grow longer. I know 'em!—and there's trouble brewing for you if you keep the child here. Rank sentiment and moonshine; she'll grow up to laugh at you, and to go out into the world for the first lad that holds up a finger to her. Send her packing in the morning; if you must look after her, find a good, hard boarding school."

"You don't know what you're talking about," Paul had replied with unexpected harshness. "This baby is more to me than anyone else could be, Anthony Ditchburn; with her tiny fingers she writes for me the book of life as I have known it; lisps out to me with her baby-lips all that life has

spelled for me; tells over again, with the sweet eyes of her, a story I have tried to forget, and yet have been glad to remember. The child stays."

"Then it'll be damned uncomfortable!" Ditchburn had exclaimed in a heat.

"If it rests between you and the child, Anthony Ditchburn," Old Paul had said gravely, "there are other places where you can find opportunity for work and for thought." Which showed Anthony Ditchburn that it would be well to be silent.

But if these were his feelings on the arrival of Moira, what must have been his thoughts when Jimmy came into the house—and when Alice followed. The man for a time regarded himself as being in a state of siege; dared not move about the house, lest he might stumble upon some objectionable child. At meal times he grunted and ate in silence, while the merry talk went on at the other end of the table; he smoked many pipes, and determined that in the monumental work he would contrive to introduce a chapter dealing with a Rational Upbringing of Children; a chapter which should throw a new light upon a very much misunderstood subject.

Old Paul was a lover of peace; he would have been glad to bring Anthony Ditchburn to a better understanding of the children—to have welded together those warring elements. Knowing Ditchburn for a man of learning, it had occurred to him, as time went on, that the old man might do something towards the education of Moira and the others. Not that it occurred for a moment to the generous mind of Paul that in that way Anthony Ditchburn might work off a great debt; he

would have blushed at the thought. But to Anthony himself the suggestion savoured of that, and he resented it hotly.

"You are evidently unaware, my dear Nannock," he said, "of the position I once occupied in the world, before I decided, for that world's service, to write my present treatise. Shall I, who have touched the highest in matters of learning, descend to teach babies the alphabet and the rule of three? Shall I, who have been regarded with veneration by men whose names (through their arts of self-advertisement) are known to the world, stoop to teach boys and girls their tables?"

"It occurred to me that you might care to help me in the matter," Paul had suggested humbly. "Of course, I can guess how great your attainments must have been, before you consented to come down here and to bury yourself; but the children want teaching something."

"Very well, then, I will sacrifice myself," Anthony Ditchburn had declared. "I am aware that I am in your hands; it is not for me to be proud in these days; I must bend the knee, I suppose, in return for the food I eat and the bed in which I sleep. It is but another instance of what culture and learning must pass through in this stony world. Not another word, I beg"—this as Old Paul would indignantly have protested—"I will see the children after my third pipe to-morrow morning."

But the experiment was not a success. It was declared afterwards that Anthony Ditchburn, in the intervals of falling asleep and much smoking of pipes, quoted Horace to the silent wondering babies, and even read a scrap or two from the monumental work; but he taught them nothing. Jimmy

drew pictures for their delight on some of the tutor's sacred margins; and they whispered together, what time Anthony Ditchburn slumbered; but Old Paul saw that another arrangement must be made.

The further experiment involved the rector. Old Paul only knew him casually, chiefly because the Rev. Temple Purdue, having been much exercised in his mind over the strange household of Daisley Place, had called, with the view to a better understanding of all the circumstances; and had gone away utterly bewildered, and with no understanding at all. But he, too, was a man of learning, and in a small way, a man of family, for he had a son. It occurred to Old Paul that it might be possible to induce the rector to give lessons to those babies who, from the educational standpoint, were beginning to be troublesome. Therefore he called upon the Rev. Temple Purdue, and broached the matter.

The rector was a small, mild, spectacled man of a frightened aspect; he had been left a widower some two or three years before, and it was his painful duty to pass the modest headstone erected to the memory of the late Mrs. Temple Purdue twice on Sundays, and occasionally on other evenings. In sleepy Daisley Cross he was certainly very much out of his element; may be said, indeed, to have fluttered about among his sturdy, slow flock, like a small timid hen in charge of rather large and heavy ducks. But he was a conscientious little man, with a large leaven of unworked geniality in him.

He had held up hands of protest at the mention of the large sum which Old Paul was prepared to pay for the education of the children; had compromised gratefully on