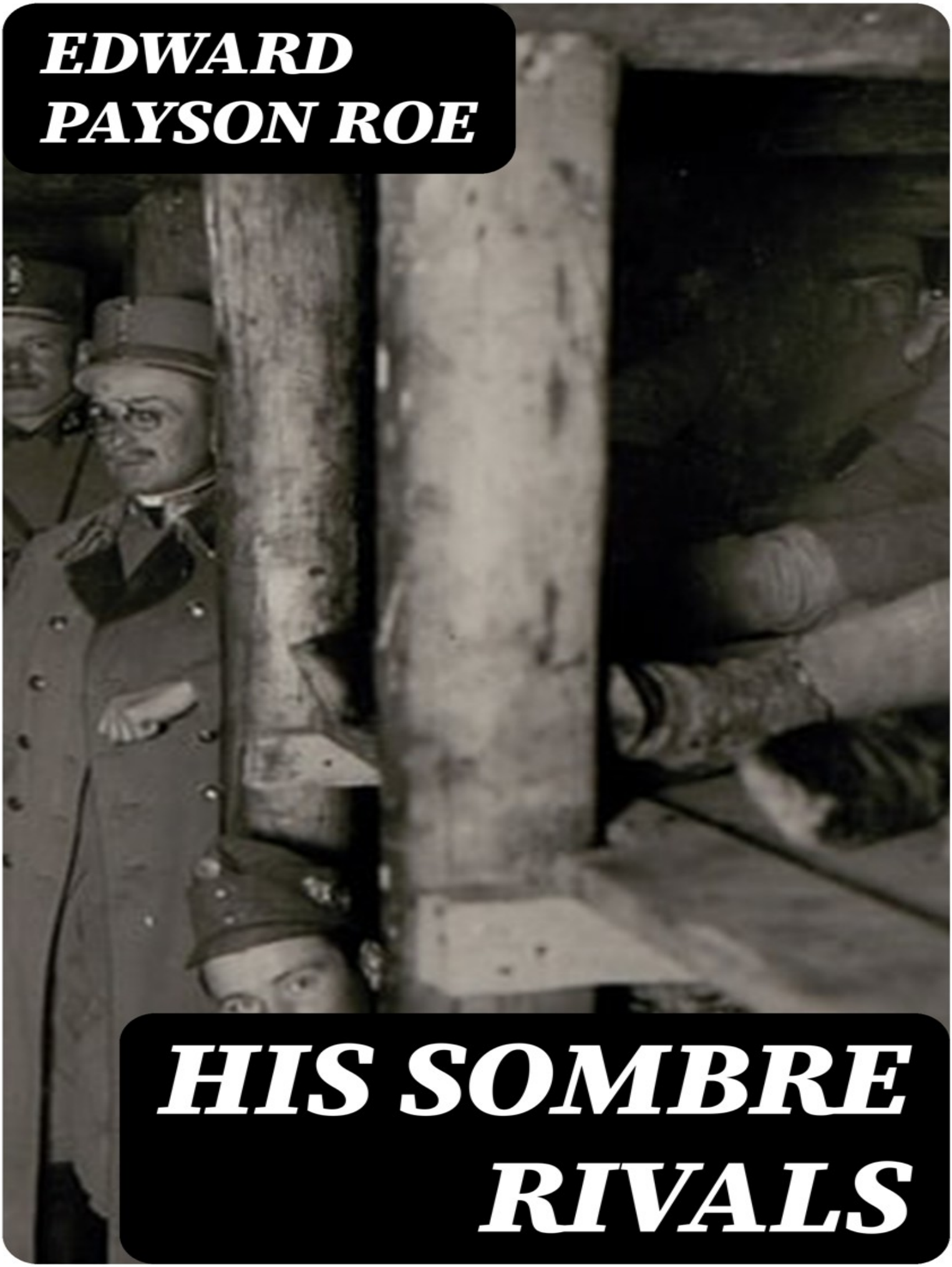
EDWARD PAYSON ROE



HIS SOMBRE RIVALS

Edward Payson Roe

His Sombre Rivals

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PREFACE

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The following story has been taking form in my mind for several years, and at last I have been able to write it out. With a regret akin to sadness, I take my leave, this August day, of people who have become very real to me, whose joys and sorrows I have made my own. Although a Northern man, I think my Southern readers will feel that I have sought to do justice to their motives. At this distance from the late Civil War, it is time that passion and prejudice sank below the horizon, and among the surviving soldiers who were arrayed against each other I think they have practically disappeared. Stern and prolonged conflict taught mutual respect. The men of the Northern armies were convinced, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that they had fought men and Americans—men whose patriotism and devotion to a cause sacred to them was as pure and lofty as their own. It is time that sane men and women should be large-minded enough to recognize that, whatever may have been the original motives of political leaders, the people on both sides were sincere and honest; that around the camp-fires at their hearths and in their places of worship they looked for God's blessing on their efforts with equal freedom from hypocrisy.

I have endeavored to portray the battle of Bull Run as it could appear to a civilian spectator: to give a suggestive picture and not a general description. The following war-scenes are imaginary, and colored by personal reminiscence. I was in the service nearly four years, two of which were spent with the cavalry. Nevertheless, justly distrustful of my knowledge of military affairs, I have submitted my proofs to my friend Colonel H. C. Hasbrouck, Commandant of Cadets at West Point, and therefore have confidence that as mere sketches of battles and skirmishes they are not technically defective.

The title of the story will naturally lead the reader to expect that deep shadows rest upon many of its pages. I know it is scarcely the fashion of the present time to portray men and women who feel very deeply about anything, but there certainly was deep feeling at the time of which I write, as, in truth, there is to-day. The heart of humanity is like the ocean. There are depths to be stirred when the causes are adequate. E. P. R.

CORNWALL-ON-THE-HUDSON, *August* 21, 1883.

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CHAPTER I

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AN EMBODIMENT OF MAY

"Beyond that revolving light lies my home. And yet why should I use such a term when the best I can say is that a continent is my home? Home suggests a loved familiar nook in the great world. There is no such niche for me, nor can I recall any place around which my memory lingers with especial pleasure."

In a gloomy and somewhat bitter mood, Alford Graham thus soliloquized as he paced the deck of an in-coming steamer. In explanation it may be briefly said that he had been orphaned early in life, and that the residences of his guardians had never been made homelike to him. While scarcely more than a child he had been placed at boarding-schools where the system and routine made the youth's life little better than that of a soldier in his barrack. Many boys would have grown hardy, aggressive, callous, and very possibly vicious from being thrown out on the world so early. Young Graham became reticent and to superficial observers shy. Those who cared to observe him closely, however, discovered that it was not diffidence, but indifference toward others that characterized his manner. In the most impressible period of his life he had received instruction, advice and discipline in abundance, but love and sympathy

had been denied. Unconsciously his heart had become chilled, benumbed and overshadowed by his intellect. The actual world gave him little and seemed to promise less, and, as a result not at all unnatural, he became something of a recluse and bookworm even before he had left behind him the years of boyhood.

Both comrades and teachers eventually learned that the retiring and solitary youth was not to be trifled with. He looked his instructor steadily in the eye when he recited, and while his manner was respectful, it was never deferential, nor could he be induced to yield a point, when believing himself in the right, to mere arbitrary assertion; and sometimes he brought confusion to his teacher by quoting in support of his own view some unimpeachable authority.

At the beginning of each school term there were usually rough fellows who thought the quiet boy could be made the subject of practical jokes and petty annoyances without much danger of retaliation. Graham would usually remain patient up to a certain point, and then, in dismay and astonishment, the offender would suddenly find himself receiving a punishment which he seemed powerless to resist. Blows would fall like hail, or if the combatants closed in the struggle, the aggressor appeared to find in Graham's slight form sinew and fury only. It seemed as if the lad's spirit broke forth in such a flame of indignation that no one could withstand him. It was also remembered that while he was not noted for prowess on the playground, few could surpass him in the gymnasium, and that he took long solitary rambles. Such of his classmates, therefore, as were

inclined to quarrel with him because of his unpopular ways soon learned that he kept up his muscle with the best of them, and that, when at last roused, his anger struck like lightning from a cloud.

During the latter part of his college course he gradually formed a strong friendship for a young man of a different type, an ardent sunny-natured youth, who proved an antidote to his morbid tendencies. They went abroad together and studied for two years at a German university, and then Warren Hilland, Graham's friend, having inherited large wealth, returned to his home. Graham, left to himself, delved more and more deeply in certain phases of sceptical philosophy. It appeared to him that in the past men had believed almost everything, and that the heavier the drafts made on credulity the more largely had they been honored. The two friends had long since resolved that the actual and the proved should be the base from which they would advance into the unknown, and they discarded with equal indifference unsubstantiated theories of science and what they were pleased to term the illusions of faith. "From the verge of the known explore the unknown," was their motto, and it had been their hope to spend their lives in extending the outposts of accurate knowledge, in some one or two directions, a little beyond the points already reached. Since the scalpel and microscope revealed no soul in the human mechanism they regarded all theories and beliefs concerning a separate spiritual existence as mere assumption. They accepted the materialistic view. To them each generation was a link in an endless chain, and man himself wholly the product of an evolution which had no

relations to a creative mind, for they had no belief in the existence of such a mind. They held that one had only to live wisely and well, and thus transmit the principle of life, not only unvitiated, but strengthened and enlarged. Sins against body and mind were sins against the race, and it was their creed that the stronger, fuller and more nearly complete they made their lives the richer and fuller would be the life that succeeded them. They scouted as utterly unproved and irrational the idea that they could live after death, excepting as the plant lives by adding to the material life and well-being of other plants. But at that time the spring and vigor of youth were in their heart and brain, and it seemed to them a glorious thing to live and do their part in the advancement of the race toward a stage of perfection not dreamed of by the unthinking masses.

Alas for their visions of future achievement! An avalanche of wealth had overwhelmed Hilland. His letters to his friend had grown more and more infrequent, and they contained many traces of the business cares and the distractions inseparable from his possessions and new relations. And now for causes just the reverse Graham also was forsaking his studies. His modest inheritance, invested chiefly in real estate, had so far depreciated that apparently it could not much longer provide for even his frugal life abroad.

"I must give up my chosen career for a life of bread-winning," he had concluded sadly, and he was ready to avail himself of any good opening that offered. Therefore he knew not where his lot would be cast on the broad continent

beyond the revolving light that loomed every moment more distinctly in the west.

A few days later found him at the residence of Mrs. Mayburn, a pretty cottage in a suburb of an eastern city. This lady was his aunt by marriage, and had long been a widow. She had never manifested much interest in her nephew, but since she was his nearest relative he felt that he could not do less than call upon her. To his agreeable surprise he found that time had mellowed her spirit and softened her angularities. After the death of her husband she had developed unusual ability to take care of herself, and had shown little disposition to take care of any one else. Her thrift and economy had greatly enhanced her resources, and her investments had been profitable, while the sense of increasing abundance had had a happy effect on her character. Within the past year she had purchased the dwelling in which she now resided, and to which she welcomed Graham with unexpected warmth. So far from permitting him to make simply a formal call, she insisted on an extended visit, and he, divorced from his studies and therefore feeling his isolation more keenly than ever before, assented.

"My home is accessible," she said, "and from this point you can make inquiries and look around for business opportunities quite as well as from a city hotel."

She was so cordial, so perfectly sincere, that for the first time in his life he felt what it was to have kindred and a place in the world that was not purchased.

He had found his financial affairs in a much better condition than he had expected. Some improvements were

on foot which promised to advance the value of his real estate so largely as to make him independent, and he was much inclined to return to Germany and resume his studies.

"I will rest and vegetate for a time," he concluded. "I will wait till my friend Hilland returns from the West, and then, when the impulse of work takes possession of me again, I will decide upon my course."

He had come over the ocean to meet his fate, and not the faintest shadow of a presentiment of this truth crossed his mind as he looked tranquilly from his aunt's parlor window at the beautiful May sunset. The cherry blossoms were on the wane, and the light puffs of wind brought the white petals down like flurries of snow; the plum-trees looked as if the snow had clung to every branch and spray, and they were as white as they could have been after some breathless, large-flaked December storm; but the great apple-tree that stood well down the path was the crowning product of May. A more exquisite bloom of pink and white against an emerald foil of tender young leaves could not have existed even in Eden, nor could the breath of Eve have been more sweet than the fragrance exhaled. The air was soft with summer-like mildness, and the breeze that fanned Graham's cheek brought no sense of chilliness. The sunset hour, with its spring beauty, the song of innumerable birds, and especially the strains of a wood-thrush, that, like a *prima donna*, trilled her melody, clear, sweet and distinct above the feathered chorus, penetrated his soul with subtle and delicious influences. A vague longing for something he had never known or felt, for something that books had never taught, or experimental science revealed, throbbed in

his heart. He felt that his life was incomplete, and a deeper sense of isolation came over him than he had ever experienced in foreign cities where every face was strange. Unconsciously he was passing under the most subtle and powerful of all spells, that of spring, when the impulse to mate comes not to the birds alone.

It so happened that he was in just the condition to succumb to this influence. His mental tension was relaxed. He had sat down by the wayside of life to rest awhile. He had found that there was no need that he should bestir himself in money-getting, and his mind refused to return immediately to the deep abstractions of science. It pleaded weariness of the world and of the pros and cons of conflicting theories and questions. He admitted the plea and said:—

"My mind *shall* rest, and for a few days, possibly weeks, it shall be passively receptive of just such influences as nature and circumstances chance to bring to it. Who knows but that I may gain a deeper insight into the hidden mysteries than if I were delving among the dusty tomes of a university library? For some reason I feel to-night as if I could look at that radiant, fragrant apple-tree and listen to the lullaby of the birds forever. And yet their songs suggest a thought that awakens an odd pain and dissatisfaction. Each one is singing to his mate. Each one is giving expression to an overflowing fulness and completeness of life; and never before have I felt my life so incomplete and isolated.

"I wish Hilland was here. He is such a true friend that his silence is companionship, and his words never jar discordantly. It seems to me that I miss him more to-night

than I did during the first days after his departure. It's odd that I should. I wonder if the friendship, the love of a woman could be more to me than that of Hilland. What was that paragraph from Emerson that once struck me so forcibly? My aunt is a woman of solid reading; she must have Emerson. Yes, here in her bookcase, meagre only in the number of volumes it contains, is what I want," and he turned the leaves rapidly until his eyes lighted on the following passage:—

"No man ever forgot the visitations of that power to his heart and brain which created all things new; which was the dawn in him of music, poetry, and art; which made the face of nature radiant with purple light, the morning and the night varied enchantments; when a single tone of one voice could make the heart bound, and the most trivial circumstance associated with one form was put in the amber of memory; when he became all eye when one was present, and all memory when one was gone."

"Emerson never learned that at a university, German or otherwise. He writes as if it were a common human experience, and yet I know no more about it than of the sensations of a man who has lost an arm. I suppose losing one's heart is much the same. As long as a man's limbs are intact he is scarcely conscious of them, but when one is gone it troubles him all the time, although it isn't there. Now when Hilland left me I felt guilty at the ease with which I could forget him in the library and laboratory. I did not become all memory. I knew he was my best, my only friend; he is still; but he is not essential to my life. Clearly, according to Emerson, I am as ignorant as a child of one of

the deepest experiences of life, and very probably had better remain so, and yet the hour is playing strange tricks with my fancy."

Thus it may be perceived that Alford Graham was peculiarly open on this deceitful May evening, which promised peace and security, to the impending stroke of fate. Its harbinger first appeared in the form of a white Spitz dog, barking vivaciously under the apple-tree, where a path from a neighboring residence intersected the walk leading from Mrs. Mayburn's cottage to the street. Evidently some one was playing with the little creature, and was pretending to be kept at bay by its belligerent attitude. Suddenly there was a rush and a flutter of white draperies, and the dog retreated toward Graham, barking with still greater excitement. Then the young man saw coming up the path with quick, lithe tread, sudden pauses, and little impetuous dashes at her canine playmate, a being that might have been an emanation from the radiant apple-tree, or, rather, the human embodiment of the blossoming period of the year. Her low wide brow and her neck were snowy white, and no pink petal on the trees above her could surpass the bloom on her cheeks. Her large, dark, lustrous eyes were brimming over with fun, and unconscious of observation, she moved with the natural, unstudied grace of a child.

Graham thought, "No scene of nature is complete without the human element, and now the very genius of the hour and season has appeared;" and he hastily concealed himself behind the curtains, unwilling to lose one glimpse of a picture that made every nerve tingle with pleasure. His first glance had revealed that the fair vision was not a child,

but a tall, graceful girl, who happily had not yet passed beyond the sportive impulses of childhood.

Every moment she came nearer, until at last she stood opposite the window. He could see the blue veins branching across her temples, the quick rise and fall of her bosom, caused by rather violent exertion, the wavy outlines of light brown hair that was gathered in a Greek coil at the back of the shapely head. She had the rare combination of dark eyes and light hair which made the lustre of her eyes all the more striking. He never forgot that moment as she stood panting before him on the gravel walk, her girlhood's grace blending so harmoniously with her budding womanhood. For a moment the thought crossed his mind that under the spell of the spring evening his own fancy had created her, and that if he looked away and turned again he would see nothing but the pink and white blossoms, and hear only the jubilant song of the birds.

The Spitz dog, however, could not possibly have any such unsubstantial origin, and this small Cerberus had now entered the room, and was barking furiously at him as an unrecognized stranger. A moment later his vision under the window stood in the doorway. The sportive girl was transformed at once into a well-bred young woman who remarked quietly, "I beg your pardon. I expected to find Mrs. Mayburn here;" and she departed to search for that lady through the house with a prompt freedom which suggested relations of the most friendly intimacy.

CHAPTER II

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MERE FANCIES

Graham's disposition to make his aunt a visit was not at all chilled by the discovery that she had so fair a neighbor. He was conscious of little more than an impulse to form the acquaintance of one who might give a peculiar charm and piquancy to his May-day vacation, and enrich him with an experience that had been wholly wanting in his secluded and studious life. With a smile he permitted the fancy—for he was in a mood for all sorts of fancies on this evening—that if this girl could teach him to interpret Emerson's words, he would make no crabbed resistance. And yet the remote possibility of such an event gave him a sense of security, and prompted him all the more to yield himself for the first time to whatever impressions a young and pretty woman might be able to make upon him. His very disposition toward experiment and analysis inclined him to experiment with himself. Thus it would seem that even the perfect evening, and the vision that had emerged from under the apple-boughs, could not wholly banish a tendency to give a scientific cast to the mood and fancies of the hour.

His aunt now summoned him to the supper-room, where he was formally introduced to Miss Grace St. John, with whom his first meal under his relative's roof was destined to be taken.

As may naturally be supposed, Graham was not well furnished with small talk, and while he had not the proverbial shyness and awkwardness of the student, he was

somewhat silent because he knew not what to say. The young guest was entirely at her ease, and her familiarity with the hostess enabled her to chat freely and naturally on topics of mutual interest, thus giving Graham time for those observations to which all are inclined when meeting one who has taken a sudden and strong hold upon the attention.

He speedily concluded that she could not be less than nineteen or twenty years of age, and that she was not what he would term a society girl—a type that he had learned to recognize from not a few representatives of his countrywomen whom he had seen abroad, rather than from much personal acquaintance. It should not be understood that he had shunned society altogether, and his position had ever entitled him to enter the best; but the young women whom it had been his fortune to meet had failed to interest him as completely as he had proved himself a bore to them. Their worlds were too widely separated for mutual sympathy; and after brief excursions among the drawing-rooms to which Hilland had usually dragged him, he returned to his books with a deeper satisfaction and content. Would his acquaintance with Miss St. John lead to a like result? He was watching and waiting to see, and she had the advantage—if it was an advantage—of making a good first impression.

Every moment increased this predisposition in her favor. She must have known that she was very attractive, for few girls reach her age without attaining such knowledge; but her observer, and in a certain sense her critic, could not detect the faintest trace of affectation or self-consciousness. Her manner, her words, and even their accent seemed

unstudied, unpracticed, and unmodelled after any received type. Her glance was peculiarly open and direct, and from the first she gave Graham the feeling that she was one who might be trusted absolutely. That she had tact and kindliness also was evidenced by the fact that she did not misunderstand or resent his comparative silence. At first, after learning that he had lived much abroad, her manner toward him had been a little shy and wary, indicating that she may have surmised that his reticence was the result of a certain kind of superiority which travelled men—especially young men—often assume when meeting those whose lives are supposed to have a narrow horizon; but she quickly discovered that Graham had no foreign-bred pre-eminence to parade—that he wanted to talk with her if he could only find some common subject of interest. This she supplied by taking him to ground with which he was perfectly familiar, for she asked him to tell her something about university life in Germany. On such a theme he could converse well, and before long a fire of eager questions proved that he had not only a deeply interested listener but also a very intelligent one.

Mrs. Mayburn smiled complacently, for she had some natural desire that her nephew should make a favorable impression. In regard to Miss St. John she had long ceased to have any misgivings, and the approval that she saw in Graham's eyes was expected as a matter of course. This approval she soon developed into positive admiration by leading her favorite to speak of her own past.

"Grace, you must know, Alford, is the daughter of an army officer, and has seen some odd phases of life at the

various military stations where her father has been on duty."

These words piqued Graham's curiosity at once, and he became the questioner. His own frank effort to entertain was now rewarded, and the young girl, possessing easy and natural powers of description, gave sketches of life at military posts which to Graham had more than the charm of novelty. Unconsciously she was accounting for herself. In the refined yet unconventional society of officers and their wives she had acquired the frank manner so peculiarly her own. But the characteristic which won Graham's interest most strongly was her abounding mirthfulness. It ran through all her words like a golden thread. The instinctive craving of every nature is for that which supplements itself, and Graham found something so genial in Miss St. John's ready smile and laughing eyes, which suggested an over-full fountain of joyousness within, that his heart, chilled and repressed from childhood, began to give signs of its existence, even during the first hour of their acquaintance. It is true, as we have seen, that he was in a very receptive condition, but then a smile, a glance that is like warm sunshine, is never devoid of power.

The long May twilight had faded, and they were still lingering over the supper-table, when a middle-aged colored woman in a flaming red turban appeared in the doorway and said, "Pardon, Mis' Mayburn; I'se a-hopin' you'll 'scuse me. I jes step over to tell Miss Grace dat de major's po'ful oneasy,—'spected you back afo'."

The girl arose with alacrity, saying, "Mr. Graham, you have brought me into danger, and must now extricate me. Papa is an inveterate whist-player, and you have put my

errand here quite out of my mind. I didn't come for the sake of your delicious muffins altogether"—with a nod at her hostess; "our game has been broken up, you know, Mrs. Mayburn, by the departure of Mrs. Weeks and her daughter. You have often played a good hand with us, and papa thought you would come over this evening, and that you, from your better acquaintance with our neighbors, might know of some one who enjoyed the game sufficiently to join us quite often. Mr. Graham, you must be the one I am seeking. A gentleman versed in the lore of two continents certainly understands whist, or, at least, can penetrate its mysteries at a single sitting."

"Suppose I punish the irony of your concluding words," Graham replied, "by saying that I know just enough about the game to be aware how much skill is required to play with such a veteran as your father?"

"If you did you would punish papa also, who is innocent."

"That cannot be thought of, although, in truth, I play but an indifferent game. If you will make amends by teaching me I will try to perpetrate as few blunders as possible."

"Indeed, sir, you forget. You are to make amends for keeping me talking here, forgetful of filial duty, by giving me a chance to teach you. You are to be led meekly in as a trophy by which I am to propitiate my stern parent, who has military ideas of promptness and obedience."

"What if he should place me under arrest?"

"Then Mrs. Mayburn and I will become your jailers, and we shall keep you here until you are one of the most accomplished whist-players in the land."

"If you will promise to stand guard over me some of the time I will submit to any conditions."

"You are already making one condition, and may think of a dozen more. It will be better to parole you with the understanding that you are to put in an appearance at the hour for whist;" and with similar light talk they went down the walk under the apple-boughs, whence in Graham's fancy the fair girl had had her origin. As they passed under the shadow he saw the dusky outline of a rustic seat leaning against the bole of the tree, and he wondered if he should ever induce his present guide through the darkened paths to come there some moonlight evening, and listen to the fancies which her unexpected appearance had occasioned. The possibility of such an event in contrast with its far greater improbability caused him to sigh, and then he smiled broadly at himself in the darkness.

When they had passed a clump of evergreens, a lighted cottage presented itself, and Miss St. John sprang lightly up the steps, pushed open the hall door, and cried through the open entrance to a cosey apartment, "No occasion for hostilities, papa. I have made a capture that gives the promise of whist not only this evening but also for several more to come."

As Graham and Mrs. Mayburn entered, a tall, white-haired man lifted his foot from off a cushion, and rose with some little difficulty, but having gained his feet, his bearing was erect and soldier-like, and his courtesy perfect, although toward Mrs. Mayburn it was tinged with the gallantry of a former generation. Some brief explanations followed, and then Major St. John turned upon Graham the

dark eyes which his daughter had inherited, and which seemed all the more brilliant in contrast with his frosty eyebrows, and said genially, "It is very kind of you to be willing to aid in beguiling an old man's tedium." Turning to his daughter he added a little querulously, "There must be a storm brewing, Grace," and he drew in his breath as if in pain.

"Does your wound trouble you to-night, papa?" she asked gently.

"Yes, just as it always does before a storm."

"It is perfectly clear without," she resumed. "Perhaps the room has become a little cold. The evenings are still damp and chilly;" and she threw two or three billets of wood on the open fire, kindling a blaze that sprang cheerily up the chimney.

The room seemed to be a combination of parlor and library, and it satisfied Graham's ideal of a living apartment. Easy-chairs of various patterns stood here and there and looked as if constructed by the very genius of comfort. A secretary in the corner near a window was open, suggesting absent friends and the pleasure of writing to them amid such agreeable surroundings. Again Graham queried, prompted by the peculiar influences that had gained the mastery on this tranquil but eventful evening, "Will Miss St. John ever sit there penning words straight from her heart to me?"

He was brought back to prose and reality by the major. Mrs. Mayburn had been condoling with him, and he now turned and said, "I hope, my dear sir, that you may never

carry around such a barometer as I am afflicted with. A man with an infirmity grows a little egotistical, if not worse."

"You have much consolation, sir, in remembering how you came by your infirmity," Graham replied. "Men bearing such proofs of service to their country are not plentiful in our money-getting land."

His daughter's laugh rang out musically as she cried, "That was meant to be a fine stroke of diplomacy. Papa, you will now have to pardon a score of blunders."

"I have as yet no proof that any will be made," the major remarked, and in fact Graham had underrated his acquaintance with the game. He was quite equal to his aunt in proficiency, and with Miss St. John for his partner he was on his mettle. He found her skilful indeed, quick, penetrating, and possessed of an excellent memory. They held their own so well that the major's spirits rose hourly. He forgot his wound in the complete absorption of his favorite recreation.

As opportunity occurred Graham could not keep his eyes from wandering here and there about the apartment that had so taken his fancy, especially toward the large, well-filled bookcase and the pictures, which, if not very expensive, had evidently been the choice of a cultivated taste.

They were brought to a consciousness of the flight of time by a clock chiming out the hour of eleven, and the old soldier with a sigh of regret saw Mrs. Mayburn rise. Miss St. John touched a silver bell, and a moment later the same negress who had reminded her of her father's impatience

early in the evening entered with a tray bearing a decanter of wine, glasses, and some wafer-like cakes.

"Have I earned the indulgence of a glance at your books?" Graham asked.

"Yes, indeed," Miss St. John replied; "your martyr-like submission shall be further rewarded by permission to borrow any of them while in town. I doubt, however, if you will find them profound enough for your taste."

"I shall take all point from your irony by asking if you think one can relish nothing but intellectual roast beef. I am enjoying one of your delicate cakes. You must have an excellent cook."

"Papa says he has, in the line of cake and pastry; but then he is partial."

"What! did you make them?"

"Why not?"

"Oh, I'm not objecting. Did my manners permit, I'd empty the plate. Still, I was under the impression that young ladies were not adepts in this sort of thing."

"You have been abroad so long that you may have to revise many of your impressions. Of course retired army officers are naturally in a condition to import *chefs de cuisine*, but then we like to keep up the idea of republican simplicity."

"Could you be so very kind as to induce your father to ask me to make one of your evening quartette as often as possible?"

"The relevancy of that request is striking. Was it suggested by the flavor of the cakes? I sometimes forget to make them."

"Their absence would not prevent my taste from being gratified if you will permit me to come. Here is a marked volume of Emerson's works. May I take it for a day or two?"

She blushed slightly, hesitated perceptibly, and then said, "Yes."

"Alford," broke in his aunt, "you students have the name of being great owls, but for an old woman of my regular habits it's getting late."

"My daughter informs me," the major remarked to Graham in parting, "that we may be able to induce you to take a hand with us quite often. If you should ever become as old and crippled as I am you will know how to appreciate such kindness.'"

"Indeed, sir, Miss St. John must testify that I asked to share your game as a privilege. I can scarcely remember to have passed so pleasant an evening."

"Mrs. Mayburn, do try to keep him in this amiable frame of mind," cried the girl.

"I think I shall need your aid," said that lady, with a smile. "Come,
Alford, it is next to impossible to get you away."

"Papa's unfortunate barometer will prove correct, I fear," said Miss St. John, following them out on the piazza, for a thin scud was already veiling the stars, and there was an ominous moan of the wind.

"To-morrow will be a stormy day," remarked Mrs. Mayburn, who prided herself on her weather wisdom.

"I'm sorry," Miss St. John continued, "for it will spoil our fairy world of blossoms, and I am still more sorry for papa's sake."