

HARRY JOSCELYN.

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BY
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CHAPTER I.

AFTER TEN YEARS.

TEN years is a large slice out of a life; but it slips by, not leaving much trace in a rural country where everything goes quietly, and where Christmas follows after Christmas with scarcely any sign by which one can be identified from another on looking back. We will not say that nothing had happened in the White House to mark the ten years from the time when young Harry Joscelyn disappeared from the Fell country, and it became evident that no one there was likely to hear anything of him more. Various things had happened: one, for instance, was that Joan had married Philip Selby, and was now the mistress of Heatonshaw, and could not easily remember, so strange is the effect of such a change, how she had contented herself in her previous life, or what had been the habits and customs of Joan Joscelyn. More had happened to her in this than in any other ten years of her life; but yet they had glided over very calmly, day following day with such a gentle monotony that it was hard for her to decide how many of them there were, or which was which. She had no child to measure the years by, which was a misfortune, but one which she bore with submission: reflecting to herself that if children are a comfort they are often also a great handful, and that when they are troublesome there is nothing else so troublesome in all the world. Philip Selby himself was less philosophical, and would have ventured gladly upon the risk for the sake of the blessing; but it was not so to be. And thus they had little evidence before them of how the years stole away. But all that he had augured, and Joan had agreed to, about the house, had come true. There were the best of beasts in the byres, and heavy

crops on the arable land, and a phaeton in the coach-house, and horses in the stables such as no man needed to be ashamed of. And with all this, there was a very comfortable couple inside. Joan, on her marriage, had been half ashamed of the fine room, which was called—not according to her old-fashioned formula, the parlour, but—the drawing-room, to which her husband had brought her home, and which had been furnished by one of the best shops in Carlisle, with furniture such as was approved by the taste of the time. There was a white paper on the walls, and a great deal of gilding, and sofas and tables with legs that were crooked and curly. But by the end of ten years much that was somewhat showy once had toned down. The furniture had got more shapely and a little human; the place had worn into the fashion of the people that inhabited it. In summer it was a perfect bower of lilies and roses, the great white shafts of the one rising above the broad branches, heavy with flowers, of the other (for in those days there were no standards), and the whole air sweet with the mingled perfume. Liddy Joscelyn, Mrs. Selby's little sister, thought there was no flower-garden in the world like it; but then she had not been away from home since she was twelve, and had not seen much, and there was nothing like it about the White House.

That, place, too, had changed in these years. Ralph Joscelyn was the one upon whom the change had told most. It was not that he was much altered in personal appearance, nor yet that he had entirely mended and corrected his ways. Perhaps indeed the alteration visible in him was more due to the fact that there was nobody about the place who crossed him, no one who opposed any strenuous opposition to his will, or dissented from his opinions, than any real alteration. But it was a quieter life which the homestead led, subject to much fewer storms than of old; and Mrs.

Joscelyn lived a far less anxious life. The loss of her youngest boy so long ago—though it might not be really the loss of him, since who could tell what day he might re-appear again?—was not a thing, as everyone said, that she could be expected to get over. But the ten years had calmed her, and, what was more, Liddy had calmed her. Lydia had been sent for to her school when her mother was in the depths of this trouble, and she had never been suffered to go back again, her presence being the only consolation which the gentle and unhappy woman was the better for. And after ten years of Liddy's constant company, Mrs. Joscelyn was a very different woman. Joan, who had been so sympathetic with her mother through that last family trouble, without understanding her in the others, understood still less the effect produced by her little sister, who smoothed down everything without any apparent trouble, more by understanding it, so far as appeared, than from anything she did. When Joan's reign terminated, Lydia became the dominant spirit in the house. She was so at fourteen; how much more at twenty! It was not a good thing for the butter and the cheese. The dairy produce of the White House fell off wonderfully. It was no longer half the quantity, and still less was it equal in quality, to the butter of Joan's time. Old Simon never ceased shaking his head over it till his dying day, and went out of human consciousness moaning to himself that "A' things was altered, and no t' half o' t' money coming in." It was he that had always been the salesman, and he felt it deeply. For half of the time or so Joan had done her utmost, driving over in the morning and spending hours endeavouring to indoctrinate her sister with the mysteries of that art; but Liddy only laughed, and kept her pretty white hands by her side, and declared herself incapable. "I don't know what to do with these things," she would say, gazing at the bowls of milk, without the least sense of shame, with even a smile on her face;

and to Joan's consternation her father, coming in when this was said, and himself standing in the doorway, swaying his big figure to and fro, said, "Let her alone, let her alone, Joan. You did it, but she is another kind from you."

"That she is," said Joan. "She's not the profitable kind either, if she let's the dairy take care of itself."

But to this Joscelyn paid no attention; and Mrs. Selby was led to her chaise stupefied, not knowing whether she was asleep or awake, so bewildered was she. The dairy went off, it was no longer celebrated as of yore. The cows decreased in number, for what was the use of keeping them when they brought in so little profit? And by degrees the house changed altogether. Lydia, slim and straight, with her white hands, and feet that scarcely sounded upon the old passage, gradually modified everything. When she was seen in a new riding-habit, and a hat with a feather, going out to ride with her father, the old servants could scarcely contain themselves; and the timid mother, coming out to see her, smoothed the horse's sleek coat with a frightened hand, and did not know how to look at the girl, or her father, who was as proud of Lydia as Mrs. Joscelyn herself could be.

And then the old piano, which nobody had touched for years—for Joan, who had ended her education at fifteen, had never learned any more music than was contained in a first book of exercises—was sent off to an attic, and a new piano was bought for Lydia. Where it came from no one could quite understand, for it was impossible to believe that Joscelyn had drawn his purse-strings to such an extent; but all the same it arrived, and Lydia, sometimes going into Wyburgh, sometimes having her professor out to the White House, had lessons, and practised diligently, and by-and-bye

became in her way a musician, astonishing all the neighbourhood with her powers. A young lady who rode about the country on a handsome horse, and who played the piano, was something altogether new in the place. She might have been much more profoundly instructed without producing half so great an impression. The house altogether rose in the social scale. People came to call who had never been seen near the White House before; and they found the mistress of the house, who had always been genteel, a gentle woman, ladylike and subdued, and her daughter one of the prettiest girls in the county, with a sort of elegance about her which was the inheritance she had received from her mother, strengthened and consolidated by the superior strength which she got from the other side of the house. When Joscelyn himself appeared, which was rarely, his fine form and strength, and the refinement imparted by a crown of white hair, raised him, too, to a sort of pinnacle. People began to say that they found they had done him injustice, and that after all the present representative of the Joscelyns was not unworthy his race. The process was slow, but it was very complete. When Will and Tom appeared with their wives, it was unaccountable how “put out” and “set down” they felt, as if they were going to their landlord’s, where everything was finer than the surroundings they were accustomed to, and not to their father’s, upon whose shabby furniture Mrs. Will and Mrs. Tom had looked with contempt. Even Joan looked round her with a curiosity which was mingled with grievance, scarcely able to restrain the thought that what was good enough for *her*, might certainly have been good enough for Liddy. Liddy it was clear did not think so. And how that little thing knew, or where she had got her instinctive acquaintance with polite ways, Mrs. Selby, who was on the whole proud of Liddy, could not tell; but so it was. The house brightened up generally; here a new carpet, and there a new curtain,

made a change in its dingy aspect. The old furniture was made the most of, and old china, and all the stores of a long established house brought out to embellish the parlours; the very hall and passages were brushed up, the table, and the service at the table, so improved, that Joan too thought she must be dining with some of the great county people, whom the Joscelyns had always thought themselves equal to, but who had not acknowledged the Joscelyns.

“The thing that surprises me is where she learned it all,” Mrs. Selby said; “a bit of a thing that has seen no more than the rest of us; but she has a deal of you in her, mother, far more than any of the rest.”

“Ah, my dear,” said Mrs. Joscelyn, shaking her head, “I never had the courage to settle things my own way. It was not that I didn’t know: I knew very well how things ought to be done.” This little gentle assertion of her gentility Mrs. Joscelyn felt was her due in the new development of affairs. It was not all the discovery of Liddy. She had known well enough all the time. Circumstances had been too much for her; but the refinements of society were her natural atmosphere. Joan looked at her mother with mingled respect and amusement, proud that she was such a lady, yet feeling the joke of her superiority.

“Yes, mother,” she said, “I mind how you and Phil talked the first time he came to the White House. It was as good as a play to hear you. He never let on it was me he wanted, but to have a talk with you, such a superior woman. I did not understand a word you were saying, and I took pains to let him see that the dairy and the stables were what I was most acquainted with; but that didn’t make any difference, you see.”

“You were never one to make the most of yourself, Joan,” said the mother, mildly. “I always knew there was a great deal more in you than you would ever show,” at which Joan laughed; but she was not displeased. And she was proud of her young sister when Liddy came riding over on the last perfection from her father’s stable, looking like a young princess. She was the nearest thing to a child of her own that Joan was ever likely to have, and she forgave her possession of a great many indulgences which no one had thought of conceding to Joan. When it appeared, however, that Lydia had a groom behind her, Mrs. Selby’s soul was stirred within her.

“Now, Liddy,” she said, “I can stand a deal, but you’ll ruin father if you go on like this. A groom behind you! what will you want next? Father’s just infatuated, that is all I can say.”

“It’s only a livery coat,” said Liddy, “that’s all. It doesn’t cost very much. I’ll pay it off my own allowance, and father will never be the worse——”

Here she was interrupted by a shriek from her elder sister. “Your allowance? What next?” she said. “I never had a penny to myself when I was at home, and hard ado to get a bill paid. If it had not been for the butter money, I should never have had a gown to my back.”

“But that would not do for me,” said Lydia, with a toss of her head; and, indeed, to see her here with her airy figure, and her close-fitting habit, and the beautiful bay arching his fine neck in the background, and to suggest any connection with the butter money was a thing which only an elder sister without sentiment or sense of appropriateness could have done. The Duke’s daughter

did not look more unlike any such homely particulars; indeed, the Duke's daughter was not fit, as Joan said, proudly, to herself, to "hold the candle" to little Liddy Joscelyn.

"I don't know what's coming of it," Mrs. Selby said to her husband; "but, Phil, you and me will stand by that child, and see her out of it—will you, goodman?"

"That I will, my dear," Philip Selby said; "but Joscelyn has been doing not badly, and I dare say he can afford to let the little one have her fling. He has none to think of now but Liddy—and there's Uncle Henry's money."

This allusion always made Joan ready to cry, though she was not given to tears. "I would rather burn off my fingers than touch Uncle Henry's money," she said. "It will never be me that will put my hand to it, and give my consent that yon poor lad is not coming home——"

"We must be reasonable, my dear," Philip Selby said, mildly, "and the others will not be so patient. There is one thing you shall do if you like, Joan, and that is give your share to Liddy. It would never be any pleasure to you."

Joan looked at her husband with a startled air. She was more matter of fact than he was, and the idea of giving over actual money to which she had a right, to anyone, was a thing which gave her somewhat of a shock. In their ordinary affairs she had to keep rather a tight hand upon her Phil, who was too easy about his money generally; but this was a complicated case, and puzzled her much.

“Give Liddy my share? You say true it would be little, little pleasure to me; but money is money, and there are some to come after us. It’s fine to be generous, but we must think upon justice. What’s Liddy’s is Liddy’s, and what’s mine is mine.”

It was from no want of kindness that Joan spoke: but she could not help it. It was as natural to close her hand over money, even when she hated it, as it was for others to throw it away.

“You will think better of it,” her husband said.

“Oh! it’s very likely I will think better of it. A woman cannot live with a prodigal like you without getting into ill ways. But I was always brought up to stick to my money; and I’ve you to look after as well. If you had not me to watch over you, you would give away the coat off your back.”

“For all that I’ve always had plenty,” said Selby, “and now more than plenty—with a good wife to take care of it and me.”

“You may say a wife to take care of you,” said Joan, “and how you ever kept a penny in your purse before you got her, is what I cannot tell; though, after all, when a man spends nothing upon himself, it’s easy keeping him going. But I’m one that sticks to my money. Give what you please else, but keep a grip upon your money, that’s always been my way.” Then she added, after a pause: “There will never be any question about that; when he knows it’s all left to him, it stands to reason that he will come back. Joscelyns have more regard to their own interest. They are not easy-going like you.”

“I wish I could think so,” Mr. Selby said.

And so the conversation ended. Uncle Henry had died not very long before, leaving behind him only an old will in which everything was left to Harry. The executors, who were both influential persons in Wyburgh, had advertised for him, or for news of him, but none had come; and the family generally had accepted this as a proof that Harry was dead—the family, all but the mother and Joan, who were both strenuous that nothing should be done, and no division made. Mrs. Joscelyn would have been overruled before now, but Joan was a stronger opponent, and she had the backing of her husband, of whom her brothers stood in a little awe; so that the division and distribution of Uncle Henry's funds had been postponed. But this delay could not last: the elder brothers, who were men with families and in want of money, were certain to push for a settlement. They had no doubt, and not very much feeling, about the younger one who was lost. It had been entirely his own doing. He was a fool to have gone away like that, and compromised himself, and thrown away all his chances; but whatever happened to him in consequence was his own fault. If he had died, or if he was living in some obscure corner far away, were not they equally innocent? They had tried all they could to find him—the trustees were trying now. Old Pilgrim was advertising far and wide. If Harry were dead, or if he were so far away as to be out of reach of this call, it was not their fault; and they wanted no more than their share—but that share, there was no doubt, would be very convenient. Will's sons were growing up, and Tom was taking in more land to his farm. To each of these, as to most people, a little money would have been of the greatest use. And it was all very well for Joan to talk who had neither chick nor child, and was in such easy circumstances; it was well for her to talk whose husband supplied her with everything, and who had no need of money; but they were men and knew better. They knew that men are not such

fools as to stay away from their home as Harry had done. Nobody did such a thing, especially when advertisements were in the papers about them, and “something to their advantage” promised.

“Something to your advantage means money,” said Will. “’Twouldn’t be long I’d skulk away at the end of the world if you were to give me the chance.”

“He’s never skulking away at the end of the world,” said Tom. “If he went off at all, he went to California or thereabouts; and he’d have come home at the first scent of money. Bless you, we know our own breed;” and in this the other brother concurred. But the trustees held fast. They would not consent to any distribution of the money till Harry, if Harry still existed, had every chance of hearing of it. Privately Mr. Pilgrim had no objection to advance to Tom the money he wanted for that addition to his farm. There was solid security, and a feasible reason for borrowing. “There’s but too much reason to think that your poor brother will never turn up again,” the executor allowed; “but we must not go too fast.” Alas! such is the weakness of human nature that the other Joscelyns ere long were not sure that they wished their poor brother to turn up again. The money would be so convenient! When is there a time that money is not convenient? And it could do him no good, poor fellow, if he was in his grave—which at the same time would be his own fault.

Very different, however, from the conclusions of Will and Joan were those which were held at the White House on this subject. Mrs. Joscelyn had never consented to that view. “He may have been led away,” she said; “but do you think my boy would die and me not know? Oh, Liddy, my darling, many a time when you see me in low spirits, and ask me why, and I say it’s nothing, that is

what it is. It is borne in upon me that something is the matter with one of the boys. I've different feelings for each of them. People may laugh that don't understand, but you'll not laugh, my Liddy dear. I never said it to one of the others, but I may say it to you. If it's Ben, or if it's Huntley, I have a kind of a feeling—and as sure as letters come it's found to be true. There is always a something. Now it stands to reason that Harry should be the same, but as he never writes we never can tell. Sometimes I've been quite light-hearted for nothing at all, and I've said to myself, 'That's Harry: something good's happening to him.' Do you think it is natural that if he had *died*—oh, the Lord preserve him!—his mother would not know?"

"It would not be natural at all," said Lydia, confidently; "he would come and stand by your bedside; I don't feel the least doubt of that. But there is one thing I should like, mamma; I should like to go abroad. I feel sure that I should find him. I think that I should find him somewhere not very far away—or else in America: I have quite made up my mind to that."

"You would scarcely know your brother if you saw him," said Mrs. Joscelyn, shaking her head; "You were so little, my pet; and poor Harry must be changed in ten years."

"Oh, I should know him," cried Lydia. She held her pretty head high. She was very sure of most things. "After you are grown up you don't change so much. He might not know me, but I should know him wherever I saw him. Ah, how delightful it would be to bring him back to you!" said Lydia, throwing her arms round her mother. The words and the arms were alike sweet. Nobody had given Mrs. Joscelyn this food for her heart in the old days.

“My darling!” she said; “but I see no chance for you to go abroad, far less—far less——”

“There is no telling what may happen,” said Liddy, “everybody, you know, goes abroad now.”

But Mrs. Joscelyn shook her head. She saw the practical difficulties here.

CHAPTER II.

A NEW COUSIN.

LYDIA had indeed as little prospect of going abroad as any girl could have. Her own kindred dreamt of no such indulgences, and she had no friends likely to suggest them. In these days people stayed still where their home was, and did not think of the continued changes and absences which make up our modern life—though the spirit of travel was beginning to be in the air, and younger spirits, even in the Fell-country, began to form dreams on the subject. Perhaps there never was a time when the idea of travelling was not attractive to the young, and when Italy was not a name to conjure withal. Lydia Joscelyn had read everything that fell into her hands all her life, even the Book of Beauty, which her brother-in-law, Philip Selby, presented to her with an inscription on the flyleaf, at Christmas. Half the stories, and half, almost all, the poetry there, bore reference to “the sunny South.” She was resolute to go “abroad” some time or other; to live among the dark-eyed Antonios and lovely Rosalbas of romance. And there, she had made up her mind, she would find Harry, and bring him back to her mother. It was her dream. Whenever she had nothing else to do she thought of it, and represented to herself how she should find him, how he would try to conceal himself from her, and by what wonderful ruses and clever expedients she would discover his secret and prove him to be her brother. It is not to be supposed that there did not mingle in Lydia’s dreams, visions of some other figure still more attractive than that of her brother, who having been five-and-twenty when he disappeared, ten years ago, was according to her calculation “quite old” by this time. It is not quite

certain that she did not expect him to be grey-haired, and a little decrepit; but there would be some friend, some protector, some handsome young count, or even prince, who would have afforded the stranger hospitality, and in whom Liddy felt the possible hero of her life to be embodied. He was quite vague, except a pair of beautiful eyes; there was nothing at all about him else that she was certain of; but those eyes looked out of the mists upon her, with every kind of tender and delightful look. He would help her, could any one doubt, to bring Harry home? and afterwards—perhaps—would ask for his reward. Such was the natural sequence of events. To do Lydia justice, however, this visionary prince was a secondary personage, only indulged in as a dream by way of recreation, after she had, in her thoughts, tracked Harry down, and got him at her mercy.

She had not much society or recreation at the White House. There were times, indeed, when, if it had been possible for a girl to have done so, Lydia would have had no objection to try, as Harry had done, what the society of the “Red Lion” could do for her; but to do her justice one trial would have been enough. She did what was quite as good, and more innocent; she ran off sometimes into the kitchen of the White House, and talked with the servants, and heard a hundred stories both of the past and present, and learned the countryside, so that she knew who everybody was, and their mothers, and their wives, and all that had happened to them. It was there, rather than from her mother and her sister, that she heard about Harry. The old cook remembered everything about him, from the time when he had cut his teeth. She had a recollection of that night when he had gone away, and still excused herself for not having gone to the rescue. “T’ master was all about t’ house, travelling up and down in his stocking-feet—was it my part to oop

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