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CHAPTER I.

SCHOOL BEGINS.

Forty years ago Mr. Savory Gray was a prosperous merchant. No gentleman on 'Change wore more spotless linen or blacker broadcloth. His ample white cravat had an air of absolute wisdom and honesty. It was so very white that his fellow-merchants could not avoid a vague impression that he had taken the church on his way down town, and had so purified himself for business. Indeed a white cravat is strongly to be recommended as a corrective and sedative of the public mind. Its advantages have long been familiar to the clergy; and even, in some desperate cases, politicians have found a resort to it of signal benefit. There are instructive instances, also, in banks and insurance offices of the comfort and value of spotless linen. Combined with highly-polished shoes, it is of inestimable mercantile advantage.

Mr. Gray prospered in business, and nobody was sorry. He enjoyed his practical joke and his glass of Madeira, which had made at least three voyages round the Cape. His temperament, like his person, was just unctuous enough to enable him to slip comfortably through life.

Happily for his own comfort, he had but a speaking acquaintance with politics. He was not a blue Federalist, and he never d'd the Democrats. With unconscious skill he shot the angry rapids of discussion, and swept, by a sure instinct, toward the quiet water on which he liked to ride. In the counting-room or the meeting of directors, when his neighbors waxed furious upon raking over some outrage of that old French infidel, Tom Jefferson, as they called him, sending him and his gun-boats where no man or boat wants to go, Mr. Gray rolled his neck in his white cravat, crossed his legs, and shook his black-gaitered shoe, and beamed, and smiled, and blew

his nose, and hum'd, and ha'd, and said, "Ah, yes!" "Ah, indeed?" "Quite so!" and held his tongue.

Mr. Savory Gray minded his own business; but his business did not mind him. There came a sudden crash—one of the commercial earthquakes that shake fortunes to their foundations and scatter failure on every side. One day he sat in his office consoling his friend Jowlson, who had been ruined. Mr. Jowlson was terribly agitated—credit gone—fortune wrecked—no prospects—"O wife and children!" he cried, rocking to and fro as he sat.

"My dear Jowlson, you must not give way in this manner. You must control your feelings. Have we not always been taught," said Mr. Gray, as a clerk brought in a letter, the seal of which the merchant broke leisurely, and then skimmed the contents as he continued, "that riches have wings and—my God!" he ejaculated, springing up, "I am a ruined man!"

So he was. Every thing was gone. Those pretty riches that chirped and sang to him as he fed them; they had all spread their bright plumage, like a troop of singing birds—have we not always been taught that they might, Mr. Jowlson?—and had flown away.

To undertake business anew was out of the question. His friends said,
"Poor Gray! what shall be done?"

The friendly merchants pondered and pondered. The worthy Jowlson, who had meanwhile engaged as book-keeper upon a salary of seven hundred dollars a year—one of the rare prizes—was busy enough for his friend, consulting, wondering, planning. Mr. Gray could not preach, nor practice medicine, nor surgery, nor law, because men must be instructed in those professions; and people will not trust a suit of a thousand dollars, or a sore throat, or a broken thumb, in the hands of a man who has not fitted himself carefully for the responsibility. He could not make boots, nor build houses, nor shoe horses, nor lay stone wall, nor bake bread, nor bind books. Men must be educated to be shoemakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, bakers, masons, or book-binders. What *could* be done? Nobody suggested an insurance office, or an agency for diamond mines on Newport beach; for, although it was the era of good feel-

ing, those ingenious infirmaries for commercial invalids were not yet invented.

"I have it!" cried Jowlsion, one day, rushing in, out of breath, among several gentlemen who were holding a council about their friend Gray—that is, who had met in a bank parlor, and were talking about his prospects—"I have it! and how dull we all are! What shall he do? Why, keep a school, to be sure!—a school!—a school! Take children, and be a parent to them!"

"How dull we all were!" cried the gentlemen in chorus. "A school is the very thing! A school it shall be!" And a school it was.

Upon the main street of the pleasant village of Delafield Savory Gray, Esq., hired a large house, with an avenue of young lindens in front, a garden on one side, and a spacious play-ground in the rear. The pretty pond was not far away, with its sloping shores and neat villas, and a distant spire upon the opposite bank—the whole like the vignette of an English pastoral poem. Here the merchant turned from importing pongees to inculcating principles. His old friends sent some of their children to the new school, and persuaded their friends to send others. Some of his former correspondents in other parts of the world, not entirely satisfied with the Asian and East Indian systems of education, shipped their sons to Mr. Gray. The good man was glad to see them. He was not very learned, and therefore could not communicate knowledge. But he did his best, and tried very hard to be respected. The boys did not learn any thing; but they had plenty of good beef, and Mr. Gray played practical jokes upon them; and on Sundays they all went to hear Dr. Peewee preach.

CHAPTER II.

HOPE WAYNE.

When there was a report that Mr. Savory Gray was coming to Delafield to establish a school for boys, Dr. Peewee, the minister of the village, called to communicate the news to Mr. Christopher Burt, his oldest and richest parishioner, at Pine wood, his country seat. When Mr. Burt heard the news, he foresaw trouble without end; for his orphan grand-daughter, Hope Wayne, who lived with him, was nearly eighteen years old; and it had been his fixed resolution that she should be protected from the wicked world of youth that is always going up and down in the earth seeking whom it may marry. If incessant care, and invention, and management could secure it, she should arrive safely where Grandpa Burt was determined she should arrive ultimately, at the head of her husband's dinner-table, Mrs. Simcoe, ma'am.

Mrs. Simcoe was Mr. Burt's housekeeper. So far as any body could say, Mrs. Burt died at a period of which the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. There were traditions of other housekeepers. But since the death of Hope's mother Mrs. Simcoe was the only incumbent. She had been Mrs. Wayne's nurse in her last moments, and had rocked the little Hope to sleep the night after her mother's burial. She was always tidy, erect, imperturbable. She pervaded the house; and her eye was upon a table-cloth, a pane of glass, or a carpet, almost as soon as the spot which arrested it. Housekeeper *nascitur non fit*. She was so silent and shadowy that the whole house sympathized with her, until it became extremely uncomfortable to the servants, who constantly went away; and a story that the house was haunted became immensely popular and credible the moment it was told.

There had been no visiting at Pinewood for a long time, because of the want of a mistress and of the unsocial habits of Mr. Burt. But the neighboring ladies were just beginning to call upon Miss

Wayne. When she returned the visits Mrs. Simcoe accompanied her in the carriage, and sat there while Miss Wayne performed the parlor ceremony. Then they drove home. Mr. Burt dined at two, and Miss Hope sat opposite her grandfather at table; Hiram waited. Mrs. Simcoe dined alone in her room.

There, too, she sat alone in the long summer afternoons, when the work of the house was over for the day. She held a book by the open window, or gazed for a very long time out upon the landscape. There were pine-trees near her window; but beyond she could see green meadows, and blue hills, and a glittering river, and rounded reaches of woods. She watched the clouds, or, at least, looked at the sky. She heard the birds in spring days, and the dry hot locusts on sultry afternoons; and she looked with the same unchanging eyes upon the opening buds and blooming flowers, as upon the worms that swung themselves on filaments and ate the leaves and ruined the trees, or the autumnal hectic which Death painted upon the leaves that escaped the worms.

Sometimes on these still, warm afternoons her lips parted, as if she were singing. But it was a very grave, quiet performance. There was none of the gush and warmth of song, although the words she uttered were always those of the hymns of Charles Wesley—those passionate, religious songs of the New Jerusalem. For Mrs. Simcoe was a Methodist, and with Methodist hymns she had sung Hope to sleep in the days when she was a baby; so that the young woman often listened to the music in church with a heart full of vague feelings, and dim, inexplicable memories, not knowing that she was hearing, though with different words, the strains that her nurse had whispered over her crib in the hymns of Wesley.

It is to be presumed that at some period Mrs. Simcoe, whom Mr. Burt always addressed in the same manner as "Mrs. Simcoe, ma'am," had received a general system of instruction to the effect that "My grand-daughter, Miss Wayne—Mrs. Simcoe, ma'am—will marry a gentleman of wealth and position; and I expect her to be fitted to preside over his household. Yes, Mrs. Simcoe, ma'am."

What on earth is a girl sent into this world for but to make a proper match, and not disgrace her husband—to keep his house, either directly or by a deputy—to take care of his children, to see

that his slippers are warm and his Madeira cold, and his beef not burned to a cinder, Mrs. Simcoe, ma'am? Christopher Burt believed that a man's wife was a more sacred piece of private property than his sheep-pasture, and when he delivered the deed of any such property he meant that it should be in perfect order.

"Hope may marry a foreign minister, Mrs. Simcoe, ma'am. Who knows? She may marry a large merchant in town or a large planter at the South, who will be obliged to entertain a great deal, and from all parts of the world. I intend that she shall be fit for the situation, that she shall preside at her husband's table in a superior manner."

So Hope, as a child, had played with little girls, who were invited to Pinewood—select little girls, who came in the prettiest frocks and behaved in the prettiest way, superintended by nurses and ladies' maids. They tended their dolls peaceably in the nursery; they played clean little games upon the lawn. Not too noisy, Ellen! Mary, gently, gently, dear! Julia, carefully! you are tumbling your frock. They were not chattering French nurses who presided over these solemnities; they were grave, housekeeping, Mrs. Simcoe-kind of people. Julia and Mary were exhorted to behave themselves like little ladies, and the frolic ended by their all taking books from the library shelves and sitting properly in a large chair, or on the sofa, or even upon the piazza, if it had been nicely dusted and inspected, until the setting sun sent them away with the calmest kisses at parting.

As Hope grew older she had teachers at home—recluse old scholars, decayed clergymen in shiny black coats, who taught her Latin, and looked at her through round spectacles, and, as they looked, remembered that they were once young. She had teachers of history, of grammar, of arithmetic—of all English studies. Some of these Mentors were weak-eyed fathers of ten children, who spoke so softly that their wives must have had loud voices. Others were young college graduates, with low collars and long hair, who read with Miss Wayne in English literature, while Mrs. Simcoe sat knitting in the next chair. Then there had been the Italian music-masters, and the French teachers, very devoted, never missing a lesson, but also never missing Mrs. Simcoe, who presided over all instruction which was imparted by any Mentor under sixty.

But when Hope grew older still and found Byron upon the shelves of the Library, his romantic sadness responded to the vague longing of her heart. Instinctively she avoided all that repels a woman in his verses, as she would have avoided the unsound parts of a fruit. But the solitary, secluded girl lived unconsciously and inevitably in a dream world, for she had no knowledge of any other, nor contact with it. Proud and shy, her heart was restless, her imagination morbid, and she believed in heroes.

When Dr. Peewee had told Mr. Burt all that he knew about the project of the school, Mr. Burt rang the bell violently.

"Send Miss Hope to me."

The servant disappeared, and in a few moments Hope Wayne entered the room. To Dr. Peewee's eyes she seemed wrapped only in a cloud of delicate muslin, and the wind had evidently been playing with her golden hair, for she had been lying upon the lawn reading Byron.

"Did you want me, grandfather?"

"Yes, my dear. Mr. Gray, a respectable person, is coming here to set up a school. There will be a great many young men and boys. I shall never ask them to the house. I hate boys. I expect you to hate them too."

"Yes—yes, my dear," said Dr. Peewee; "hate the boys? Yes; we must hate the boys."

Hope Wayne looked at the two old gentlemen, and answered,

"I don't think you need have warned me, grandfather; I'm not so apt to fall in love with boys."

"No, no, Hope; I know. Ever since you have lived with me—how long is it, my dear, since your mother died?"

"I don't know, grandfather; I never saw her," replied Hope, gravely.

"Yes, yes; well, ever since then you have been a good, quiet little girl with grandpapa. Here, Cossy, come and give grandpa a kiss. And mind the boys! No speaking, no looking—we are never to know them. You understand? Now go, dear."