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THE TWINS.

CHAPTER I.

PLACE: TIME: CIRCUMSTANCE.

Burleigh-Singleton is a pleasant little watering-place on the southern coast of England, entirely suitable for those who have small incomes and good consciences. The latter, to residents especially, are at least as indispensable as the former: seeing that, however just the reputation of their growing little town for superior cheapness in matters of meat and drink, its character in things regarding men and manners is quite as undeniable for preëminent dullness.

Not but that it has its varieties of scene, and more or less of circumstances too: there are, on one flank, the breezy Heights, with flag-staff and panorama; on the other, broad and level water-meadows, skirted by the dark-flowing Mullet, running to the sea between its tortuous banks: for neighbourhood, Pacton Park is one great attraction—the pretty market-town of Eyemouth another—the everlasting, never-tiring sea a third; and, at high-summer, when the Devonshire lanes are not knee-deep in mire, the nevertheless immeasurably filthy, though picturesque, mud-built village of Oxton.

Then again (and really as I enumerate these multitudinous advantages, I begin to relent for having called it dull), you may pick up curious agate pebbles on the beach, as well as corallines and scarce sea-weeds, good for gumming on front-parlour windows; you may fish *for* whittings in the bay, and occasionally catch them; you may wade in huge caoutchouc boots among the muddy shallows of the Mullet, and shoot *at* cormorants and curlews; you may walk to satiety between high-banked and rather dirty cross-roads; and, if you will scramble up the hedge-row, may get now and then peeps of undulated country landscape.

Moreover, you have free liberty to drop in any where to "tiffin" – Burleigh being very Indianized, and a guest always welcome; indeed, so Indianized is it, so populous in jaundiced cheek and ailing livers, that you may openly assert, without fear of being misunderstood (if you wish to vary your common phrase of loyalty), that Victoria sits upon the "musnud" of Great Britain; you may order curry in the smallest pot-house, and still be sure to get the rice well-cooked; you may call your house-maid "ayah," without risk of warning for impertinence; you may vent your wrath against indolent waiters in eloquence of "jaa, soostee;" and, finally, you may go to the library, and besides the advantage of the day-before-yesterday's Times, you may behold in bilious presence an affable, but authoritative, old gentleman, who introduces himself, "Sir, you see in me the hero of Puttymuddyfudgepoor."

You may even now see such an one, I say, and hear him too, if you will but go to Burleigh; seeing he has by this time over-lived the year or so whereof our tale discourses. He has, by dint of service, attained to the dignity of General H.E.I.C.S., and – which he was still longer coming to – the wisdom of being a communicative creature; though possibly, by a natural réaction, at present he carries anti-secrecy a little too far, and verges on the gossiping extreme. But, at the time to which we must look back to commence this right-instructive story, General Tracy was still drinking "Hodgson's Pale" in India, was so taciturn as to be considered almost dumb, and had not yet lifted up his yellow visage upon Albion's white cliffs, nor taken up head-quarters in his final rest of Burleigh-Singleton.

Nevertheless, with reference to quartering at Burleigh, a certain long-neglected wife of his, Mrs. Tracy, had; and that for the period of at least the twenty-one years preceding: how and wherefore I proceed to tell.

A common case and common fate was that of Mrs. Tracy. She had married, both early and hastily, a gallant lieutenant, John George Julian Tracy, to wit, the military germ of our future general; their courtship and acquaintance previous to matrimony extended over the not inconsiderable space of three whole weeks – commencing with a country ball; and after marriage, honey-moon inclusive, they lived the life of cooing doves for three whole months.

And now came the furlough's end: Mr. Tracy, in his then habitual reserve (a quiet man was he), had concealed its existence altogether: and, for aught Jane knew, the hearty invalid was to remain at home for ever: but months soon slip away; and so it came to pass, that on a certain next Wednesday he must be on his way back to the Presidency of Madras, and—if she will not follow him—he must leave her.

However, there was a certain old relative, one Mrs. Green, a childless widow—rich, capricious, and infirm—whom Jane Tracy did not wish to lose sight of: her money was well worth both watching and waiting for; and the captain, whom a lucky chance had now lifted out of the lieutenantancy, was easily persuaded to forego the pleasure of his wife's company till the somewhat indefinite period of her old aunt's death.

How far sundry discoveries made in the unknown regions of each other's temper reconciled him to this retrograding bachelorship, and her to her widowhood-bewitched, I will not undertake to say: but I will hazard the remark, anti-poor-law though it seemeth, that the separation of man and wife, however convenient, lucrative, or even mutually pleasant, is a dereliction of duty, which always deserves, and generally meets, its proper and discriminative punishment. Had the young wife faithfully performed her Maker's bidding, and left all other ties unstrung to cleave unto her lord; had she considered a husband's true affections before all other wealth, and resolved to share his dangers, to solace his cares, to be his blessing through life, and his partner even unto death, rather than selfishly to seek her own comfort, and consult her own interest—the tale of crime and sadness, which it is my lot to tell, would never have had truth for its foundation.

Ill-matched for happiness though they were, however well-matched as to mutual merit, the common man of pleasure and the frivolous woman of fashion, still the wisest way to fuse their minds to union, the likeliest receipt for moral good and social comfort, would have been this course of foreign scenes, of new faces, sprinkled with a seasoning of adventure, hardship, danger, in a distant land. Gradually would they have learned to bear and forbear; the petty quarrel would have been forgotten in the frequent kindness;

the rougher edges of temper and opinion would insensibly have smoothed away; new circumstances would have brought out better feelings under happier skies; old acquaintances, false friends forgotten, would have neutralized old feuds: and, by long-living together, though it were perhaps amid various worries and many cares, they might still have come to a good old age with more than average happiness, and more than the common run of love. Patience in dutiful enduring brings a sure reward: and marriage, however irksome a constraint to the foolish and the gay, is still so wise an ordinance, that the most ill-assorted couple imaginable will unconsciously grow happy, if they only remain true to one another, and will learn the wisdom always to hope and often to forgive.

The Tracys, however, overlooked all this, and mutual friends (those invariable foes to all that is generous and unworldly) smiled upon the prudence of their temporary separation. The captain was to come home again on furlough in five years at furthest, even if the aunt held out so long; and this availed to keep his wife in the rear-guard; therefore, Mrs. Tracy wiped her eyes, bade adieu to her retreating lord in Plymouth Sound, and determined to abide, with other expectant dames and Asiatic invalided heroes, at Burleigh-Singleton, until she might go to him, or he return to her: for pleasant little Burleigh, besides its contiguity to arriving Indiamen, was advantageous as being the dwelling-place of aforesaid Mrs. Green;—that wealthy, widowed aunt, devoutly wished in heaven: and the considerate old soul had offered her designing niece a home with her till Tracy could come back.

During the first year of absence, ship-letters and India-letters arrived duteously in consecutive succession: but somehow or other, the regular post, in no long time afterwards, became unfaithful to its trust; and if Mrs. Jane heard quarterly, which at any rate she did through the agent, when he remitted her allowance, she consoled herself as to the captain's well-being: in due course of things, even this became irregular; he was far up the country, hunting, fighting, surveying, and what not; and no wonder that letters, if written at all, which I rather doubt, got lost. Then there came a long period of positive and protracted silence—months of it—years of it; barring that her checks for cash were honoured still at Hancock's, though they could tell her nothing of her lord; so that Mrs. Tracy was at

length seriously recommended by her friends to become a widow; she tried on the cap, and looked into many mirrors; but, after long inspection, decided upon still remaining a wife, because the weeds were so clearly unbecoming. Habit, meanwhile, and that still-existing old aunt, who seemed resolved to live to a hundred, kept her as before at Burleigh: and, seeing that a few months after the captain's departure she had presented the world, not to say her truant lord, with twins, she had always found something to do in the way of, what she considered, education, and other juvenile amusement: that is to say, when the gayeties of a circle of fifteen miles in radius left her any time to spare in such a process. The twins—a brace of boys—were born and bred at Burleigh, and had attained severally to twenty years of age, just before their father came home again as brevet-major-general. But both they, and that arrival, deserve special detail, each in its own chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE HEROES.

Mrs. Tracy's sons were as unlike each other as it is well possible for two human beings to be, both in person and character. Julian, whose forward and bold spirit gained him from the very cradle every prerogative of eldership (and he did struggle first into life, too, so he was the first-born), had grown to be a swarthy, strong, big-boned man, of the Roman-nosed, or, more physiognomically, the Jewish cast of countenance; with melo-dramatic elf-locks, large whiskers, and ungovernable passions; loud, fierce, impetuous; cunning, too, for all his overbearing clamour; and an embodied personification of those choice essentials to criminal happiness—a hard heart and a good digestion. Charles, on the contrary (or, as logicians would say, on the contradictory), was fair-haired, blue-eyed, of Grecian features; slim, though well enough for inches, and had hitherto (as the commonalty have it) "enjoyed" weak health: he was gentle and affectionate in heart, pure and religious in mind, studious and unobtrusive in habits. It was a wonder to see the strange diversity between those own twin-brothers, born within the same

hour, and, it is superfluous to add, of the same parents; brought up in all outward things alike, and who had shared equally in all that might be called advantage or disadvantage, of circumstance or education.

Certain is it that minds are different at birth, and require as different a treatment as Iceland moss from cactuses, or bull-dogs from bull-finches: certain is it, too, that Julian, early submitted and resolutely broken in, would have made as great a man, as Charles, naturally meek, did make a good one; but for the matter of educating her boys, poor Mrs. Tracy had no more notion of the feat, than of squaring the circle, or determining the longitude. She kept them both at home, till the peevish aunt could suffer Julian's noise no longer: the house was a Pandemonium, and the giant grown too big for that castle of Otranto; so he must go at any rate; and (as no difference in the treatment of different characters ever occurred to any body) of course Charles must go along with him. Away they went to an expensive school, which Julian's insubordination on the instant could not brook—and, accordingly, he ran away; without doubt, Charles must be taken away too. Another school was tried, Julian got expelled this time; and Charles, in spite of prizes, must, on system, be removed with him: so forth, with like wisdom, all through the years of adolescence and instruction, those ill-matched brothers were driven as a pair. Then again, for fashion's sake, and Aunt Green's whims, the circumspective mother, notwithstanding all her inconsistencies, gave each of them prettily bound handbooks of devotion; which the one used upon his knees, and the other lit cigars withal; both extremes having exceeded her intention: and she proved similarly overreached when she persisted in treating both exactly alike, as to liberal allowances, and liberty of will; the result being, that one of her sons "foolishly" spent his money in a multitude of charitable hobbies; and that the other was constantly supplied with means for (the mother was sorry to say it, vulgar) dissipation. By consequence, Charles did more good, and Julian more evil, than I have time to stop and tell off.

If any thing in this life must be personal, peculiar, and specific, it is education: we take upon ourselves to speak thus dogmatically, not of mere school-teaching only, *musa*, *musæ*, and so forth; nor yet of lectures, on relative qualities of carbon and nitrogen in vegeta-

bles; no, nor even of schemes of theology, or codes of morals; but we do speak of the daily and hourly reining-in, or letting-out, of discouragement in one appetite, and encouragement in another; of habitual formation of characters in their diversity; and of shaping their bear's-cub, or that child-angel, the natural human mind, to its destined ends; that it may turn out, for good, according to its several natures, to be either the strong-armed, bold-eyed, rough-hewer of God's grand designs, or the delicate-fingered polisher of His rarest sculptures. Julian, well-trained, might have grown to be a Luther; and many a gentle soul like Charles, has turned out a coxcomb and a sensualist.

The boys were born, as I have said, in the regulation order of things, a few months after Captain Tracy sailed away for India some full score of years, and more, from this present hour, when we have seen him seated as a general in the library at Burleigh; and, until the last year, they had never seen their father—scarcely ever heard of him.

The incidents of their lives had been few and common-place: it would be easy, but wearisome, to specify the orchards and the beehives which Julian had robbed as a school-boy; the rebellions he had headed; the monkey tricks he had played upon old fish-women; and the cruel havoc he made of cats, rats, and other poor tormented creatures, who had ministered to his wanton and brutalizing joys. In like manner, wearily, but easily, might I relate how Charles grew up the nurse's darling, though little of his flaunting mother's; the curly-pated young book-worm; the sympathizing, inoffensive, gentle heart, whose effort still it was to countervail his brother's evil: how often, at the risk of blows, had he interposed to save some drowning puppy: how often paid the bribe for Julian's impunity, when mulcted for some damage done in the way of broken windows, upset apple-stalls, and the like: how often had he screened his bad twin-brother from the flagellatory consequences of sheer idleness, by doing for him all his school-tasks: how often striven to guide his insensate conscience to truth, and good, and wisdom: how often, and how vainly!

And when the youths grew up, and their good and evil grew up with them, it were possible to tell you a heart-rending tale of

Julian's treachery to more than one poor village beauty; and many a pleasing trait of Charles's pure benevolence, and wise zeal to remedy his brother's mischiefs. The one went about doing ill, and the other doing good: Julian, on account of obligations, more truly than in spite of them, hated Charles; and yet one great aim of all Charles's amiabilities tended continually to Julian's good, and he strove to please him, too, while he wished to bless him. The one had grown to manhood, full of unrepented sins, and ripe for darker crime: the other had attained a like age of what is somewhat satirically called discretion, having amassed, with Solon of old, "knowledge day by day," having lived a life of piety and purity, and blest with a cheerful disposition, that teemed with happy thoughts.

They had, of course, in the progress of human life, been both laid upon the bed of sickness, where, with similar contrast, the one lay muttering discontent, and the other smiling patiently: they had both been in dangers by land and by sea, where Julian, though not a little lacking to himself at the moment of peril, was still loudly minacious till it came too near; while Charles, with all his caution, was more actually courageous, and in spite of all his gentleness, stood against the worst undaunted: they had both, with opposite motives and dissimilar modes of life, passed through various vicissitudes of feeling, scene, society; and the influence of circumstance on their different characters, heightened or diminished, bettered or depraved, by the good or evil principle in each, had produced their different and probable results.

Thus, strangely dissimilar, the twin-brothers together stand before us: Julian the strong impersonation of the animal man, as Charles of the intellectual; Julian, matter; Charles, spirit; Julian, the creature of this world, tending to a lower and a worse: Charles, though in the world, not of the world, and reaching to a higher and a better.

Mrs. Tracy, the mother of this various progeny, had been somewhat of a beauty in her day, albeit much too large and masculine for the taste of ordinary mortals; and though now very considerably past forty, the vain vast female was still ambitious of compliment, and greedy of admiration. That Julian should be such a woman's favourite will surprise none: she had, she could have, no sympa-

ties with mild and thoughtful Charles; but rather dreaded to set her flaunting folly in the light of his wise glance, and sought to hide her humbled vanity from his pure and keen perceptions. His very presence was a tacit rebuke to her social dissipation, and she could not endure the mild radiance of his virtues. He never fawned and flattered her, as Julian would; but had even suffered filial presumption (it could not be affection—O dear, no!) to go so far as gently to expostulate at what he fancied wrong; he never gave her reason to contrast, with happy self-complacence, her own soul's state with Charles's, however she could with Julian's: and then, too, she would indulgently allow her foolish mind—a woman's, though a parent's—to admire that tall, black, bandit-looking son, above the slight build, the delicate features, and almost feminine elegance of his brother: she found Julian always ready to countenance and pamper her gayest wishes, and was glad to make him her escort every where—at balls, and fêtes, and races, and archery parties; while as to Charles, he would be the stay-at-home, the milk-sop, the learned pundit, the pious prayer-monger, any thing but the ladies' man. Yes: it is little wonder that Mrs. Tracy's heart clave to Julian, the masculine image of herself; while it barely tolerated Charles, who was a rarefied and idealized likeness of the absent and forgotten Tracy.

But the mother—and there are many silly mothers, almost as many as silly men and silly maids—in her admiration of the outward form of manliness, overlooked the true strength, and chivalry, and nobleness of mind which shone supreme in Charles. How would Julian have acted in such a case as this?—a sheep had wandered down the cliff's face to a narrow ledge of rock, whence it could not come back again, for there was no room to turn: Julian would have pelted it, and set his bull-dog at it, and rejoiced to have seen the poor animal's frantic leaps from shingly shelf to shelf, till it would be dashed to pieces. But how did Charles act? With the utmost courage, and caution, and presence of mind, he crept down, and, at the risk of his life, dragged the bleating, unreluctant creature up again; it really seemed as if the ungrateful poor dumb brute recognised its humane friend, and suffered him to rescue it without a struggle or a motion that might have endangered both.

Again: a burly costermonger was belabouring his donkey, and the wretched beast fell beneath his cudgel: strange to say, Julian and Charles were walking together that time; and the same sight affected each so differently, that the one sided with the cruel man, and the other with his suffering victim: Charles, in momentary indignation, rushed up to the fellow, wrested the cudgel from his hand, and flung it over the cliff; while Julian was so base, so cowardly, as to reward such generous interference, by holding his weaker brother's arms, and inviting the wrathful costermonger to expend the remainder of his phrensy on unlucky Charles. Yes, and when at home Mrs. Tracy heard all this, she was silly enough, wicked enough, to receive her truly noble son with ridicule, and her other one, the child of her disgrace, with approval.

"It will teach you, Master Charles, not to meddle with common people and their donkeys; and you may thank your brother Julian for giving you a lesson how a gentleman should behave."

Poor Charles! but poorer Julian, and poorest Mrs. Tracy!

It would be easy, if need were, to enumerate multiplied examples tending towards the same end—a large, masculine-featured mother's foolish preference of the loud, bold, worldly animal, before the meek, kind, noble, spiritual. And the results of all these many matters were, that now, at twenty years of age, Charles found himself, as it were, alone in a strange land, with many common friends indeed abroad, but at home no nearer, dearer ties to string his heart's dank lyre withal; neither mother nor brother, nor any other kind familiar face, to look upon his gentleness in love, or to sympathize with his affections, unapprehended, unappreciated: so—while Mrs. Tracy was the showy, gay, and vapid thing she ever had been, and Julian the same impetuous mother's son which his very nurse could say she knew him—Charles grew up a shy and silent youth, necessarily reserved, for lack of some one to understand him; necessarily chilled, for want of somebody to love him.

CHAPTER III.

THE ARRIVAL.

The young men were thus situated as regards both the world and one another, and Mrs. Tracy had almost entirely forgotten the fact, that she possessed a piece of goods so supererogatory as her husband (a property too which her children had never quite realized), when all on a sudden, one ordinary morning, the postman's-knock brought to her breakfast-table at Burleigh-Singleton the following epistle:

"British Channel, Thursday, March 11th, 1842.

"The Sir William Elphinston, E.I.M.

"DEAR JANE: You will be surprised to find that you are to see me so soon, I dare say, especially as it is now some years since you will have heard from me. The reason is, I have been long in an out-of-the-way part of India, where there is little communication with Europe, and so you will excuse my not writing. We hope to find ourselves to-night in Plymouth roads, where I shall get into a pilot-boat, and so shall see you to-morrow. You may, therefore, now expect your affectionate husband,

"J.G.J. TRACY, General H.E.I.C.S.

"P.S.1. — Remember me to our boy, or boys — which is it?

"P.S.2. — I bring with me the daughter of a friend in India, who is come over for a year or two's polish at a first-rate school. Of course you will be glad to receive her as our guest.

"J.G.J.T."

This loving letter was the most startling event that had ever attempted to unnerve Mrs. Tracy; and she accordingly managed, for effect and propriety's sake, to grow very faint upon the spot, whether for joy, or sorrow, or fear of lost liberty, or hope of a restored lord, doth not appear; she had so long been satisfied with receiving quarterly pay from the India agents, that she forgot it was an evidence of her husband's existence; and, lo! here he was returning a general, doubtlessly a magnificent moustachioed individual, and she was to be Mrs. General! so that when she came completely to herself, after that feint of a faint, she was thinking of nothing but court-plumes, oriental pearls, and her gallant Tracy's uniform.

The postscripts also had their influence: Charles, naturally affectionate, and willing to love a hitherto unseen father, felt hurt, as well he might, at the "boy, or boys;" while Julian, who ridiculed his brother's sentimentality, was already fancying that the "daughter of a friend" might be a pleasant addition to the dullness of Burleigh-Singleton.

Preparations vast were made at once for the general's reception; from attic to kitchen was sounded the tocsin of his coming. Julian was all bustle and excitement, to his mother's joy and pride; while Charles merited her wrath by too much of his habitual and paternal quietude, particularly when he withdrew his forces altogether from the loud domestic fray, by retreating up-stairs to cogitate and muse, perhaps to make a calming prayer or two about all these matters of importance. As for Mrs. Tracy herself, she was even now, within the first hour of that news, busily engaged in collecting cosmetics, trinkets, blonde lace, and other female finery, resolved to trick herself out like Jezebel, and win her lord once more; whilst the pernicious old aunt, who still lived on, notwithstanding all those twenty years of patience, as vivacious as before, grumbled and scolded so much at this upsetting of her house, that there was really some risk of her altering the will at last, and cutting out Jane Tracy after all.

And the morrow morning came, as if it were no more than an ordinary Friday, and with it came expectancy; and noon succeeded, and with it spirits alternately elated and depressed; and evening drew in, with heart-sickness and chagrin at hopes or prophecies deferred; and night, and next morning, and still the general came not. So, much weeping at that vexing disappointment, after so many pains to please, Mrs. Tracy put aside her numerous aids and appliances, and lay slatternly a-bed, to nurse a head-ache until noon; and all had well nigh forgotten the probable arrival, when, to every body's dismay, a dusty chaise and four suddenly rattled up the terrace, and stopped at our identical number seven.

Then was there scuffling up, and getting down, and making preparation in hot haste; and a stout gentleman with a gamboge face descended from the chaise, exploding wrath like a bomb-shell, that so important an approach had made such slight appearance of expectancy: it was disrespectful to his rank, and he took care to