
EDNA
LYALL
WE TWO

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A Novel

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CHAPTER I. Brian Falls in Love

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Still humanity grows dearer,
Being learned the more. Jean Ingelow.

There are three things in this world which deserve no quarter—Hypocrisy, Pharisaism, and Tyranny. F. Robertson

People who have been brought up in the country, or in small places where every neighbor is known by sight, are apt to think that life in a large town must lack many of the interests which they have learned to find in their more limited communities. In a somewhat bewildered way, they gaze at the shifting crowd of strange faces, and wonder whether it would be possible to feel completely at home where all the surroundings of life seem ever changing and unfamiliar.

But those who have lived long in one quarter of London, or of any other large town, know that there are in reality almost as many links between the actors of the town life-drama as between those of the country life-drama.

Silent recognitions pass between passengers who meet day after day in the same morning or evening train, on the way to or from work; the faces of omnibus conductors grow familiar; we learn to know perfectly well on what day of the week and at what hour the well-known organ-grinder will make his appearance, and in what street we shall meet the city clerk or the care-worn little daily governess on their way to office or school. It so happened that Brian Osmond, a young doctor who had not been very long settled in the Bloomsbury regions, had an engagement which took him

every afternoon down Gower Street, and here many faces had grown familiar to him. He invariably met the same sallow-faced postman, the same nasal-voiced milkman, the same pompous-looking man with the bushy whiskers and the shiny black bag, on his way home from the city. But the only passenger in whom he took any interest was a certain bright-faced little girl whom he generally met just before the Montague Place crossing. He always called her his “little girl,” though she was by no means little in the ordinary acceptation of the word, being at least sixteen, and rather tall for her years. But there was a sort of freshness and naivete and youthfulness about her which made him use that adjective. She usually carried a pile of books in a strap, so he conjectured that she must be coming from school, and, ever since he had first seen her, she had worn the same rough blue serge dress, and the same quaint little fur hat. In other details, however, he could never tell in the least how he should find her. She seemed to have a mood for every day. Sometimes she would be in a great hurry and would almost run past him; sometimes she would saunter along in the most unconventional way, glancing from time to time at a book or a paper; sometimes her eager face would look absolutely bewitching in its brightness; sometimes scarcely less bewitching in a consuming anxiety which seemed unnatural in one so young.

One rainy afternoon in November, Brian was as usual making his way down Gower Street, his umbrella held low to shelter him from the driving rain which seemed to come in all directions. The milkman's shrill voice was still far in the distance, the man of letters was still at work upon knockers

some way off, it was not yet time for his little girl to make her appearance, and he was not even thinking of her, when suddenly his umbrella was nearly knocked out of his hand by coming violently into collision with another umbrella. Brought thus to a sudden stand, he looked to see who it was who had charged him with such violence, and found himself face to face with his unknown friend. He had never been quite so close to her before. Her quaint face had always fascinated him, but on nearer view he thought it the loveliest face he had ever seen—it took his heart by storm.

It was framed in soft, silky masses of dusky auburn hair which hung over the broad, white forehead, but at the back was scarcely longer than a boy's. The features, though not regular, were delicate and piquant; the usual faint rose-flush on the cheeks deepened now to carnation, perhaps because of the slight contretemps, perhaps because of some deeper emotion—Brian fancied the latter, for the clear, golden-brown eyes that were lifted to his seemed bright either with indignation or with unshed tears. Today it was clear that the mood was not a happy one.

“I am very sorry,” she said, looking up at him, and speaking in a low, musical voice, but with the unembarrassed frankness of a child. “I really wasn't thinking or looking; it was very careless of me.”

Brian of course took all the blame to himself, and apologized profusely; but though he would have given much to detain her, if only a moment, she gave him no opportunity, but with a slight inclination passed rapidly on. He stood quite still, watching her till she was out of sight, aware of a sudden change in his life. He was a busy hard-

working man, not at all given to dreams, and it was no dream that he was in now. He knew perfectly well that he had met his ideal, had spoken to her and she to him; that somehow in a single moment a new world had opened out to him. He had fallen in love.

The trifling occurrence had made no great impression on the “little girl” herself. She was rather vexed with herself for the carelessness, but a much deeper trouble was filling her heart. She soon forgot the passing interruption and the brown-bearded man with the pleasant gray eyes who had apologized for what was quite her fault. Something had gone wrong that day, as Brian had surmised; the eyes grew brighter, the carnation flush deepened as she hurried along, the delicate lips closed with a curiously hard expression, the hands were clasped with unnecessary tightness round the umbrella.

She passed up Guilford Square, but did not turn into any of the old decayed houses; her home was far less imposing. At the corner of the square there is a narrow opening which leads into a sort of blind alley paved with grim flagstones. Here, facing a high blank wall, are four or five very dreary houses. She entered one of these, put down her wet umbrella in the shabby little hall, and opened the door of a barely furnished room, the walls of which were, however, lined with books. Beside the fire was the one really comfortable piece of furniture in the room, an Ikeley couch, and upon it lay a very wan-looking invalid, who glanced up with a smile of welcome. “Why, Erica, you are home early today. How is that?”

“Oh, I don't know,” said Erica, tossing down her books in a way which showed her mother that she was troubled about something. “I suppose I tore along at a good rate, and there was no temptation to stay at the High School.”

“Come and tell me about it,” said the mother, gently, “what has gone wrong, little one?”

“Everything!” exclaimed Erica, vehemently. “Everything always does go wrong with us and always will, I suppose. I wish you had never sent me to school, mother; I wish I need never see the place again!”

“But till today you enjoyed it so much.”

“Yes, the classes and the being with Gertrude. But that will never be the same again. It's just this, mother, I'm never to speak to Gertrude again—to have noting more to do with her.”

“Who said so? And Why?”

“Why? Because I'm myself,” said Erica, with a bitter little laugh. “How I can help it, nobody seems to think. But Gertrude's father has come back from Africa, and was horrified to learn that we were friends, made her promise never to speak to me again, and made her write this note about it. Look!” and she took a crumpled envelope from her pocket.

The mother read the note in silence, and an expression of pain came over her face. Erica, who was very impetuous, snatched it away from her when she saw that look of sadness.

“Don't read the horrid thing!” she exclaimed, crushing it up in her hand. “There, we will burn it!” and she threw it into the fire with a vehemence which somehow relieved her.

“You shouldn't have done that,” said her mother. “Your father will be sure to want to see it.”

“No, no, no,” cried Erica, passionately. “He must not know; you must not tell him, mother.”

“Dear child, have you not learned that it is impossible to keep anything from him? He will find out directly that something is wrong.”

“It will grieve him so; he must not hear it,” said Erica. “He cares so much for what hurts us. Oh! Why are people so hard and cruel? Why do they treat us like lepers? It isn't all because of losing Gertrude; I could bear that if there were some real reason—if she went away or died. But there's no reason! It's all prejudice and bigotry and injustice; it's that which makes it sting so.”

Erica was not at all given to tears, but there was now a sort of choking in her throat, and a sort of dimness in her eyes which made her rather hurriedly settle down on the floor in her own particular nook beside her mother's couch, where her face could not be seen. There was a silence. Presently the mother spoke, stroking back the wavy, auburn hair with her thin white hand.

“For a long time I have dreaded this for you, Erica. I was afraid you didn't realize the sort of position the world will give you. Till lately you have seen scarcely any but our own people, but it can hardly be, darling, that you can go on much longer without coming into contact with others; and then, more and more, you must realize that you are cut off from much that other girls may enjoy.”

“Why?” questioned Erica. “Why can't they be friendly? Why must they cut us off from everything?”

“It does seem unjust; but you must remember that we belong to an unpopular minority.”

“But if I belonged to the larger party, I would at least be just to the smaller,” said Erica. “How can they expect us to think their system beautiful when the very first thing they show us is hatred and meanness. Oh! If I belonged to the other side I would show them how different it might be.”

“I believe you would,” said the mother, smiling a little at the idea, and at the vehemence of the speaker. “But, as it is, Erica, I am afraid you must school yourself to endure. After all, I fancy you will be glad to share so soon in your father's vexations.”

“Yes,” said Erica, pushing back the hair from her forehead, and giving herself a kind of mental shaking. “I am glad of that. After all, they can't spoil the best part of our lives! I shall go into the garden to get rid of my bad temper; it doesn't rain now.”

She struggled to her feet, picked up the little fur hat which had fallen off, kissed her mother, and went out of the room.

The “garden” was Erica's favorite resort, her own particular property. It was about fifteen feet square, and no one but a Londoner would have bestowed on it so dignified a name. But Erica, who was of an inventive turn, had contrived to make the most of the little patch of ground, had induced ivy to grow on the ugly brick walls, and with infinite care and satisfaction had nursed a few flowers and shrubs into tolerably healthy though smutty life. In one of the corners, Tom Craigie, her favorite cousin, had put up a rough wooden bench for her, and here she read and dreamed as

contentedly as if her “garden ground” had been fairy-land. Here, too, she invariably came when anything had gone wrong, when the endless troubles about money which had weighed upon her all her life became a little less bearable than usual, or when some act of discourtesy or harshness to her father had roused in her a tingling, burning sense of indignation.

Erica was not one of those people who take life easily; things went very deeply with her. In spite of her brightness and vivacity, in spite of her readiness to see the ludicrous in everything, and her singularly quick perceptions, she was also very keenly alive to other and graver impressions.

Her anger had passed, but still, as she paced round and round her small domain, her heart was very heavy. Life seemed perplexing to her; but her mother had somehow struck the right key-note when she had spoken of the vexations which might be shared. There was something inspiriting in that thought, certainly, for Erica worshipped her father. By degrees the trouble and indignation died away, and a very sweet look stole over the grave little face.

A smutty sparrow came and peered down at her from the ivy-colored wall, and chirped and twittered in quite a friendly way, perhaps recognizing the scatter of its daily bread.

“After all,” though Erica, “with ourselves and the animals, we might let the rest of the world treat us as they please. I am glad they can't turn the animals and birds against us! That would be worse than anything.”

Then, suddenly turning from the abstract to the practical, she took out of her pocket a shabby little sealskin purse.

“Still sixpence of my prize money over,” she remarked to herself; “I'll go and buy some scones for tea. Father likes them.”

Erica's father was a Scotchman, and, though so-called scones were to be had at most shops, there was only one place where she could buy scones which she considered worthy the name, and that was at the Scotch baker's in Southampton Row. She hurried along the wet pavements, glad that the rain was over, for as soon as her purchase was completed she made up her mind to indulge for a few minutes in what had lately become a very frequent treat, namely a pause before a certain tempting store of second-hand books. She had never had money enough to buy anything except the necessary school books, and, being a great lover of poetry, she always seized with avidity on anything that was to be found outside the book shop. Sometimes she would carry away a verse of Swinburne, which would ring in her ears for days and days; sometimes she would read as much as two or three pages of Shelley. No one had every interrupted her, and a certain sense of impropriety and daring was rather stimulating than otherwise. It always brought to her mind a saying in the proverbs of Solomon, “Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”

For three successive days she had found to her great delight Longfellow's “Hiawatha.” The strange meter, the musical Indian names, the delightfully described animals, all served to make the poem wonderfully fascinating to her. She thought a page or two of “Hiawatha” would greatly sweeten her somewhat bitter world this afternoon, and with

her bag of scones in one hand and the book in the other she read on happily, quite unconscious that three pair of eyes were watching her from within the shop.

The wrinkled old man who was the presiding genius of the place had two customers, a tall, gray-bearded clergyman with bright, kindly eyes, and his son, the same Brian Osmond whom Erica had charged with her umbrella in Gower Street.

“An outside customer for you,” remarked Charles Osmond, the clergyman, glancing at the shop keeper. Then to his son, “What a picture she makes!”

Brian looked up hastily from some medical books which he had been turning over.

“Why that's my little Gower Street friend,” he exclaimed, the words being somehow surprised out of him, though he would fain have recalled them the next minute.

“I don't interrupt her,” said the shop owner. “Her father has done a great deal of business with me, and the little lady has a fancy for poetry, and don't get much of it in her life, I'll be bound.”

“Why, who is she?” asked Charles Osmond, who was on very friendly terms with the old book collector.

“She's the daughter of Luke Raeburn,” was the reply, “and whatever folks may say, I know that Mr. Raeburn leads a hard enough life.”

Brian turned away from the speakers, a sickening sense of dismay at his heart. His ideal was the daughter of Luke Raeburn! And Luke Raeburn was an atheist leader!

For a few minutes he lost consciousness of time and place, though always seeing in a sort of dark mist Erica's

lovely face bending over her book. The shop keeper's casual remark had been a fearful blow to him; yet, as he came to himself again, his heart went out more and more to the beautiful girl who had been brought up in what seemed to him so barren a creed. His dream of love, which had been bright enough only an hour before, was suddenly shadowed by an unthought of pain, but presently began to shine with a new and altogether different luster. He began to hear again what was passing between his father and the shop keeper.

“There's a sight more good in him than folks think. However wrong his views, he believes them right, and is ready to suffer for 'em, too. Bless me, that's odd, to be sure! There is Mr. Raeburn, on the other side of the Row! Fine-looking man, isn't he?”

Brian, looking up eagerly, fancied he must be mistaken for the only passenger in sight was a very tall man of remarkably benign aspect, middle-aged, yet venerable—or perhaps better described by the word “devotional-looking,” pervaded too by a certain majesty of calmness which seemed scarcely suited to his character of public agitator. The clean-shaven and somewhat rugged face was unmistakably that of a Scotchman, the thick waves of tawny hair overshadowing the wide brow, and the clear golden-brown eyes showed Brian at once that this could be no other than the father of his ideal.

In the meantime, Raeburn, having caught sight of his daughter, slowly crossed the road, and coming noiselessly up to her, suddenly took hold of the book she was reading, and with laughter in his eyes, said, in a peremptory voice:

“Five shillings to pay, if you please, miss!”

Erica, who had been absorbed in the poem, looked up in dismay; then seeing who had spoken, she began to laugh.

“What a horrible fright you gave me, father! But do look at this, it's the loveliest thing in the world. I've just got to the 'very strong man Kwasind.' I think he's a little like you!”

Raeburn, though no very great lover of poetry, took the book and read a few lines.

“Long they lived in peace together, Spake with naked hearts together, Pondering much and much contriving How the tribes of men might prosper.”

“Good! That will do very well for you and me, little one. I'm ready to be your Kwasind. What's the price of the thing? Four and sixpence! Too much for a luxury. It must wait till our ship comes in.”

He put down the book, and they moved on together, but had not gone many paces before they were stopped by a most miserable-looking beggar child. Brian standing now outside the shop, saw and heard all that passed.

Raeburn was evidently investigating the case, Erica, a little impatient of the interruption, was remonstrating.

“I thought you never gave to beggars, and I am sure that harrowing story is made up.”

“Very likely,” replied the father, “but the hunger is real, and I know well enough what hunger is. What have you here?” he added, indicating the paper bag which Erica held.

“Scones,” she said, unwillingly.

“That will do,” he said, taking them from her and giving them to the child. “He is too young to be anything but the victim of another's laziness. There! Sit down and eat them while you can.”

The child sat down on the doorstep with the bag of scones clasped in both hands, but he continued to gaze after his benefactor till he had passed out of sight, and there was a strange look of surprise and gratification in his eyes. That was a man who knew! Many people had, after hard begging, thrown him pence, many had warned him off harshly, but this man had looked straight into his eyes, and had at once stopped and questioned him, had singled out the one true statement from a mass of lies, and had given him—not a stale loaf with the top cut off, a suspicious sort of charity which always angered the waif—but his own food, bought for his own consumption. Most wonderful of all, too, this man knew what it was to be hungry, and had even the insight and shrewdness to be aware that the waif's best chance of eating the scones at all was to eat them then and there. For the first time a feeling of reverence and admiration was kindled in the child's heart; he would have done a great deal for his unknown friend.

Raeburn and Erica had meanwhile walked on in the direction of Guilford Square.

“I had bought them for you,” said Erica, reproachfully.

“And I ruthlessly gave them away,” said Raeburn, smiling. “That was hard lines; I though they were only household stock. But after all it comes to the same thing in the end, or better. You have given them to me by giving them to the child. Never mind, 'Little son Eric!'”

This was his pet name for her, and it meant a great deal to them. She was his only child, and it had at first been a great disappointment to every one that she was not a boy. But Raeburn had long ago ceased to regret this, and the

nickname referred more to Erica's capability of being both son and daughter to him, able to help him in his work and at the same time to brighten his home. Erica was very proud of her name, for she had been called after her father's greatest friend, Eric Haeberlein, a celebrated republican, who once during a long exile had taken refuge in London. His views were in some respects more extreme than Raeburn's, but in private life he was the gentlest and most fascinating of men, and had quite won the heart of his little namesake.

As Mrs. Raeburn had surmised, Erica's father had at once seen that something had gone wrong that day. The all-observing eyes, which had noticed the hungry look in the beggar child's face, noticed at once that his own child had been troubled.

“Something has vexed you,” he said. “What is the matter, Erica?”

“I had rather not tell you, father, it isn't anything much,” said Erica, casting down her eyes as if all at once the paving stones had become absorbingly interesting.

“I fancy I know already,” said Raeburn. “It is about your friend at the High School, is it not. I thought so. This afternoon I had a letter from her father.”

“What does he say? May I see it?” asked Erica.

“I tore it up,” said Raeburn, “I thought you would ask to see it, and the thing was really so abominably insolent that I didn't want you to. How did you hear about it?”

“Gertrude wrote me a note,” said Erica.

“At her father's dictation, no doubt,” said Raeburn; “I should know his style directly, let me see it.”

“I thought it was a pity to vex you, so I burned it,” said Erica.

Then, unable to help being amused at their efforts to save each other, they both laughed, though the subject was rather a sore one.

“It is the old story,” said Raeburn. “Life only, as Pope Innocent III benevolently remarked, 'is to be left to the children of misbelievers, and that only as an act of mercy.' You must make up your mind to bear the social stigma, child. Do you see the moral of this?”

“No,” said Erica, with something between a smile and a sigh.

“The moral of it is that you must be content with your own people,” said Raeburn. “There is this one good point about persecution—it does draw us all nearer together, really strengthens us in a hundred ways. So, little one, you must forswear school friends, and be content with your 'very strong man Kwasind,' and we will

“'Live in peace together Speak with naked hearts together.'

By the bye, it is rather doubtful if Tom will be able to come to the lecture tonight; do you think you can take notes for me instead?”

This was in reality the most delicate piece of tact and consideration, for it was, of course, Erica's delight and pride to help her father.

CHAPTER II. From Effect to Cause

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Only the acrid spirit of the times, Corroded this true steel. Longfellow.

Not Thine the bigot's partial plea,
Not Thine the zealot's ban;
Thou well canst spare a love of Thee
Which ends in hate of man.
Whittier.

Luke Raeburn was the son of a Scotch clergyman of the Episcopal Church. His history, though familiar to his own followers and to them more powerfully convincing than many arguments against modern Christianity, was not generally known. The orthodox were apt to content themselves with shuddering at the mention of his name; very few troubled themselves to think or inquire how this man had been driven into atheism. Had they done so they might, perhaps, have treated him more considerately, at any rate they must have learned that the much-disliked prophet of atheism was the most disinterested of men, one who had the courage of his opinions, a man of fearless honesty.

Raeburn had lost his mother very early; his father, a well-to-do man, had held for many years a small living in the west of Scotland. He was rather a clever man, but one-sided and bigoted; cold-hearted, too, and caring very little for his children. Of Luke, however, he was, in his peculiar fashion, very proud, for at an early age the boy showed signs of genius. The father was no great worker; though shrewd and

clever, he had no ambition, and was quietly content to live out his life in the retired little parsonage where, with no parish to trouble him, and a small and unexacting congregation on Sundays, he could do pretty much as he pleased. But for his son he was ambitious. Ever since his sixteenth year—when, at a public meeting the boy had, to the astonishment of every one, suddenly sprung to his feet and contradicted a false statement made by a great landowner as to the condition of the cottages on his estate—the father had foreseen future triumphs for his son. For the speech, though unpremeditated, was marvelously clever, and there was a power in it not to be accounted for by a certain ring of indignation; it was the speech of a future orator.

Then, too, Luke had by this time shown signs of religious zeal, a zeal which his father, though far from attempting to copy, could not but admire. His Sunday services over, he relapsed into the comfortable, easy-going life of a country gentleman for the rest of the week; but his son was indefatigable, and, though little more than a boy himself, gathered round him the roughest lads of the village, and by his eloquence, and a certain peculiar personal fascination which he retained all his life, absolutely forced them to listen to him. The father augured great things for him, and invariably prophesied that he would “live to see him a bishop yet.”

It was a settled thing that he should take Holy Orders, and for some time Raeburn was only too happy to carry out his father's plans. In his very first term at Cambridge, however, he began to feel doubts, and, becoming convinced

that he could never again accept the doctrines in which he had been educated, he told his father that he must give up all thought of taking Orders.

Now, unfortunately, Mr. Raeburn was the very last man to understand or sympathize with any phase of life through which he had not himself passed. He had never been troubled with religious doubts; skepticism seemed to him monstrous and unnatural. He met the confession, which his son had made in pain and diffidence, with a most deplorable want of tact. In answer to the perplexing questions which were put to him, he merely replied testily that Luke had been overworking himself, and that he had no business to trouble his head with matters which were beyond him, and would fain have dismissed the whole affair at once.

“But,” urged the son, “how is it possible for me to turn my back on these matters when I am preparing to teach them?”

“Nonsense,” replied the father, angrily. “Have not I taught all my life, preached twice a Sunday these thirty years without perplexing myself with your questionings? Be off to your shooting, and your golf, and let me have no more of this morbid fuss.”

No more was said; but Luke Raeburn, with his doubts and questions shut thus into himself, drifted rapidly from skepticism to the most positive form of unbelief. When he next came home for the long vacation, his father was at length awakened to the fact that the son, upon whom all his ambition was set, was hopelessly lost to the Church; and with this consciousness a most bitter sense of disappointment rose in his heart. His pride, the only side of

fatherhood which he possessed, was deeply wounded, and his dreams of honorable distinction were laid low. His wrath was great. Luke found the home made almost unbearable to him. His college career was of course at an end, for his father would not hear of providing him with the necessary funds now that he had actually confessed his atheism. He was hardly allowed to speak to his sisters, every request for money to start him in some profession met with a sharp refusal, and matters were becoming so desperate that he would probably have left the place of his own accord before long, had not Mr. Raeburn himself put an end to a state of things which had grown insufferable.

With some lurking hope, perhaps, of convincing his son, he resolved upon trying a course of argument. To do him justice he really tried to prepare himself for it, dragged down volumes of dusty divines, and got up with much pains Paley's “watch” argument. There was some honesty, even perhaps a very little love, in his mistaken endeavors; but he did not recognize that while he himself was unforgiving, unloving, harsh, and self-indulgent, all his arguments for Christianity were of necessity null and void. He argued for the existence of a perfectly loving, good God, all the while treating his son with injustice and tyranny. Of course there could be only one result from a debate between the two. Luke Raeburn with his honesty, his great abilities, his gift of reasoning, above all his thorough earnestness, had the best of it.

To be beaten in argument was naturally the one thing which such a man as Mr. Raeburn could not forgive. He might in time have learned to tolerate a difference of

opinion, he would beyond a doubt have forgiven almost any of the failings that he could understand, would have paid his son's college debts without a murmur, would have overlooked anything connected with what he considered the necessary process of “sowing his wild oats.” But that the fellow should presume to think out the greatest problems in the world, should set up his judgment against Paley's, and worst of all should actually and palpably beat HIM in argument—this was an unpardonable offense.

A stormy scene ensued. The father, in ungovernable fury, heaped upon the son every abusive epithet he could think of. Luke Raeburn spoke not a word; he was strong and self-controlled; moreover, he knew that he had had the best of the argument. He was human, however, and his heart was wrung by his father's bitterness. Standing there on that summer day, in the study of the Scotch parsonage, the man's future was sealed. He suffered there the loss of all things, but at the very time there sprung up in him an enthusiasm for the cause of free thought, a passionate, burning zeal for the opinions for which he suffered, which never left him, but served as the great moving impulse of his whole subsequent life.

“I tell you, you are not fit to be in a gentleman's house,” thundered the father. “A rank atheist, a lying infidel! It is against nature that you should call a parsonage your home.”

“It is not particularly home-like,” said the son, bitterly. “I can leave it when you please.”

“Can!” exclaimed the father, in a fury, “you WILL leave it, sir, and this very day too! I disown you from this time. I'll

have no atheist for my son! Change your views or leave the house at once."

Perhaps he expected his son to make some compromise; if so he showed what a very slight knowledge he had of his character. Luke Raeburn had certainly not been prepared for such extreme harshness, but with the pain and grief and indignation there rose in his heart a mighty resoluteness. With a face as hard and rugged as the granite rocks without, he wished his father goodbye, and obeyed his orders.

Then had followed such a struggle with the world as few men would have gone through with. Cut off from all friends and relations by his avowal of atheism, and baffled again and again in seeking to earn his living, he had more than once been on the very brink of starvation. By sheer force of will he had won his way, had risen above adverse circumstances, had fought down obstacles, and conquered opposing powers. Before long he had made fresh friends and gained many followers, for there was an extraordinary magnetism about the man which almost compelled those who were brought into contact with him to reverence him.

It was a curious history. First there had been that time of grievous doubt; then he had been thrown upon the world friendless and penniless, with the beliefs and hopes hitherto most sacred to him dead, and in their place an aching blank. He had suffered much. Treated on all sides with harshness and injustice, it was indeed wonderful that he had not developed into a mere hater, a passionate down-puller. But there was in his character a nobility which would not allow him to rest at this low level. The bitter hostility and injustice which he encountered did indeed warp his mind, and every

year of controversy made it more impossible for him to take an unprejudiced view of Christ's teaching; but nevertheless he could not remain a mere destroyer.

In that time of blankness, when he had lost all faith in God, when he had been robbed of friendship and family love, he had seized desperately on the one thing left him—the love of humanity. To him atheism meant not only the assertion—“The word God is a word without meaning, it conveys nothing to my understanding.” He added to this barren confession of an intellectual state a singularly high code of duty. Such a code as could only have emanated from one about whom there lingered what Carlyle has termed a great after-shine of Christianity. He held that the only happiness worth having was that which came to a man while engaged in promoting the general good. That the whole duty of man was to devote himself to the service of others. And he lived his creed.

Like other people, he had his faults, but he was always ready to spend and he spent for what he considered the good of others, while every act of injustice called forth his unsparing rebuke, and every oppressed person or cause was sure to meet with his support at whatever cost to himself. His zeal for what he regarded as the “gospel” of atheism grew and strengthened year by year. He was the untiring advocate of what he considered the truth. Neither illness nor small results, nor loss, could quench his ardor, while opposition invariably stimulated him to fresh efforts. After long years of toil, he had at length attained an influential position in the country, and though crippled by debts incurred in the struggle for freedom of speech, and living in

absolute penury, he was one of the most powerful men of the day.

The old bookseller had very truly observed that there was more good in him than people thought, he was in fact a noble character twisted the wrong way by clumsy and mistaken handling.

Brian Osmond was by no means bigoted; he had moreover, known those who were intimate with Raeburn, and consequently had heard enough of the truth about him to disbelieve the gross libels which were constantly being circulated by the unscrupulous among his opponents. Still, as on that November afternoon he watched Raeburn and his daughter down Southampton Row, he was conscious that for the first time he fully regarded the atheist as a fellow-man. The fact was that Raeburn had for long years been the champion of a hated cause; he had braved the full flood of opposition; and like an isolated rock had been the mark for so much of the rage and fury of the elements that people who knew him only by name had really learned to regard him more as a target than as a man. It was he who could hit hardest, who could most effectually baffle and ruin him; while the quieter spirits contented themselves with rarely mentioning his obnoxious name, and endeavoring as far as possible, to ignore his existence. Brian felt that till now he had followed with the multitude to do evil. He had, as far as possible, ignored his existence; had even been rather annoyed when his father had once publicly urged that Raeburn should be treated with as much justice and courtesy and consideration as if he had been a Christian. He had been vexed that his father should suffer on behalf of

such a man, had been half inclined to put down the scorn and contempt and anger of the narrow-minded to the atheist's account. The feeling had perhaps been natural, but all was changed now; he only revered his father all the more for having suffered in an unpopular cause. With some eagerness, he went back into the shop to see if he could gather any more particulars from the old bookseller. Charles Osmond had, however, finished his purchases and his conversation, and was ready to go.

“The second house in Guilford Terrace, you say?” he observed, turning at the door. “Thank you. I shall be sure to find it. Good day.” Then turning to his son, he added, “I had no idea we were such near neighbors! Did you hear what he told me? Mr. Raeburn lives in Guilford Terrace.”

“What, that miserable blind alley, do you mean at the other side of the square?”

“Yes, and I am just going round there now, for our friend the 'book-worm' tells me he has heard it rumored that some unscrupulous person who is going to answer Mr. Raeburn this evening, has hired a band of roughs to make a disturbance at the meeting. Fancy how indignant Donovan would be! I only wish he were here to take a word to Mr. Raeburn.”

“Will he not most likely have heard from some other source?” said Brian.

“Possibly, but I shall go round and see. Such abominations ought to be put down, and if by our own side all the better.”

Brian was only too glad that his father should go, and indeed he would probably have wished to take the message

himself had not his mind been set upon getting the best edition of Longfellow to be found in all London for his ideal. So at the turning into Guilford Square, the father and son parted.

The bookseller's information had roused in Charles Osmond a keen sense of indignation; he walked on rapidly as soon as he had left his son, and in a very few minutes had reached the gloomy entrance to Guilford Terrace. It was currently reported that Raeburn made fabulous sums by his work, and lived in great luxury; but the real fact was that, whatever his income, few men led so self-denying a life, or voluntarily endured such privations. Charles Osmond could not help wishing that he could bring some of the intolerant with him down that gloomy little alley, to the door of that comfortless lodging house. He rang, and was admitted into the narrow passage, then shown into the private study of the great man. The floor was uncarpeted, the window uncurtained, the room was almost dark; but a red-glow of fire light served to show a large writing table strewn with papers, and walls literally lined with books; also on the hearth-rug a little figure curled up in the most unconventionally comfortable attitude, dividing her attention between making toast and fondling a loud-purring cat.

CHAPTER III. Life From Another Point of View

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Toleration an attack on Christianity? What, then, are we to come to this pass, to suppose that nothing can support Christianity but the principles of persecution?... I am persuaded that toleration, so far from being an attack on Christianity, becomes the best and surest support that can possibly be given to it.... Toleration is good for all, or it is good for none... God forbid. I may be mistaken, but I take toleration to be a part of religion. Burke

Erica was, apparently, well used to receiving strangers. She put down the toasting fork, but kept the cat in her arms, as she rose to greet Charles Osmond, and her frank and rather child-like manner fascinated him almost as much as it had fascinated Brian.

“My father will be home in a few minutes,” she said; “I almost wonder you didn't meet him in the square; he has only just gone to send off a telegram. Can you wait? Or will you leave a message?”

“I will wait, if I may,” said Charles Osmond. “Oh, don't trouble about a light. I like this dimness very well, and, please, don't let me interrupt you.”

Erica relinquished a vain search for candle lighters, and took up her former position on the hearth rug with her toasting fork.