CHAPTER XXIX.

"QUINDIRA" REVISITED.

Since the occurrence of the events recorded in the last chapter to the time of those now narrated nine years had elapsed.

As Duke Dreman had been for a second time elected President of Undara, which now included all Fregida, his wise and comprehensive policy had been uninterruptedly continued. His great wealth, ability, eloquence, and charm of manner rendered his power almost dictatorial, notwithstanding the fact that he himself unceasingly extended the sovereignty of the people; as, however, in every case, he represented and advocated their opinions, which he largely formed, and for which he undoubtedly worked with unselfish consideration, their supreme power was represented by his acts. Of all his great abilities, that to select the fittest and wisest men for all leading positions, and to give them the full credit for all their actions, was probably the one which most largely added to his success.

The progress of Fregida, now known as Undara, had been as rapid as was consistent with safety and permanency. In the State of Gurla alone did any portion of the community suffer. Here, the class who had lately constituted the holders of hereditary titles, and their immediate connections, were the only sufferers. Being lately in a position which caused them to think that they were above ordinary mortals, while its surrounding tended to deteriorate them below their fellows, as it not only sapped their self-reliance, energy, and all their manly qualities, but encouraged all their appetites to the full at the expense of their intellect and finer feelings, they felt—now that they were placed on a footing according to their worth alone—utterly ill-used and discontented. Men who, in the time of their power, they would not condescend to notice, now outstripped them on all sides, and fairly held in society the positions they lately usurped. Prior to the establishment of the Republic, the majority of public positions were thrown open to competitive examinations only; but still, there had been a great number of positions which were filled with men of birth, not worth, and their great and most substantial prop remained, namely, their value
as husbands. Women of marriageable age whose parents, by a life of penurious saving, were able to largely endow them with money, but whose share of wit or charms were small, realized the splendid stability of a position conferred by a title, not only on its possessor but also on his near relatives, and so offered themselves and their money to support and endow the titled classes. By thus absorbing the fortunes of a large number of the heiresses, and also by bringing into their class many men of very great wealth and ability, they had managed to live, till the establishment of the commonwealth, as vampires on the general community; now, however, that sinecures of all sorts were abolished, and their claims to value as husbands had disappeared, though actually on an equality with their fellow-citizens, they were so much hampered by an extraordinary belief in their own superiority to ordinary persons that many of them were reduced to abject mental and physical misery. Poor people! Till they realized that those who were not of keen intellect should do their share of the world's work by physical labour, they suffered extremely; gradually, however, they realized this fact, and that it was as honourable and satisfactory for a man to earn his living by physical as by mental toil, and then they began to be wise. Before, however, these loafers, who lived in idleness through having too much, were brought to reason, the loafers, who having too little, lived in laziness through physical weakness, foolishness, or a preference for idleness, even if accompanied with a hungry, filthy degradation, were being brought to wise ways. These poor creatures, when given good food, proper clothes, shelter, and work, soon realized the loathsomeness of their late life, and became good members of the community. Many, certainly, preferred to live all their lives at Pentona, and so end their irresolute existence, but this was good for both the community and themselves, as it prevented posterity being burdened with a second edition of their individual selves. All temptations were repressed throughout Fregida, when Gurla became part of Undara. Consumption, leprosy, epilepsy, cancer, insanity, and heart disease, being bars to marriage, soon became almost unknown diseases. Destitution was a thing of the past, and now, gradually, crime of all sorts was becoming unknown. Criminal law was considered not as a means of punishing crime, but as a mode of reforming the criminal and suppressing crime. Medical science was not regarded as a means to keep alive diseased people, to propagate generations of unhealthy misery, but as a means to preserve life, stamp out disease, and prevent its propagation. The laws were founded on common sense and a regard for the benefit of the Commonwealth, before that of the individual. This bore the fruit of general happiness. Formerly the laws of the Republic were enacted primarily for the benefit of the few wealthy people, as those of Gurla were for the benefit of hereditary title-holders and
their connections, and in each case made privileged and protected those for whom they were formed.

Slowly wisdom became prevalent, and slowly—alas, too slowly—foolishness of all sorts decreased, though once having gone it went for ever. In Undara I could see no change during the eighteen years I had lived there. Men and women became old and passed away. Children were born or grew up, the cleared land extended, the roads changed for the better. Houses were built; but all these things came gradually as age to early prime, so gradually as to be unnoticed. In Pentona everything had progressed; the town had doubled in size, twice the extent of river gave light, heat, or power to the inhabitants; far as the eye could reach, cultivated fields, or even plantations and fruiteries extended, all of which was due to the army of paupers which had been sent to this haven that they soon regarded as a heaven. Their miserable existence, which had formerly been devoted to the corruption of their fellow-creatures, had been changed to one of happiness and benefit to society.

In Ura the change had been stupendous. In place of irregular streets—too broad in one place and too narrow in another—were straight, wide, handsome avenues, conveniently at right angles. In place of domiciles, replete with selfish, wasteful splendour, or filthy crowded dens of misery, with every grade between, had risen tall, handsome, regular buildings, giving reasonable luxury and comfort to all. In place of the idle plethoric wealth and the pinched miserable existences of perpetual toil had come wealth, with duties that could not be shirked, and a comfortable competence for all. In place of carriages with two horses, and two or more men, to carry two or three healthy people, as if they were weak-spined cripples, huge, slow, overcrowded vehicles, and slow traffic with occasional blocks, were splendid trams which ran down every street, and provided rapid, comfortable, and economical transit for all; while the dirty, inefficent horse traffic was replaced by infinitely superior vehicles, using electricity or compressed air. The loafing men and women, who spent their time in dressing themselves to move idly about the streets, thinking only of their own selfish pleasure, and the loafers who stood on the pavement, dirty, hungry and ill-clad, were both removed; and only saved from oblivion by being quoted occasionally to show the folly of the olden times. All extremes had disappeared, the evil excess of each moved to the other and changed to blessings. The golden mean had been reached, and in place of prejudice, favouritism, ignorance, intolerance, and folly of all sorts had come wisdom, which is as completely the father of good as light is of life. Zimera, newer than the cities I have mentioned, had grown up handsomer, healthier, more convenient and better in every way. This was only to be expected. A house built today lacks many of the improvements which are possible in a
house built ten years later, and so with a city. With Pentona, the criminal and foolish people who had found a haven there had built the roads, developed the mines and water-ways, reclaimed the land, and made many other improvements that brought prosperity in their train, and enabled everyone to have all that makes life happy, in exchange for a reasonable day's labour with brain or muscle.

In Gurla the progress, though no greater, had been more noticeable. The prison labour, when first introduced, had caused a great outcry, which reminded me of that against the introduction of machinery, which took place in the Middle Globe, when the working classes were as ignorant, and but little better than the animals. Foolishly they cried out, "This machine, that enables ten men to do the work of a hundred, will throw ninety men out of work to starve, and, by overstocking the labour market, reduce the toilers' value." The result, as everyone knows, was to elevate the labourer, shorten his hours, and improve his condition in every way.

"The labour of the prisons," said the foolish people in Gurla, "will throw men out of work to starve, there is not now enough work for all, we will have to work for less, and become virtually slaves." Foolish people! They forgot that the State could not let them starve. The wasted work, now utilized, made the earth fruitful, so that everyone had plenty. By increasing the number of labourers so much, the hours of all were shortened, so that all classes had time to cultivate themselves; than which, nothing is of greater importance to the State, as the cultivation and elevation of its people are as consequent on each other as is heat on fire. Men, who formerly toiled like machines, till wearied in brain and body, they had only inclination and motive power left, to take them to houses that sold spirituous stimulants, which created a deleterious and exhilarating intoxication, which soon made them besotted, and prematurely old; now that they left their work with some energy to spare, cleansed and happy, sat in the public gardens listening to music, or in the galleries, museums or libraries, learning from pictures and works of art; from specimens and models, or from books, as their inclination impelled them, those things that make happy mankind.

Progress, like an avalanche, goes slowly but surely, sometimes imperceptibly, faster and faster every year, till at last it moves onwards, in a majesty of might, crushing all opposition, and brooking no restraint. So, in Gurla, wisdom had been growing in the heart and mind of the people, till now it moved mightily on, overcoming all opposition, and leaving only the ruins of obstruction in its path.

Last, but not least, was Novel, the new city, founded by Duke Dreman from the wealth of his mines, and the wisdom of his great ability and experience. Laid out on fields and river bank,
with the foresight of genius fortified with experience, and, un­
hampered with prejudice, it represented the embryo of a godlike
ambition, and noble love for mankind, of a master mind who saw
in it a power to leaven the whole world with wisdom. Already
its influence was felt throughout Undara, and of the applicants
for admission to its citizenship, not one in three was granted.
Mental and physical excellence, combined with unblemished
character, alone gave the entry. Wealth had no golden key to
unlock its gates, nor influence any secluded path by which to
gain admission. Once the power of love, mightiest power in all
the universe, tried to pass to citizenship a woman, fair and good,
whose mother had died of consumption. Travo Rica, whose sweet
voice at opera and concert moved to joy his audience, and whose
gardens with flowers and fruits rewarded the industrious efforts
of his husbandry, loved a woman of Ura. He was twenty-four,
she three years younger. She must be admitted to citizenship,
or he resign it, to enable them to be married. Her lungs were
weak, but no sign of the fell disease was apparent. In the Supreme
Council it was proposed and seconded that the woman be admitted
to citizenship, so that she might become Rica's wife. He and she
anxiously witnessed the proceedings. Gravely the proposition
was negatived without a division, and no similar one was ever
made. The vexations of law, and the sufferings of disease were
almost unknown in the community, and anything that could lead
to either was rigorously excluded or suppressed. Duke Dreman's
power, though nominally only the same as that of any other
citizen, was actually an absolute despotism, by the wish of his
fellow-citizens. Had he, however, tried to inaugurate folly, his
power would have vanished as darkness before the sun. The city
was the child of his brain, and no one knew its requirements, or
sympathized with its wants, as he did. Personally, he was loved,
almost deified. The founder of the community, rich, generous,
clever, courteous, powerful, yet sympathetic, he had every quality
and requirement for despotism. Thus, in a community where
every man had an equal voice in the election of its rulers, and
where the majority could disselect, one man had gained an as­
ccendency and personal power, such as physical force alone could
not give, and which probably in the world's history no other man
ever enjoyed.

At this time my wife and I spent a holiday with the Dremanes.
At the Ura station we were received by the Duchess and her
eldest son. She seemed unchanged. Her life contained all that
makes existence happy for a woman. Health, wealth, a devoted
husband, clever, healthy children, and a splendid ambition. As
our electric carriage moved rapidly towards Quindira, the wonder­
ful change that had taken place in Ura since my first visit forced
itself on my mind; then destitution and misery was apparent on
all sides, now the first was not possible, and the second not
apparent, and reduced to a minimum. Quindira was unaltered; the duke, having a Presidential residence at both Ura and Zara, used it principally as a place of seclusion, where the younger children grew up, and he and Cora kept their pets, and worked out their ideas. The picturesque building, with its quaint, comfortable arrangements of verandah and outhouses, unique in its picturesqueuess, was the cradle of the duke's greatness. Here the early years of his energetic manhood had been successfully devoted to the foundation of his future prosperity. Here the ideas that had brought him wealth had been successfully worked out, and his plans, books, and speeches matured to fruition. And here he had found the woman who had crowned and made perfect his life.

At Quindira we found the duke and his second son waiting to receive us. Father and sons were more like friends than relations, the latter absorbing all the ideas of the former, whose future hopes they represented. Vernon, strangely like the duke, strong in mind and body, already spoke and acted with an originality only second to that of his father; the younger son, though physically like the father, had not his originating powers, but owned, to a great extent, a mental application, which patiently worked out what the duke's or his brother's more energetic brains conceived. The duke's five other children were all girls, and though he was as loving to them as a father could be, the boys were his hope and joy, who, in the future, when time had ended his life, were to carry out his plans, and in whom he felt—odd fancy—he was a mixture of stern logic and quaint ideas—he would continue his existence on earth. When Mary and the Duchess had expressed their mutual good wishes the duke said, "In the electric car in which you came the power generated in descending a declivity is saved to assist in moving on the level, or mounting a hill; the idea is Vernon's," he put his hand on his son's shoulders, "and we worked it out together."

They were wonderfully alike, dressed in the same material of the one fashion—knickerbockers, with jumper, and Vandyke collars—the father, vigorous and young-looking, the son tall and strong, the same vivid face and fearless eyes, the same courtesy of manner; they were but a completed and half-finished edition of each other. The younger son, Novel, was like in face and figure, but with larger, softer eyes, and quieter manner; like his mother, he could execute, but not originate. The little girls, with the rest of the household, looked on their brothers, as, after the duke, the most wonderful beings in the universe.

"My boys," said the duke, "will be partners, and what I have commenced they will more worthily finish."

As usual, one sat on either side of the mother, whom they regarded as requiring their constant courteous attention, the ripest fruit, the sweetest flowers, the cream of everything was for her.
In their infancy their offerings took the form of sweets half sucked away, dead butterflies, young animals, and all things dear to the childish heart. Now, the offerings, though no more prized, were more suitable; wild flowers, fruit, books, specimens of handicraft, and all things of greatest value to the givers.

The duke, continuing, said, "All disease has eventually to be stamped out of the world. This task they will have to transmit to their sons as I do to mine. The secrets of nature have to be discovered, and all her forces controlled for man's benefit."

"Father," said Vernon, "we—it was always we with them—will do all this while you live to work with us. Mother's hair may be grey"—he stroked the duchess's beautiful brown locks—"you may be a thing of the past, and we may be fathers of families, but together we will see these things."

"Delays may come," said the duke, thoughtfully, and then continued with a pathetic longing, "If I could only see all this before I die," his nostrils dilated and his face looked as it did in the years past, when he was conquering fate. "Difficulties dishearten, and delays damp resolution, my sons, as you have yet to find."

"We have never looked back, father," said Novel, quietly, "you have toiled and conquered in the past, as we will in the future." The mother drew down his head and kissed him on the mouth. "We will see the fruition of our hopes together, we three, I am certain."

Years after we all remembered these words. The mother, with tears and a beaming face, and all others with a feeling of grief that the growth of the tree should not be witnessed by its planters.

"Will you and Doctor Frank come with us to-morrow, Mary?" asked Vernon. "We are going—father and all—to break in the grey foal for mother."

"I should like to come very much," said my wife. "Why should the duchess want the grey colt broken in?"

"Because," replied Cora, "it is said to be the handsomest horse in Undara. Two years ago, when my boys were out shooting at Mount Boro, they saw a grey mare and her foal canter over a rustic bridge, and jump into a field of oats over a big gate. The boys measured it, and found it was over five feet high. They then stole quietly up to the horses, and saw that they were both very handsome animals. Frightening them, they again jumped the fence, and disappeared in the bush. My boys then determined to buy the foal for me, which they subsequently did, and made arrangements with its owner to let it run loose in the mountains, and feed it in the winter, so that it might grow a fine animal. All this the owner promised and did, for everyone loves my boys."
"And," said Vernon, in his clever complimentary way, "my father's sons."

"Were they not loved for their own sakes, they would be for their father's," replied the duchess, who, from use and mother wit, took the loving compliments from husband and son with a charming grace.

"My boys did this," said the duke, proudly, "as they like their mother to ride only the finest and handsomest horses in Undara."

"Not only this, but because a horse used to climbing the hills is as sure-footed as a goat," explained Vernon, "and besides, the way those horses jumped was wonderful. Supposing mother should like to take a short cut over the fences, that animal will carry her safe as a bird."

The idea seemed so very improbable as to cause Mary and me to smile.

"The horse we break in," he continued, unmoved, "we can be quite sure will be reliable in every way; good-tempered and perfect."

Turning to me, he said with a conviction I found contagious, "You must see that horse, Dr. Frank, to properly realize him."

"Father could buy mother the best horse in the market, but there is not, in my opinion, a horse born like this once in a decade," said Novel, who in action became very like his father and brother, though in repose his dreaming, studious face was wonderfully like his mother's.

"We have," said the duke, "made several improvements in harness—principally devised by the boys—which we will show you to-morrow."

"They work splendidly," said Vernon, the boy of practical energy.

"They are correct according to the highest theory of animal training, which proves that we have only to remove the natural fear inherent in the animal, and plant in its place a belief in the power and kindness of man," said Novel, the boy of study and theory, "to make them our willing slaves."

In the stables we found that each of the boys had his horses and dogs, each of which they personally fed, and to a large extent cared for; the duke wishing to make them physically strong and practical, as well as mentally energetic.

"Do you remember the night that Ben Aver shot my husband, Frank, and how Cedro saved his life?" asked the beautiful duchess, in a voice melodious with thankfulness.

"How you saved my life, by letting Cedro loose, my queen," said the duke, with a loving look.

"I remember it perfectly," I replied. "Sometimes, when I think of it in the dark, it all appears before me vivid as life; from
the flash of the pistol, and Cedro's rush past me, to the moment I stooped over the duke's unconscious face, and saw your tear stains there."

"The time was bitter sweet," said Cora, her eyes humid with old memories; "I thought he would die, and the joy of my future be buried in his grave. How I prayed: I seemed to speak direct to the throne of God. I promised my life—anything—if his life were spared."

"The prayer was heard," said Duke Yernon, kissing his wife's hand with a reverent love, "and your life taken, for it has been mine since that day."

The woman's brown eyes were like dew-laden flowers, and her fair face made soft as a Madonna's, with the shadow of sweet memories.

"Poor Cedro," she said presently, "he died on the anniversary of that day. My husband and I went into the field, and he followed us; he was very old, toothless and weak, and nearly blind. We went and sat down on a seat in the fields; it was a bright, frosty night, and our sealskins, wrapped closely round us, barely kept us from shivering. My husband was carrying a satchel, which he put down by our seat, and forgot, on our returning to the house. When we remembered and went back for it, we found the noble old dog dead beside it. He had stayed to take care of it as he had always done, and the cold had killed him. Poor Cedro. We should not have forgotten. He was true to the last."

"He hardly died, mother dear," said Vernon, soothingly, "the cold made him sleep, and he then passed away. He was gentle and brave, breathing only for the right, and lived a very happy life."

"All such do," said the duke, and his words seemed to me inspired, and the echo of fate.