

CHAPTER XIX

TIME passed, and with it events, great and small, national and domestic. Hardly had one war ended than thousands of miles away the Indian Mutiny flamed to the sky. With the present of a steam-yacht we laid the foundations of a rival navy in distant Japan. In 1858 was launched that premature leviathan, the "*Great Eastern*," and in that same year was launched another little craft of much more importance to John and Angeline Woden. Young Leslie Woden came into the world.

He was named by Angeline's desire, after his grandfather, a decision which tickled that gentleman's vanity. He bestowed upon him a large silver and utterly useless mug, and persisted in making extraordinary clucking noises to the new arrival, under the erroneous impression that the child liked it.

"Fancy my Angeline a mother." It gratified John immensely to see his wife with a young son held to her soft breast; he was enthralled. It endeared her to him all the more. Those in the town, who were already deservedly giving John Woden the reputation of a hard man, would have been amazed.

He thought of the time when Angeline first knew of the wonderful thing, which was to befall her, of her beautiful frankness, her hopes, her ambitions for the unborn. Of how she had lain by his side talking with radiant joy of the thing which was to be, and then some nights, suddenly afraid, had clung to him sobbing, whilst he held her in his arms and soothed her. And then the son and heir had arrived.

"I think we might call him Leslie," said Angeline, "Papa has no son, and the name will die out. We cannot have two Johns in the family; it will be such a confusion. Unless, we call him after my uncle, and name him Tom."

John started. "No. Don't call him Tom."

"Why not dear? Don't you like the name?"

"No." There was a shade on John's brow; he was thinking of the years that had been. Where now was his *other* son? The first-born. He would be a boy of twelve.

"John, you look very solemn. What is the matter?"

"Nothing, Angeline. I was only thinking."

There was nothing to be done. Never had anything more been heard of Lizzie Bonvill and her son since that far-off year: The candle was still being put out nightly in the window in the Strand.

Often it had been on the tip of John's tongue to confess to Angeline, but something had always held him back.

He sighed a little, and then was again the strong man, unmoved. This son of his—this lawful son—was to do great things, carry on the family name, be a worthy successor to the Woden interests; the engineering works at Rotherhithe and Redhall, the *Woden Collieries*, even the little shop of *Brown and Woden* in the Strand.

For he had always retained the little shop, and after selling the engineering interests at Rotherhithe at the top of the market, had subsequently bought them back at the bottom when the time came.

"*Woden and Son*," murmured John. "I hope he has the instincts of a business man."

He would not force him into business, if he had not, but it would be a grievous disappointment. He remembered how he himself had been destined for the Church; sons did not always become what their fathers desired.

The months passed. Young Leslie grew fatter and bigger and was weaned, and was given a small carriage of his won in which to take the air.

In 1859, Angeline presented Leslie with a little brother.

It was a great year, 1859. Darwin had launched the first of his thunderbolts. Age-old superstitions and outworn creeds were grinding to destruction on the rocks of scientific truth.

Aunt Maria, unbending from her frozen attitude of the past few years, very piously gave the new baby a Bible. John added to it, a nicely-bound volume of the *Origin of Species*.

"I think we might call him Charles," said John.

Angeline was a little shocked. "Ch, no; I don't like Mr. Darwin. I am sure my baby is not descended from a monkey."

"Well, of course, Angeline, I can't bring any of your own relatives up against you, except your Aunt, but I am open to admit that some of my ancestors were a queer lot."

"Dearest, how can you say such things? Mr. Baddeley was in yesterday, and he was most bitter about Mr. Darwin. Says he ought to be imprisoned, and that he is an instrument of Satan."

"We must expect Mr. Baddeley to be bitter about it, Angeline. Being a clergyman he sees that it is a blow to his profession. I should not like it if someone invented substitutes for coal and iron."

"John, I wish you were not quite so sceptical. Mr. Gladstone is a clever man, and he does not believe in what Mr. Darwin says about us and these monkeys. I thought of calling the baby William."

"After that fellow? Well, I admit he is smart and will go far. He has any amount of ability, and has a wonderful way with a crowd. I really think that sometimes he himself believes what he is saying to them! Call the boy William, by all means. What's in a name?"

So William was chosen, and duly baptised by Mr. Baddeley who so disliked Darwin and all his ways.

John's unbelief never obtruded itself much to the out-

side world; only when fanatics entered the lists, he could always enjoy tilting a lance against them. It troubled Angeline a little; she was broadminded for her sex beyond the age in which she lived, and had no patience with ignorance. Yet she always held to her early beliefs, and John gave her a perfectly free hand with regard to their children in such matters, so she was comforted.

It was a period when, in affairs religious, all from archbishops to artisans ignored commonsense and refused to think, preferring to rely on the teaching handed down by many generations of mamas.

"I do not like to hear you say that," exclaimed Angeline, when John expressed some such view. "I honoured my mother as I want my sons to honour me."

"Dear, every decent man and woman does. But we must think for ourselves."

"I can't *reason* with you, John; I can only be very sorry."

With a sudden movement, he lifted her in his arms, and kissed her reverently.

"Don't you bother your head about things, little Miss One-Shoe-Off-and-One-Shoe-On."

"Dearest, you have not called me that for years, and it is nice to hear it again. How big and strong you are!"

"And what a dainty dark-haired, blue eyed little elf you are, Angeline. Much too much of a baby to be the mother of two strong sons. I declare you have hardly changed since I found you in your nightie in Vienna, and not changed at all since I found you in your 'wood syrup' dress by the pool."

"Nothing on at all. Wasn't that shocking? I expect you were fearfully intrigued—much more than you told me then."

"Not any more than to see you so now. It is always a thrill to me."

"Will it be so when I grow old, I wonder, John?"

"And when I grow old, what then, Angeline? When I am a cross, doddering old man? Will you love me then?"

"I can't think you will ever be cross; you are always so calm. And John, I am sure you could *never* dodder, if you lived to be a hundred. I expect we shall be just a loving old couple, with Leslie and Billy to look after us."

"I want them to grow up two fine strong men, who will carry on the family name and interests, my little Angeline."

"And I want them to grow up good, honest boys, like their papa—but not so sceptical as their papa—not so hard," said Angeline.

"Hard? You have never found me hard, pussy."

"No, but that is the name you have among the workmen."

"I am only hard to failures and incompetents and weaklings," answered John.

"I think one ought to be kind to those; they have such a rough time in the world. But I am only a girl," said Angeline, with dignity, "I do not know much about these things. Perhaps I ought not to call myself a girl, either; being the mother of two sons?"

"Perhaps you will just as long as you are like a pretty schoolgirl, and that will be for years," announced John.

"Put me down now, dear—oh, kiss me first, like a good husband. I have to bath your sons. I dare not leave it to Nannie; she always makes the water either too hot or too cold, and they cry so."

"Poor little brutes. All right, you go along and look after them."

John Woden stretched his six feet three and fifteen stone of solid bone and muscle in the armchair and mused on events.

At thirty-two years of age, he could contemplate life with considerable satisfaction. He had started his career with thirty-three pounds and iron determination. He now had many thousands and the same iron determination. He was resolved yet to be a millionaire. The nice house

in which he and Angeline lived and moved and had their being would go, to be replaced by a mansion in the midst of many acres. This would be in the kindly South-country, when the time came : not in the industrial North, where year by year as even in the lovely valley of Redehall itself, the factories and the mean little houses were covering land, which had grown great woods and been clustered with green grass.

He had Angeline, and two sons. He was a Member of Parliament renowned for his caustic wit and keen penetration into the interstices of his opponent's armour. It really seemed that the Fate, in which he did not believe, had been very kind to John Woden.

There was a sect of old which, in times of great good fortune, used to fall on its knees, and beseech the gods for help to bear the dire calamities which it knew were about to fall upon it and its adherents.

Mathematical laws would also seem to show that mixed with any good luck must be an admixture of bad.

"If Lizzie should ever turn up," mused John Woden, "what should I do with her now? How would Angeline look at it?"

He knew that Angeline was broadminded; it was a day when young men were tacitly understood to sow wild oats before marriage, and young women not even to know that there were such things. The question as to whether John had or had not sown wild oats had never arisen, though once or twice they had been near it. Still, if she had thought about the matter at all, she might have considered the possibility.

Wild oats in the abstract were, however, one thing. Wild oats in the concrete, in the shape of the partner of a former *liaison*, were another. Then there was young Tom; he felt that the existence of his son by another would hurt Angeline more than all.

Again, if Lizzie had gone on the streets as she had sug-

gested, what kind of a person was she now? He thought of the faded harlots he had seen; the ghastly caricatures of womanhood, once the pretty, frail toys of St. John's Wood, which then held such dubious honours, later to be passed to Maida Vale.

Lizzie would then be well in the thirties, and after years of such a life, what would she be like? How would the idea of what she had once been to him, appeal to his wife?

It was a troubling thought. He smoked cigarette after cigarette, with his mind in a state of uncertainty; a most unusual state for John Woden's mind.

"I think she will be dead long since."

Back to his mind came the story of the girl with the candle at the last bedside of his uncle.

"I wonder who that was? Telepathy of some sort, I suppose?—John Woden, you are losing your nerve. You are trying to cross the Vistula before you are over the Rhine. When trouble comes, face it and fight it then."

He rang the bell for a manservant.

"Brandy-and-soda, please, Charles."

"Very good, sir."

"And give orders to get out the horse and trap. I want to drive before I turn in."

The swift-trotting horse carried him through the lanes, and the cool air of the valley soothed his mind. Away through the hills could be seen the distant glow of the blast furnaces; they were nearer now, the hives of many men were creeping up to Redehall.

"It is a good life after all," thought John.

The years passed on; those slowly flickering years, rising from seedtime to harvest, and then again, in which a man grows old before he realises the fulness of his days.

In 1861 the United States of America, reaching adolescence and swept by mighty passions, were plunged into the throes of civil war.

The works in Rotherhithe were again busy with muni-

tions of war, and as John's customers were principally in the Confederate States, it became necessary to do a little gun-running.

"I have a good mind to go a voyage in one of the ships myself, Angeline. It would be great sport, and I hardly like to send other men to face risks and remain myself at home in safety."

"John, if you do anything so silly, I shall run away and come with you to look after you."

"Shall I tell them to get a cabin ready for you on the *Malvina*? She is sailing for Charleston almost immediately."

"John, there are times when you talk dreadful nonsense." She kissed him and left him.

It was a night in April, 1863. He sat by the fire—for the season was late up north—and smoked contentedly. The children were in bed.

There was a tap at the door.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but there is a young man to see you."

"Rather late. Who is he and what does he want?"

"He says, sir, that his name is Tom Bonvill—"

There was a great silence.

"Show him in," said John Woden, quietly. So it had come at last?

He looked up as his visitor entered, and saw a youth, barely seventeen, with a clear, open face, very like—desperately like John's own. Immediately John thought that if Angeline saw him she would *know*.

The lad was poorly but neatly dressed.

"Well," said John Woden, a little grimly, "what can I do for you?"

— He twisted his cap nervously. "The fact is, sir—ought I to call you 'sir'?"

"What else?"

"I am your son," said Tom, simply.

"I thought you must know that by your coming here. I made a great search for you and your mother. Where is she?"

"I do not know," the boy's voice faltered. "There may have been an accident. She went out one night and never came back."

"That seems to be a habit of hers, then. Did she ever go back to the shop in the Strand—I suppose you have heard of that?" asked John, thinking of the figure with the candle.

"Not that I know."

"How did you trace me?" demanded John.

"She told me all about you; you are well known—sir. It was easy to find you."

"The penalty of fame," said John, sardonically. "Why did she not come back to me? I should have given you both a good home."

"Because she hated you."

"Do you hate me?"

"I am not sure," said Tom. "Mother said that if I were ever in want I should go to you and demand my rights. I have not come to beg."

"For a young man you are singularly untactful," said John, grimly. "If I turn you out, what will you do?"

"Denounce you, sir." The boy was gaining more spirit. "No one looking at me would doubt my story."

"That is true. So you are unprosperous and have come for assistance? I do not yield to blackmail."

"I'm not blackmailing you," said the boy, sullenly. "I am your son and you are a rich man. It is right that you should do something for me."

"I should have done something all these years had your mother not been a fool. What did she do for you? Answer me that?"

At that moment the door opened and Angeline came in. John made the lad a gesture to stay his answer, but his

back was to the door; he did not see the new arrival. With a passionate force of temper he replied, his nails digging deep into his palms:

“She sold herself night after night to the foulest men in London,—my mother, who ought to have been your wife. She sold herself to keep me, Mr. Woden—I, who claim my rights from you now.”

“What—who is this?” faltered Angeline, looking from one to the other. A frightened look came into her blue eyes as she saw how like they were.

The boy turned towards her, hot with passion.

“Madam, I am his son.”