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## THE AMAZING MARRIAGE

By George Meredith

1895

### BOOK 5.

- XXXIX. THE RED WARNING FROM A SON OF VAPOUR
- XL. A RECORD OF MINOR INCIDENTS
- XLI. IN WHICH THE FATES ARE SEEN AND A CHOICE OF THE REFUGES FROM THEM
- XLII. THE RETARDED COURTSHIP
- XLIII. ON THE ROAD TO THE ACT OF PENANCE
- XLIV. BETWEEN THE EARL; THE COUNTESS AND HER BROTHER, AND OF A SILVER CROSS
- XLV. CONTAINS A RECORD OF WHAT WAS FEARED, WHAT WAS HOPED, AND WHAT HAPPENED
- XLVI. A CHAPTER OF UNDERCURRENTS AND SOME SURFACE FLASHES
- XLVII. THE LAST: WITH A CONCLUDING WORD BY THE DAME

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE RED WARNING FROM A SON OF VAPOUR

Desiring loneliness or else Lord Feltre's company, Fleetwood had to grant a deferred audience at home to various tradesmen, absurdly fussy about having the house of his leased estate of Calesford furnished complete and habitable on the very day stipulated by his peremptory orders that the place should be both habitable and hospitable. They were right, they were excused; grand entertainments of London had been projected, and he fell into the weariful business with them, thinking of Henrietta's insatiable appetite for the pleasures. He had taken the lease of this burdensome Calesford, at an eight-miles' drive from the Northwest of town, to gratify the devouring woman's taste which was, to have all the luxuries of the town in a framework of country scenery.

Gower Woodseer and he were dining together in the evening. The circumstance was just endurable, but Gower would play the secretary, and doggedly subjected him to hear a statement of the woeful plight of Countess Livia's affairs. Gower, commissioned to examine them, remarked: 'If we have all the figures!'

'If we could stop the bleeding!' Fleetwood replied. 'Come to the Opera to-night; I promised. I promised Abrane for to-morrow. There's no end to it. This gambling mania's a flux. Not one of them except your old enemy, Corby, keeps clear of it; and they're at him for subsidies, as they are at me, and would be at you or any passenger on the suspected of a purse. Corby shines among them.'

That was heavy judgement enough, Gower thought. No allusion to Esslemont ensued. The earl ate sparely, and silently for the most part.

He was warmed a little at the Opera by hearing Henrietta's honest raptures over her Columelli in the Pirata. But Lord Brailstone sat behind her, and their exchange of ecstasies upon the tattered pathos of

E il mio tradito amor,

was not moderately offensive.

His countenance in Henrietta's presence had to be studied and interpreted by Livia. Why did it darken? The demurest of fuliginous intriguers argued that Brail stone was but doing the spiring required of him, and would have to pay the penalty unrewarded, let him Italianize as much as he pleased. Not many months longer, and there would be the bit of an outburst, the whiff of scandal, perhaps a shot, and the rupture of an improvident alliance, followed by Henrietta's free hand to the moody young earl, who would then have possession of the only woman he could ever love: and at no cost. Jealousy of a man like Brailstone, however infatuated the man, was too foolish. He must perceive how matters were tending? The die-away acid eyeballs-at-the-ceiling of a pair of fanatics

per la musica might irritate a husband, but the lover should read and know. Giddy as the beautiful creature deprived of her natural aliment seems in her excuseable hunger for it, she has learnt her lesson, she is not a reeling libertine.

Brailstone peered through his eyelashes at the same shadow of a frown where no frown sat on his friend's brows. Displeasure was manifest, and why? Fleetwood had given him the dispossessing shrug of the man out of the run, and the hint of the tip for winning, with the aid of operatic arias; and though he was in Fleetwood's books ever since the prize-fight, neither Fleetwood nor the husband nor any skittishness of a timorous wife could stop the pursuer bent to capture the fairest and most inflaming woman of her day.

'I prefer your stage Columelli,' Fleetwood said.

'I come from exile!' said Henrietta; and her plea in excuse of ecstasies wrote her down as confessedly treasonable to the place quitted.

Ambrose Mallard entered the box, beholding only his goddess Livia. Their eyebrows and inaudible lips conversed eloquently. He retired like a trumped card on the appearance of M. de St. Ombre. The courtly Frenchman won the ladies to join him in whipping the cream of the world for five minutes, and passed out before his flavour was exhausted. Brailstone took his lesson and departed, to spy at them from other boxes and heave an inflated shirt-front. Young Cressett, the bottle of effervescence, dashed in, and for him Livia's face was motherly. He rattled a tale of the highway robbery of Sir Meeson Corby on one of his Yorkshire moors. The picture of the little baronet arose upon the narration, and it amused. Chumley Potts came to 'confirm every item,' as he said. 'Plucked Corby clean. Pistol at his head. Quite old style. Time, ten P.M. Suspects Great Britain, King, Lords and Commons, and buttons twenty times tighter. Brosey Mallard down on him for a few fighting men. Perfect answer to Brosey.'

'Mr. Mallard did not mention the robbery,' Henrietta remarked.

'Feared to shock: Corby such a favoured swain,' Potts accounted for the omission.

'Brosey spilling last night?' Fleetwood asked.

'At the palazzo, we were,' said Potts. 'Luck pretty fair first off. Brosey did his trick, and away and away and away went he! More old Brosey wins, the wiser he gets. I stayed.' He swung to Gower: 'Don't drink dry Sillery after two A.M. You read me?'

'Egyptian, but decipherable,' said Gower.

The rising of the curtain drew his habitual groan from Potts, and he fled to colloque with the goodly number of honest fellows in the house of music who detested 'squallery.' Most of these afflicted pilgrims to the London conservatory were engaged upon the business of the Goddess richly

inspiring the Heliconian choir, but rendering the fountain-waters heady. Here they had to be, if they would enjoy the spectacle of London's biggest and choicest bouquet: and in them, too, there was an unattached air during Potts' cooling discourse of turf and tables, except when he tossed them a morsel of tragedy, or the latest joke, not yet past the full gallop on its course. Their sparkle was transient; woman had them fast. Compelled to think of them as not serious members of our group, he assisted at the crush-room exit, and the happy riddance of the beautiful cousins dedicated to the merry London midnights' further pastures.

Fleetwood's word was extracted, that he would visit the 'palazzo' within a couple of hours.

Potts exclaimed: 'Good. You promise. Hang me, if I don't think it 's the only certain thing a man can depend upon in this world.'

He left the earl and Gower Woodseer to their lunatic talk. He still had his ideas about the association of the pair. 'Hard-headed player of his own game, that Woodseer, spite of his Mumbo-Jumbo-oracle kind of talk.'

Mallard's turn of luck downward to the deadly drop had come under Potts' first inspection of the table. Admiring his friend's audacity, deploring his rashness, reproving his persistency, Potts allowed his verdict to go by results; for it was clear that Mallard and Fortune were in opposition. Something like real awe of the tremendous encounter kept him from a plunge or a bet. Mallard had got the vertigo, he reported the gambler's launch on dementedness to the earl. Gower's less experienced optics perceived it. The plainly doomed duellist with the insensible Black Goddess offered her all the advantages of the Immortals challenged by flesh. His effort to smile was a line cut awry in wood; his big eyes were those of a cat for sociability; he looked cursed, and still he wore the smile. In this condition, the gambler runs to emptiness of everything he has, his money, his heart, his brains, like a coal-truck on the incline of the rails to a collier.

Mallard applied to the earl for a loan of fifty guineas. He had them and lost them, and he came, not begging, blustering for a second supply; quite in the wrong tone, Potts knew. Fleetwood said: 'Back it with pistols, Brosey'; and, as Potts related subsequently, 'Old Brosey had the look of a staked horse.'

Fortune and he having now closed the struggle, perforce of his total disarmament, he regained the wits we forfeit when we engage her. He said to his friend Chummy: 'Abrane tomorrow? Ah, yes, punts a Thames waterman. Start of--how many yards? Sunbury-Walton: good reach. Course of two miles: Braney in good training. Straight business? I mayn't be there. But you, Chummy, you mind, old Chums, all cases of the kind, safest back the professional. Unless--you understand!'

Fleetwood could not persuade Gower to join the party. The philosopher's pretext of much occupation masked a bashfully sentimental dislike of the flooding of quiet country places by the city's hordes. 'You're right, right,' said Fleetwood, in sympathy, resigned to the prospect of

despising his associates without a handy helper. He named Esslemont once, shot up a look at the sky, and glanced it Eastward.

Three coaches were bound for Sunbury from a common starting-point at nine of the morning. Lord Fleetwood, Lord Brailstone, and Lord Simon Pitscrew were the whips. Two hours in advance of them, the earl's famous purveyors of picnic feasts bowled along to pitch the riverside tent and spread the tables. Our upper and lower London world reported the earl as out on another of his expeditions: and, say what we will, we must think kindly of a wealthy nobleman ever to the front to enliven the town's dusty eyes and increase Old England's reputation for pre-eminence in the Sports.

He is the husband of the Whitechapel Countess--got himself into that mess; but whatever he does, he puts the stamp of style on it. He and the thing he sets his hand to, they're neat, they're finished, they're fitted to trot together, and they've a shining polish, natural, like a lily of the fields; or say Nature and Art, like the coat of a thoroughbred led into the paddock by his groom, if you're of that mind.

Present at the start in Piccadilly, Gower took note of Lord Fleetwood's military promptitude to do the work he had no taste for, and envied the self-compression which could assume so pleasant an air. He heard here and there crisp comments on his lordship's coach and horses and personal smartness; the word 'style,' which reflects handsomely on the connoisseur conferring it, and the question whether one of the ladies up there was the countess. His task of unearthing and disentangling the monetary affairs of 'one of the ladies' compelled the wish to belong to the party soon to be towering out of the grasp of bricks, and delightfully gay, spirited, quick for fun. A fellow, he thought, may brood upon Nature, but the real children of Nature--or she loves them best--are those who have the careless chatter, the ready laugh, bright welcome for a holiday. In catching the hour, we are surely the bloom of the hour? Why, yes, and no need to lose the rosy wisdom of the children when we wrap ourselves in the patched old cloak of the man's.

On he went to his conclusions; but the Dame will have none of them, though here was a creature bent on masonry-work in his act of thinking, to build a traveller's-rest for thinkers behind him; while the volatile were simply breaking their bubbles.

He was discontented all day, both with himself and the sentences he coined. A small street-boy at his run along the pavement nowhither, distanced him altogether in the race for the great Secret; precipitating the thought, that the conscious are too heavily handicapped. The unburdened unconscious win the goal. Ay, but they leave no legacy. So we must fret and stew, and look into ourselves, and seize the brute and scourge him, just to make one serviceable step forward: that is, utter a single sentence worth the pondering for guidance.

Gower imagined the fun upon middle Thames: the vulcan face of Captain Abrane; the cries of his backers, the smiles of the ladies, Lord Fleetwood's happy style in the teeth of tattlean Aurora's chariot for

overriding it. One might hope, might almost see, that he was coming to his better senses on a certain subject. As for style overriding the worst of indignities, has not Scotia given her poet to the slack dependant of the gallows-tree, who so rantingly played his jig and wheeled it round in the shadow of that institution? Style was his, he hit on the right style to top the situation, and perpetually will he slip his head out of the noose to dance the poet's verse.

In fact, style is the mantle of greatness; and say that the greatness is beyond our reach, we may at least pray to have the mantle.

Strangest of fancies, most unphilosophically, Gower conceived a woman's love as that which would bestow the gift upon a man so bare of it as he. Where was the woman? He embraced the idea of the sex, and found it resolving to a form of one. He stood humbly before the one, and she waned into swarms of her sisters. So did she charge him with the loving of her sex, not her. And could it be denied, if he wanted a woman's love just to give him a style? No, not that, but to make him feel proud of himself. That was the heart's way of telling him a secret in owning to a weakness. Within it the one he had thought of forthwith obtained her lodgement. He discovered this truth, in this roundabout way, and knew it a truth by the warm fireside glow the contemplation of her cast over him.

Dining alone, as he usually had to do, he was astonished to see the earl enter his room.

'Ah, you always make the right choice!' Fleetwood said, and requested him to come to the library when he had done eating.

Gower imagined an accident. A metallic ring was in the earl's voice.

One further mouthful finished dinner, for Gower was anxious concerning the ladies. He joined the earl and asked.

'Safe. Oh yes. We managed to keep it from them,' said Fleetwood.

'Nothing particular, perhaps you'll think. Poor devil of a fellow! Father and mother alive, too! He did it out of hearing, that 'a one merit. Mallard: Ambrose Mallard. He has blown his brains out.'

Seated plunged in the armchair, with stretched legs and eyes at the black fire-grate, Fleetwood told of the gathering under the tent, and Mallard seen, seen drinking champagne; Mallard no longer seen, not missed.

'He killed himself three fields off. He must have been careful to deaden the sound. Small pocket-pistol hardly big enough to--but anything serves. Couple of brats came running up to Chummy Potts:--"Gentleman's body bloody in a ditch." Chummy came to me, and we went. Clean dead; --in the mouth, pointed up; hole through the top of the skull. We're crockery! crockery! I had to keep Chummy standing. I couldn't bring him back to our party. We got help at a farm; the body lies there. And that's not the worst. We found a letter to me in his pocket pencilled his last five minutes. I don't see what he could have done except to go. I can't tell you more. I had to keep my face, rowing and driving back.

"But where is Mr. Potts? Where can Mr. Mallard be?" Queer sensation, to hear the ladies ask! Give me your hand.'

The earl squeezed Gower's hand an instant; and it was an act unknown for him to touch or bear a touch; it said a great deal.

Late at night he mounted to Gower's room. The funeral of the day's impressions had not been shaken off. He kicked at it and sunk under it as his talk rambled. 'Add five thousand,' he commented, on the spread of Livia's papers over the table. 'I've been having an hour with her. Two thousand more, she says. Better multiply by two and a half for a woman's confession. We have to trust to her for some of the debts of honour. See her in the morning. No one masters her but you. Mind, the first to be clear of must be St. Ombre. I like the fellow; but these Frenchmen--they don't spare women. Ambrose,'--the earl's eyelids quivered. 'Jealousy fired that shot. Quite groundless. She 's cool as a marble Venus, as you said. Go straight from her house to Esslemont. I don't plead a case. Make the best account you can of it. Say--you may say my eyes are opened. I respect her. If you think that says little, say more. It can't mean more. Whatever the Countess of Fleetwood may think due to her, let her name it. Say my view of life, way of life, everything in me, has changed. I shall follow you. I don't expect to march over the ground. She has a heap to forgive. Her father owns or boasts, in that book of his Rose Mackrell lent me, he never forgave an injury.'

Gower helped the quotation, rubbing his hands over it, for cover of his glee at the words he had been hearing. 'Never forgave an injury without a return blow for it. The blow forgives. Good for the enemy to get it. He called his hearty old Pagan custom "an action of the lungs" with him. And it's not in nature for injuries to digest in us. They poison the blood, if we try. But then, there's a manner of hitting back. It is not to go an inch beyond the exact measure, Captain Kirby warns us.'

Fleetwood sighed down to a low groan.

'Lord Feltre would have an answer for you. She's a wife; and a wife hitting back is not a pleasant--well, petticoats make the difference. If she's for amends, she shall exact them; and she may be hard to satisfy, she shall have her full revenge. Call it by any other term you like. I did her a wrong. I don't defend myself; it 's not yet in the Law Courts. I beg to wipe it out, rectify it--choose your phrase--to the very fullest. I look for the alliance with her to . . .'

He sprang up and traversed the room: 'We're all guilty of mistakes at starting: I speak of men. Women are protected; and if they're not, there's the convent for them, Feltre says. But a man has to live it on before the world; and this life, with these flies of fellows . . . I fell into it in some way. Absolutely like the first bird I shot as a youngster, and stood over the battered head and bloody feathers, wondering! There was Ambrose Mallard--the same splintered bones--blood--come to his end; and for a woman; that woman the lady bearing the title of half-mother to me. God help me! What are my sins? She feels



nothing, or about as much as the mortuary paragraph of the newspapers, for the dead man; and I have Ambrose Mallard's look at her and St. Ombre talking together, before he left the tent to cross the fields. Borrow, beg, or steal for money to play for her! and not a glimpse of the winning post.

St. Ombre 's a cool player; that 's at the bottom of the story. He's cool because play doesn't bite him, as it did Ambrose. I should say the other passion has never bitten him. And he's alive and presentable; Ambrose under a sheet, with Chummy Potts to watch. Chummy cried like a brat in the street for his lost mammy. I left him crying and sobbing. They have their feelings, these "children of vapour," as you call them. But how did I fall into the line with a set I despised? She had my opinion of her gamblers, and retorted that young Cressett's turn for the fling is my doing. I can't swear it's not. There's one of my sins. What's to wipe them out! She has a tender feeling for the boy; confessed she wanted governing. Why; she's young, in a way. She has that particular vice of play. She might be managed. Here's a lesson for her! Don't you think she might? The right man,--the man she can respect, fancy incorruptible! He must let her see he has an eye for tricks. She's not responsible for--his mad passion was the cause, cause of everything he did. The kind of woman to send the shaft. You called her "Diana seated." You said, "She doesn't hunt, she sits and lets fly her arrow." Well, she showed feeling for young Cressett, and her hit at me was an answer. It struck me on the mouth. But she's an eternal anxiety. A man she respects! A man to govern her!

Fleetwood hurried his paces. 'I couldn't have allowed poor Ambrose. Besides, he had not a chance--never had in anything. It wants a head, wants the man who can say no to her. "The Reveller's Aurora," you called her. She has her beauty, yes. She respects you. I should be relieved --a load off me! Tell her, all debts paid; fifty thousand invested, in her name and her husband's. Tell her, speak it, there's my consent--if only the man to govern her! She has it from me, but repeat it, as from me. That sum and her portion would make a fair income for the two. Relieved? By heaven, what a relief! Go early. Coach to Esslemont at eleven. Do my work there. I haven't to repeat my directions. I shall present myself two days after. I wish Lady Fleetwood to do the part of hostess at Calesford. Tell her I depute you to kiss my son for me. Now I leave you. Good-night. I shan't sleep. I remember your saying, "bad visions come under the eyelids." I shall keep mine open and read--read her father's book of the Maxims; I generally find two or three at a dip to stimulate. No wonder she venerates him. That sort of progenitor is your "permanent aristocracy." Hard enemy. She must have some of her mother in her, too. Abuse me to her, admit the justice of reproaches, but say, reason, good feeling--I needn't grind at it. Say I respect her. Advise her to swallow the injury--not intended for insult. I don't believe anything higher than respect can be offered to a woman. No defence of me to her, but I'll tell you, that when I undertook to keep my word with her, I plainly said--never mind; good-night. If we meet in the morning, let this business rest until it 's done. I must drive to help poor Chums and see about the Inquest.'

Fleetwood nodded from the doorway. Gower was left with humming ears.

## CHAPTER XL

### RECORD OF MINOR INCIDENTS

They went to their beds doomed to lie and roam as the solitaires of a sleepless night. They met next day like a couple emerging from sirocco deserts, indisposed for conversation or even short companionship, much of the night's dry turmoil in their heads. Each would have preferred the sight of an enemy; and it was hardly concealed by them, for they inclined to regard one another as the author of their infernal passage through the drear night's wilderness.

Fleetwood was the civiller; his immediate prospective duties being clear, however abhorrent. But he had inflicted a monstrous disturbance on the man he meant in his rash, decisive way to elevate, if not benefit. Gower's imagination, foreign to his desires and his projects, was playing juggler's tricks with him, dramatizing upon hypotheses, which mounted in stages and could pretend to be soberly conceivable, assuming that the earl's wild hints overnight were a credible basis. He transported himself to his first view of the Countess Livia, the fountain of similes born of his prostrate adoration, close upon the invasion and capture of him by the combined liqueurs in the giddy Batlen lights; and joining the Arabian magic in his breast at the time with the more magical reality now proposed as a sequel to it, he entered the land where dreams confess they are outstripped by revelations.

Yet it startled him to hear the earl say: 'You'll get audience at ten; I've arranged; make the most of the situation to her. I refuse to help. I foresee it 's the only way of solving this precious puzzle. You do me and every one of us a service past paying. Not a man of her set worth. . . . She--but you'll stop it; no one else can. Of course, you've had your breakfast. Off, and walk yourself into a talkative mood, as you tell me you do.'

'One of the things I do when I've nobody to hear,' said Gower, speculating whether the black sprite in this young nobleman was for sending him as a rod to scourge the lady: an ingenious device, that smelt of mediaeval Courts and tickled his humour.

'Will she listen?' he said gravely.

'She will listen; she has not to learn you admire. You admit she has helped to trim and polish, and the rest. She declares you're incorruptible. There's the ground open. I fling no single sovereign more into that quicksand, and I want not one word further on the subject. I follow you to Esslemont. Pray, go.'

Fleetwood pushed into the hall. A footman was ordered to pack and

deposit Mr. Woodseer's portmanteau at the coach-office.

'The principal point is to make sure we have all the obligations,' Gower said.

'You know the principal point,' said the earl. 'Relieve me.'

He faced to the opening street door. Lord Feltre stood in the framing of it--a welcome sight. The 'monastic man of fashion,' of Gower's phrase for him, entered, crooning condolences, with a stretched waxen hand for his friend, a partial nod for Nature's worshipper--inefficient at any serious issue of our human affairs, as the earl would now discover.

Gower left the two young noblemen to their greetings. Happily for him, philosophy, in the present instance, after a round of profundities, turned her lantern upon the comic aspect of his errand. Considering the Countess Livia, and himself, and the tyrant, who benevolently and providentially, or sardonically, hurled them to their interview, the situation was comic, certainly, in the sense of its being an illumination of this life's odd developments. For thus had things come about, that if it were possible even to think of the lady's condescending, he, thanks to the fair one he would see before evening, was armed and proof against his old infatuation or any renewal of it. And he had been taught to read through the beautiful twilighted woman, as if she were burnt paper held at the fire consuming her. His hopes hung elsewhere. Nevertheless, an intellectual demon-imp very lively in his head urged him to speculate on such a contest between them, and weigh the engaging forces. Difficulties were perceived, the scornful laughter on her side was plainly heard; but his feeling of savage mastery, far from beaten down, swelled so as to become irritable for the trial; and when he was near her house he held a review of every personal disadvantage he could summon, incited by an array of limping deficiencies that flattered their arrogant leader with ideas of the power he had in spite of them.

In fact, his emancipation from sentiment inspired the genial mood to tease. Women, having to encounter a male adept at the weapon for the purpose, must be either voluble or supportingly proud to keep the skin from shrinking: which is a commencement of the retrogression; and that has frequently been the beginning of a rout. Now the Countess Livia was a lady of queenly pose and the servitorial conventional speech likely at a push to prove beggarly. When once on a common platform with a man of agile tongue instigated by his intellectual demon to pursue inquiries into her moral resources, after a ruthless exposure of the wrecked material, she would have to be, after the various fashions, defiant, if she was to hold her own against pressure; and seeing, as she must, the road of prudence point to conciliation, it was calculable that she would take it. Hence a string of possible events, astounding to mankind, but equally calculable, should one care to give imagination headway. Gower looked signally Captain Abrane's 'fiddler' while he waited at Livia's house door. A studious intimacy with such a lady was rather like the exposure of the silver moon to the astronomer's telescope.

The Dame will have nought of an interview and colloquy not found

mentioned in her collection of ballads, concerning a person quite secondary in Dr. Glossop's voluminous papers. She as vehemently prohibits a narration of Gower Woodseer's proposal some hours later, for the hand of the Countess of Fleetwood's transfixed maid Madge, because of the insignificance of the couple; and though it was a quaint idyll of an affection slowly formed, rationally based while seeming preposterous, tending to bluntly funny utterances on both sides. The girl was a creature of the enthusiasms, and had lifted that passion of her constitution into higher than the worship of sheer physical bravery. She had pitied Mr. Gower Woodseer for his apparently extreme, albeit reverential, devotion to her mistress. The plainly worded terms of his asking a young woman of her position and her reputation to marry him came on her like an intrusion of dazzling day upon the closed eyelids of the night, requiring time, and her mistress's consent, and his father's expressed approval, before she could yield him an answer that might appear a forgetfulness of her station, her ignorance, her damaged character. Gower protested himself, with truth, a spotted pard, an ignoramus, and an outcast of all established classes, as the worshipper of Nature cannot well avoid being.

'But what is it you like me for, Mr. Gower?' Madge longed to know, that she might see a way in the strange land where he had planted her after a whirl; and he replied: 'I've thought of you till I can say I love you because you have naturally everything I shoot at.'

The vastness of the compliment drove her to think herself empty of anything.

He named courage, and its offspring, honesty, and devotedness, constancy. Her bosom rose at the word.

'Yes, constancy,' he repeated; and 'growing girls have to "turn corners," as you told me once.'

'I did?' said she, reddening under a memory, and abashed by his recollection of a moment she knew to have been weak with her, or noisy of herself.

Madge went straightway to her mistress and related her great event, in the tone of a confession of crime. Her mistress's approbation was timidly suggested rather than besought.

It came on a flood. Carinthia's eyes filled; she exclaimed: 'Oh, that good man!--he chooses my Madge for wife. She said it, Rebecca said it. Mrs. Wythan saw and said Mr. Woodseer loved my Madge. I hear her saying it. Then yes, and yes, from me for both your sakes, dear girl. He will have the faithfullest, he will have the kindest--Oh! and I shall know there can be a happy marriage in England.'

She summoned Gower; she clasped his hand, to thank him for appreciating her servant and sister, and for the happiness she had in hearing it; and she gazed at him and the laden brows of her Madge alternately, encouraging him to repeat his recital of his pecuniary means, for the

poetry of the fact it verified, feasting on the sketch of a four-roomed cottage and an agricultural labourer's widow for cook and housemaid; Madge to listen to his compositions of the day in the evening; Madge to praise him, Madge to correct his vanity.

Love was out of the count, but Carinthia's leaping sympathy decorated the baldness of the sketch and spied his features through the daubed mask he chose to wear as a member of the order of husbands, without taking it for his fun. Dry material statements presented the reality she doated to think of. Moreover, the marriage of these two renewed her belief in true marriages, and their intention to unite was evidence of love.

'My journey to England was worth all troubles for the meeting Madge,' she said. 'I can look with pleasure to that day of my meeting her first--the day, it was then!'

She stopped. Madge felt the quivering upward of a whimper to a sob in her breast. She slipped away.

'It's a day that has come round to be repaired, Lady Fleetwood,' said Gower. 'If you will. Will you not? He has had a blow--the death of a friend, violent death. It has broken him. He wants a month or so in your mountains. I have thought him hard to deal with; he is humane. His enormous wealth has been his tempter. Madge and I will owe him our means of livelihood, enough for cottagers, until I carve my way. His feelings are much more independent of his rank than those of most noblemen. He will repeat your kind words to Madge and me; I am sure of it. He has had heavy burdens; he is young, hardly formed yet. He needs a helper; I mean, one allied to him. You forgive me? I left him with a Catholic lord for comforter, who regards my prescript of the study of Nature, when we're in grief, as about the same as an offer of a dish of cold boiled greens. Silver and ivory images are more consoling. Neither he nor I can offer the right thing for Lord Fleetwood. It will be found here. And then your mountains. More than I, nearly as much as you, he has a poet's ardour for mountain land. He and Mr. Wythan would soon learn to understand one another on that head, if not as to management of mines.'

The pleading was crafty, and it was penetrative in the avoidance of stress. Carinthia shook herself to feel moved. The endeavour chilled her to a notion that she was but half alive. She let the question approach her, whether Chillon could pardon Lord Fleetwood. She, with no idea of benignness, might speak pardon's word to him, on a late autumn evening years hence, perhaps, or to his friends to-morrow, if he would considerately keep distant. She was upheld by the thought of her brother's more honourable likeness to their father, in the certainty of his refusal to speak pardon's empty word or touch an offending hand, without their father's warrant for the injury wiped out; and as she had no wish for that to be done, she could anticipate his withholding of the word.

For her brother at wrestle with his fallen fortunes was now the beating heart of Carinthia's mind. Her husband was a shadow there. He did

obscure it, and he might annoy, he was unable to set it in motion. He sat there somewhat like Youth's apprehension of Death:--the dark spot seen mistily at times through people's tears, or visioned as in an ambush beyond the hills; occasionally challenged to stimulate recklessness; oftener overlooked, acknowledged for the undesired remote of life's conditions, life's evil, fatal, ill-assorted yoke-fellow; and if it was in his power to burst out of his corner and be terrible to her, she could bring up a force unnamed and unmeasured, that being the blood of her father in her veins. Having done her utmost to guard her babe, she said her prayers; she stood for peace or the struggle.

'Does Lord Fleetwood speak of coming here?' she said.

'To-morrow.'

'I go to Croridge to-morrow.'

'Your ladyship returns?'

'Yes, I return Mr. Gower, you have fifty minutes before you dress for dinner.'

He thought only of the exceeding charity of the intimation; and he may be excused for his not seeing the feminine full answer it was, in an implied, unmeditated contrast. He went gladly to find his new comrade, his flower among grass-blades, the wonderful creature astonishing him and surcharging his world by setting her face at him, opening her breast to him, breathing a young man's word of words from a woman's mouth. His flower among grass-blades for a head looking studiously down, she was his fountain of wisdom as well, in the assurance she gave him of the wisdom of his choice.

But Madge had put up the 'prize-fighter's lass,' by way of dolly defence, to cover her amazed confusion when the proposal of this well-liked gentleman to a girl such as she sounded churchy. He knocked it over easily; it left, however, a bee at his ear and an itch to transfer the buzzer's attentions and tease his darling; for she had betrayed herself as right good game. Nor is there happier promise of life-long domestic enlivenment for a prescient man of Letters than he has in the contemplation of a pretty face showing the sensitiveness to the sting, which is not allowed to poison her temper, and is short of fetching tears. The dear innocent girl gave this pleasing promise; moreover, she could be twisted to laugh at herself, just a little. Now, the young woman who can do that has already jumped the hedge into the highroad of philosophy, and may become a philosopher's mate in its by-ways, where the minute discoveries are the notable treasures.

They had their ramble, agreeable to both, despite the admonitory dose administered to one of them. They might have been espied at a point or two from across the parkpalings; their laughter would have caught an outside pedestrian's hearing. Whatever the case, Owain Wythan, riding down off Croridge, big with news of her brother for the countess, dined at her table, and walking up the lane to the Esslemont Arms on a moonless

night, to mount his horse, pitched against an active and, as it was deemed by Gower's observation of his eyes, a scientific fist. The design to black them finely was attributable to the dyeing accuracy of the stroke. A single blow had done it. Mr. Wythan's watch and purse were untouched; and a second look at the swollen blind peepers led Gower to surmise that they were, in the calculation of the striker, his own.

He walked next day to the Royal Sovereign inn. There he came upon the earl driving his phaeton. Fleetwood jumped down, and Gower told of the mysterious incident, as the chief thing he had to tell, not rendering it so mysterious in his narrative style. He had the art of indicating darkly.

'Ines, you mean?' Fleetwood cried, and he appeared as nauseated and perplexed as he felt. Why should Ines assault Mr. Wythan? It happened that the pugilist's patron had, within the last fifteen minutes, driven past a certain thirty-acre meadow, sight of which on his way to Carinthia had stirred him. He had even then an idea of his old deeds dogging him to bind him, every one of them, the smallest.

'But you've nothing to go by,' he said. 'Why guess at this rascal more than another?'

Gower quoted Mrs. Rundles and the ostler for witnesses to Kit's visit yesterday to the Royal Sovereign, though Kit shunned the bar of the Esslemont Arms.

'I guess pretty clearly, because I suspect he was hanging about and saw me and Madge together.'

'Consolations for failures in town?--by the way, you are complimented, and I don't think you deserved it. However, there was just the chance to stop a run to perdition. But, Madge? Madge? I'd swear to the girl!'

'Not so hard as I,' said Gower, and spoke of the oath to come between the girl and him.

Fleetwood's dive into the girl's eyes drew her before him. He checked a spurt of exclamations.

'You fancy the brute had a crack for revenge and mistook his man?'

'That's what I want her ladyship to know,' said Gower.

'How could you let her hear of it?'

'Nothing can be concealed from her.'

The earl was impressionable to the remark, in his disgust at the incident. It added a touch of a new kind of power to her image.

'She's aware of my coming?'

'To-day or to-morrow.'

They scaled the phaeton and drove.

'You undervalue Lord Feltre. You avoid your adversaries,' Fleetwood now rebuked his hearer. 'It's an easy way to have the pull of them in your own mind. You might learn from him. He's willing for controversy. Nature-worship--or "aboriginal genuflexion," he calls it; Anglicanism, Methodism; he stands to engage them. It can't be doubted, that in days of trouble he has a faith "stout as a rock, with an oracle in it," as he says; and he's right," men who go into battle require a rock to back them or a staff to lean on." You have your "secret," you think; as far as I can see, it's to keep you from going into any form of battle.'

The new influence at work on the young nobleman was evident, if only in the language used.

Gower answered mildly: 'That can hardly be said of a man who's going to marry.'

'Perhaps not. Lady Fleetwood is aware?'

'Lady Fleetwood does me the honour to approve my choice.'

'You mean, you're dead on to it with this girl?'

'For a year or more.'

'Fond of her?'

'All my heart.'

'In love!'

'Yes, in love. The proof of it is, I've asked her now I can support her as a cottager leaning on the Three Per Cents.'

'Well, it helps you to a human kind of talk. It carries out your theories. I never disbelieved in your honesty. The wisdom's another matter. Did you ever tell any one, that there's not an act of a man's life lies dead behind him, but it is blessing or cursing him every step he takes?'

'By that,' rejoined Gower, 'I can say Lord Feltre proves there's wisdom in the truisms of devoutness.'

He thought the Catholic lord had gone a step or two to catch an eel.

Fleetwood was looking on the backward of his days, beholding a melancholy sunset, with a grimace in it.

'Lord Feltre might show you the "leanness of Philosophy";--you would learn from hearing him:--"an old gnawed bone for the dog that chooses to



be no better than a dog."

'The vertiginous roast haunch is recommended,' Gower said.

'See a higher than your own head, good sir. But, hang the man! he manages to hit on the thing he wants.' Fleetwood set his face at Gower with cutting heartiness. 'In love, you say, and Madge: and mean it to be the holy business! Well, poor old Chummy always gave you credit for knowing how to play your game. She has given proof she 's a good girl. I don't see why it shouldn't end well. That attack on the Welshman's the bad lookout. Explained, if you like, but women's impressions won't get explained away. We must down on our knees or they. Her ladyship attentive at all to affairs of the house?'

'Every day with Queeney; at intervals with Leddings.'

'Excellent! You speak like a fellow recording the devout observances of a great dame with her minor and superior, ecclesiastical comforters. Regular at church?'

'Her ladyship goes.'

'A woman without religion, Gower Woodseer, is a weed on the water, or she's hard as nails. We shall see. Generally, Madge and the youngster parade the park at this hour. I drive round to the stables. Go in and offer your version of that rascally dog's trick. It seems the nearest we can come at. He's a sot, and drunken dogs 'll do anything. I've had him on my hands, and I've got the stain of him.'

They trotted through Esslemont Park gates. 'I've got that place, Calesford, on my hands, too,' the earl said, suddenly moved to a liking for his Kentish home.

He and Gower were struck by a common thought of the extraordinary burdens his indulgence in impulses drew upon him. Present circumstances pictured to Gower the opposing weighed and matured good reason for his choosing Madge, and he complimented himself in his pity for the earl. But Fleetwood, as he reviewed a body of acquaintances perfectly free from the wretched run in harness, though they had their fits and their whims, was pushed to the conclusion that fatalism marked his particular course through life. He could not hint at such an idea to the unsympathetic fellow, or rather, the burly antagonist to anything of the sort, beside him. Lord Feltre would have understood and appreciated it instantly. Where is aid to be had if we have the Fates against us? Feltre knew the Power, he said; was an example of 'the efficacy of supplications'; he had been 'fatally driven to find the Power,' and had found it--on the road to Rome, of course: not a delectable road for an English nobleman, except that the noise of another convert in pilgrimage on it would deal our English world a lively smack, the very stroke that heavy body wants. But the figure of a 'monastic man of fashion' was antipathetic to the earl, and he flouted an English Protestant mass merely because of his being highly individual, and therefore revolutionary for the minority.

He cast his bitter cud aside. 'My man should have arrived. Lady Fleetwood at home?'

Gower spoke of her having gone to Croridge in the morning.

'Has she taken the child?'

'She has, yes. For the air of the heights.'

'For greater security. Lady Arpington praises the thoughtful mother. I rather expected to see the child.'

'They can't be much later,' Gower supposed.

'You don't feel your long separation from "the object"?''

Letting him have his cushion for pins, Gower said 'It needs all my philosophy:

He was pricked and probed for the next five minutes; not bad rallying, the earl could be smart when he smarted. Then they descended the terrace to meet Lady Fleetwood driving her pony-trap. She gave a brief single nod to the salute of her lord, quite in the town-lady's manner, surprisingly.

## CHAPTER XLI

### IN WHICH THE FATES ARE SEEN AND A CHOICE OF THE REFUGES FROM THEM

The home of husband and wife was under one roof at last. Fleetwood went, like one deported, to his wing of the house, physically sensible, in the back turned to his wife's along the corridor, that our ordinary comparison for the division of a wedded twain is correct. She was Arctic, and Antarctic he had to be, perforce of the distance she put between them. A removal of either of them from life--or from 'the act of breathing,' as Gower Woodseer's contempt of the talk about death would call it--was an imaginable way of making it a wider division. Ambrose Mallard was far enough from his fatal lady now--farther than the Poles asunder. Ambrose, if the clergy will allow him, has found his peace. . But the road and the means he chose were a madman's.

The blotting of our character, to close our troubles, is the final proof of our being 'sons of vapour,' according to Gower Woodseer's heartless term for poor Ambrose and the lot. They have their souls; and above philosophy, 'natural' or unnatural, they may find a shelter. They can show in their desperation that they are made of blood, as philosophers rather fail of doing. An insignificant brainless creature like Feltre had wits, by the aid of his religion, to help or be charitable to his fellows, particularly the sinners, in the crisis of life, surpassing any philosopher's.

Information of her ladyship's having inspected the apartments, to see to the minutest of his customary luxuries, cut at him all round. His valet had it from the footmen and maids; and their speaking of it meant a liking for their mistress; and that liking, added to her official solicitude on his behalf, touched a soft place in him and blew an icy wind; he was frozen where he was warmed. Here was evidence of her intending the division to be a fixed gap. She had entered this room and looked about her. He was here to feel her presence in her absence.

Some one or something had schooled her, too. Her large-eyed directness of gaze was the same as at that inn and in Wales, but her easy sedateness was novel, her English, almost the tone of the English world: he gathered it, at least, from the few remarks below stairs.

His desire to be with her was the desire to escape the phantasm of the woman haunting to subjugate him when they were separate. He could kill illusion by magnifying and clawing at her visible angles and audible false notes; and he did it until his recollections joined to the sight of her, when a clash of the thought of what she had been and the thought of what she was had the effect of conjuring a bitter sweet image that was a more seductive illusion. Strange to think, this woman once loved the man who was not half the value of the man she no longer loved. He took a shot at cynicism, but hit no mark. This woman protected her whole sex.

They sat at the dinner-table alone, thanks to a handsome wench's attractions for a philosopher. Married, and parents of a lusty son, this was their first sitting at table together. The mouth that said 'I guard my rooms' was not obtruded; she talked passingly of her brother, much of Lady Arpington and of old Mr. Woodseer; and, though she reserved a smile, there was no look of a lock on her face. She seemed pleased to be treated very courteously; she returned the stately politeness in exactest measure; very simply, as well. Her face had now an air of homeliness, well suited to an English household interior. She could chat. Any pauses occurring, he was the one guilty of them; she did not allow them to be barrier chasms, or 'strids' for the leap with effort; she crossed them like the mountain maid over a gorge's plank--kept her tones perfectly. Her Madge and Mr. Gower Woodseer made a conversable topic. She was inquisitive for accounts of Spanish history and the land of Spain.

They passed into the drawing-room. She had heard of the fate of the poor child in Wales, she said, without a comment.

'I see now, I ought to have backed your proposal,' he confessed, and was near on shivering. She kept silent, proudly or regretfully.

Open on her workbasket was a Spanish guide-book and a map attached to it. She listened to descriptions of Cadiz, Malaga, Seville, Granada. Her curiosity was chiefly for detailed accounts of Catalonia and the Pyrenees.

'Hardly the place for you; there's a perpetual heaving of Carlism in

those mountains; your own are quieter for travellers,' he remarked; and for a moment her lips moved to some likeness of a smile; a dimple in a flowing thought.

He remarked the come and go of it.

He regretted his inability to add to her knowledge of the Spanish Pyrenees.

Books helped her at present, she said.

Feeling acutely that hostility would have brought them closer than her uninviting civility, he spoke of the assault on Mr. Wythan, and Gower Woodseer's conjecture, and of his having long since discharged the rascal Ines.

To which her unrepentant answer, 'You made use of those men, my lord,' sent a cry ringing through him, recalling Feltre's words, as to the grip men progressively are held in by their deeds done.

'Oh, quite true, we change our views and ways of life,' he said, thinking she might set her considerations on other points of his character. But this reflection was a piece of humility not yet in his particular estimate of his character, and he spurned it: an act of pride that drove his mind, for occupation, to contemplate hers; which speedily became an embrace of her character, until he was asking whether the woman he called wife and dared not clasp was one of those rarest, who can be idealized by virtue of their being known. For the young man embracing a character loses grasp of his own, is plucked out of himself and passes into it, to see the creature he is with the other's eyes, and feel for the other as a very self. Such is the privilege and the chastisement of the young.

Gower Woodseer's engagement with the girl Madge was a happier subject for expatiation and agreement. Her deeper tones threw a light on Gower, and where she saw goodness, he could at least behold the natural philosopher practically philosophizing.

'The girl shall have a dowry from me,' he said; and the sum named was large. Her head bent acknowledgingly; money had small weight with her now. His perception of it stripped him and lamed him.

He wished her ladyship good-night. She stood up and performed a semi-ceremonious obeisance, neatly adapted to their mutual position. She had a well-bred mother.

Probably she would sleep. No such expectation could soothe the friend, and some might be thinking misleader, of Ambrose Mallard, before he had ocular proof that the body lay underground. His promise was given to follow it to the grave, a grave in consecrated earth. Ambrose died of the accidental shot of a pocket-pistol he customarily carried loaded. Two intimate associates of the dead man swore to that habit of his. They lied to get him undisputed Christian burial. Aha! The earl laughed outright at Chummy Potts's nursery qualms. The old fellow had to do it,

and he lied like a man for the sake of Ambrose Mallard's family. So much is owing to our friend.

Can ecclesiastical casuists decide upon cases of conscience affecting men of the world?

A council sat upon the case the whole night long. A committee of the worldly held argumentation in a lower chamber.

These are nights that weaken us to below the level of women. A shuttle worked in Fleetwood's head. He defended the men of the world. Lord Feltre oiled them, damned them, kindled them to a terrific expiatory blaze, and extinguishingly salved and wafted aloft the released essence of them. Maniacal for argument, Fleetwood rejected the forgiveness of sins, if sins they be. Prove them sins, and the suffering is of necessity everlasting, his insomnia logic insisted. Whichever side he took, his wife was against him; not in speech, but in her look. She was a dumb figure among the wranglers, clouded up to the neck. Her look said she knew more of him than they knew.

He departed next day for London, after kissing his child; and he would have done wisely to abstain from his exhibition of the paternal. Knowing it a step to conciliation, he checked his impulsive warmth, under the apprehension that the mother would take it for a piece of acting to propitiate--and his lips pecked the baby's cheek. Its mother held arms for it immediately.

Not without reason did his heart denounce her as a mere mother, with little of a mind to see.

The recent series of feverishly sleepless nights disposed him to snappish irritability or the thirst for tenderness. Gower had singular experiences of him on the drive North-westward. He scarcely spoke; he said once: 'If you mean to marry, you'll be wanting to marry soon, of course,' and his curt nod before the reply was formulated appeared to signify, the sooner the better, and deliverance for both of us. Honest though he might, be sometimes deep and sometimes picturesque, the philosopher's day had come to an end. How can Philosophy minister to raw wounds, when we are in a raging gale of the vexations, battered to right and left! Religion has a nourishing breast: Philosophy is breastless. Religion condones offences: Philosophy has no forgiveness, is an untenanted confessional: 'wide air to a cry in anguish,' Feltre says.

All the way to London Fleetwood endured his companion, letting him talk when he would.

He spent the greater part of the night discussing human affairs and spiritual with Lord Feltre, whose dialectical exhortations and insinuations were of the feeblest, but to an isolated young man, yearning for the tenderness of a woman thinking but of her grievances, the ointment brought comfort.

It soothed him during his march to and away from Ambrose Mallard's grave; where it seemed to him curious and even pitiable that Chumley Potts should be so inconsolably shaken. Well, and if the priests have the secret of strengthening the backbone for a bend of the knee in calamity, why not go to the priests, Chummy? Potts's hearing was not addressed; nor was the chief person in the meditation affected by a question that merely jumped out of his perturbed interior.

Business at Calesford kept Fleetwood hanging about London several days further; and his hatred of a place he wasted time and money to decorate grew immeasurable. It distorted the features of the beautiful woman for whose pleasure the grand entertainments to be held there had, somewhere or other--when felon spectres were abroad over earth--been conceived.

He could then return to Esslemont. Gower was told kindly, with intentional coldness, that he could take a seat in the phaeton if he liked; and he liked, and took it. Anything to get to that girl of his!

Whatever the earl's inferiors did, their inferior station was not suffered to discolour it for his judgement. But an increasing antagonism to Woodseer's philosophy--which the fellow carried through with perpetual scorings of satisfaction--caused him to set a hard eye on the damsel under the grisly spotting shadow of the sottish bruiser, of whom, after once touching the beast, he could not rub his hands clean; and he chose to consider the winning of the prize-fighter's lass the final triumph or flag on the apex of the now despised philosophy. Vain to ask how he had come to be mixed up with the lot, or why the stolidly conceited, pretentious fellow had seat here, as by right, beside him! We sow and we reap; 'plant for sugar and taste the cane,' some one says--this Woodseer, probably; he can, when it suits him, tickle the ears of the worldlings. And there is worthier stuff to remember; stuff to nourish: Feltre's 'wisdom of our fathers,' rightly named Religion.

More in the country, when he traversed sweep and rise of open land, Carinthia's image began to shine, and she threw some of her light on Madge, who made Woodseer appear tolerable, sagacious, absurdly enviable, as when we have the fit to wish we were some four-foot. The fellow's philosophy wore a look of practical craft.

He was going to the girl he liked, and she was, one could swear, an honest girl; and she was a comely girl, a girl to stick to a man. Her throwing over a sot was creditable. Her mistress loved her. That said much for any mortal creature. Man or woman loved by Carinthia could not be cowardly, could not be vile, must have high qualities. Next to Religion, she stood for a test of us. Had she any strong sense of Religion, in addition to the formal trooping to one of their pallid Protestant churches? Lord Feltre might prove useful to her. For merely the comprehension of the signification of Religion steadies us. It had done that for him, the earl owned.

He broke a prolonged silence by remarking to Gower 'You haven't much to say to-day'; and the answer was 'Very little. When I'm walking, I'm picking up; and when I'm driving, I'm putting together.'

Gower was rallied on the pursuit of the personal object in both cases. He pointed at sheep, shepherd, farmer, over the hedge, all similarly occupied; and admitted shamelessly, that he had not a thought for company, scarce a word to fling. 'Ideas in gestation are the dullest matter you can have.'

'There I quite agree with you,' said Fleetwood. Abrane, Chummy Potts, Brailstone, little Corby, were brighter comrades. And these were his Ixionides! Hitherto his carving of a way in the world had been sufficiently ill-considered. Was it preferable to be a loutish philosopher? Since the death of Ambrose Mallard, he felt Woodseer's title for that crew grind harshly; and he tried to provoke a repetition of it, that he might burst out in wrathful defence of his friends--to be named friends when they were vilified: defence of poor Ambrose at least, the sinner who, or one as bad, might have reached to pardon through the priesthood.

Gower offered him no chance..

Entering Esslemont air, Fleetwood tossed his black mood to the winds. She breathed it. She was a mountain girl, and found it hard to forgive our lowlands. She would learn tolerance, taking her flights at seasons. The yacht, if she is anything of a sailor, may give her a taste of England's pleasures. She will have a special allowance for distribution among old Mr. Woodseer's people. As to the rest of the Countess of Fleetwood's wishes, her family ranks with her husband's in claims of any kind on him. There would be--she would require and had a right to demand--say, a warm half-hour of explanations: he knew the tone for them, and so little did he revolve it apprehensively, that his mind sprang beyond, to the hearing from her mouth of her not intending further to 'guard her rooms.' How quietly the words were spoken! There was a charm in the retrospect of her mouth and manner. One of the rare women who never pout or attitudinize, she could fling her glove gracefully--one might add, capturingly under every aspect, she was a handsome belligerent. The words he had to combat pleased his memory. Some good friend, Lady Arpington probably, had instructed her in the art of dressing to match her colour.

Concerning himself, he made no stipulation, but he reflected on Lord Feltre's likely estimate of her as a bit of a heathen. And it might be to her advantage, were she and Feltre to have some conversations. Whatever the faith, a faith should exist, for without the sentiment of religion, a woman, he says, is where she was when she left the gates of Eden. A man is not much farther. Feltre might have saved Ambrose Mallard. He is, however, right in saying, that the woman with the sentiment of religion in her bosom is a box of holy incense distinguishing her from all other women. Empty of it, she is devil's bait. At best, she is a creature who cannot overlook an injury, or must be exacting God knows what humiliations before she signs the treaty.

Informed at the house that her ladyship had been staying up on Croridge for the last two days, Fleetwood sent his hardest shot of the eyes at

Gower. Let her be absent: it was equal to the first move of war, and absolved him from contemplated proposals to make amends. But the enforced solitary companionship with this ruminator of a fellow set him asking whether the godless dog he had picked up by the wayside was not incarnate another of the sins he had to expiate. Day after day, almost hourly, some new stroke fell on him. Why? Was he selected for persecution because he was wealthy? The Fates were driving him in one direction, no doubt of that.

This further black mood evaporated, and like a cessation of English storm-weather bequeathed him gloom. Ashamed of the mood, he was nevertheless directed by its final shadows to see the ruminating tramp in Gower, and in Madge the prize-fighter's jilt: and round about Esslemont a world eyeing an Earl of Fleetwood, who painted himself the man he was, or was held to be, by getting together such a collection, from the daughter of the Old Buccaneer to the ghastly corpse of Ambrose Mallard. Why, clearly, wealth was the sole origin and agent of the mischief. With somewhat less of it, he might have walked in his place among the nation's elect, the 'herd of the gilt horns,' untroubled by ambitions and ideas.

Arriving thus far, he chanced to behold Gower and Madge walking over the grounds near the western plantation, and he regretted the disappearance of them, with the fellow talking hard into the girl's ear. Those two could think he had been of some use. The man pretending to philosophical depth was at any rate honest; one could swear to the honesty of the girl, though she had been a reckless hussy. Their humble little hopes and means to come to union approached, after a fashion, hymning at his ears. Those two were pleasanter to look on than amorous lords and great ladies, who are interesting only when they are wicked.

Four days of desolate wanderings over the estate were occupied chiefly in his decreeing the fall of timber that obstructed views, and was the more imperatively doomed for his bailiff's intercession. 'Sound wood' the trees might be: they had to assist in defraying the expense of separate establishments. A messenger to Queeney from Croridge then announced the Countess's return 'for a couple of hours.' Queeney said it was the day when her ladyship examined the weekly bills of the household. That was in the early morning. The post brought my lord a letter from Countess Livia, a most infrequent writer. She had his word to pay her debts; what next was she for asking? He shrugged, opened the letter, and stared at the half dozen lines. The signification of them rapped on his consciousness of another heavy blow before he was perfectly intelligent.

All possible anticipation seemed here outdone: insomuch that he held palpable evidence of the Fates at work to harass and drive him. She was married to the young Earl of Cressett!

Fleetwood printed the lines on his eyeballs. They were the politely flowing feminine of a statement of the fact, which might have been in one line. They flourished wantonly: they were deadly blunt. And of all men, this youngster, who struck at him through her lips with the reproach, that he had sped the good-looking little beast upon his road to ruin:--



perhaps to Ambrose Mallard's end!

## CHAPTER XLII

### THE RETARDED COURTSHIP

Carinthia reached Esslemont near noon. She came on foot, and had come unaccompanied, stick in hand, her dress looped for the roads. Madge bustled her shorter steps up the park beside her; Fleetwood met her on the terrace.

'No one can be spared at Croridge,' she said. 'I go back before dark.' Apology was not thought of; she seemed wound to the pitch.

He bowed; he led into the morning-room. 'The boy is at Croridge?'

'With me. He has his nurse. Madge was at home here more than there.'

'Why do you go back?'

'I am of use to my brother.'

'Forgive me--in what way?'

'He has enemies about him. They are the workmen of Lord Levellier. They attacked Lekkatts the other night, and my uncle fired at them out of a window and wounded a man. They have sworn they will be revenged. Mr. Wythan is with my brother to protect him.'

'Two men, very well; they don't want, if there's danger, a woman's aid in protecting him?'

She smiled, and her smile was like the hint of the steel blade an inch out of sheath.

'My brother does not count me a weak woman.'

'Oh no! No one would think that,' Fleetwood said hurriedly and heartily.

'Least of all men, I, Carinthia. But you might be rash.'

'My brother knows me cautious.'

'Chillon?'

'It is my brother's name.'

'You used to call him by his name.'

'I love his name.'

'Ah, well! I may be pardoned for wishing to hear what part you play there.'

'I go the rounds with my brother.'

'Armed?'

'We carry arms.'

'Queer sight to see in England. But there are rascals in this country, too.'

She was guilty of saying, though not pointedly: 'We do not hire defenders.'

'In civilized lands . . .' he began and stopped 'You have Mr. Wythan?'

'Yes, we are three.'

'You call him, I think, Owain?'

'I do.'

'In your brother's hearing?'

'Yes, my lord; it would be in your hearing if you were near.'

'No harm, no doubt.'

'There is none.'

'But you will not call your brother Chillon to me.'

'You dislike the name.'

'I learn to like everything you do and say; and every person you like.'

'It is by Mr. Wythan's dead wife's request that I call him by his name. He is our friend. He is a man to trust.'

'The situation . . .' Fleetwood hung swaying between the worldly view of it and the white light of this woman's nature flashed on his emotion into his mind. 'You shall be trusted for judging. If he is your friend, he is my friend. I have missed the sight of our boy. You heard I was at Esslemont?'

'I heard from Madge!'

'It is positive you must return to Croridge?'

'I must be with my brother, yes.'

'Your ladyship will permit me to conduct you.'

Her head assented. There was nothing to complain of, but he had not gained a step.

The rule is, that when we have yielded initiative to a woman, we are unable to recover it without uncivil bluster. So, therefore, women dealing with gentlemen are allowed unreasonable advantages. He had never granted it in colloquy or act to any woman but this one. Consequently, he was to see, that if the gentleman in him was not put aside, the lady would continue moving on lines of the independence he had likewise yielded, or rather flung, to her. Unless, as a result, he besieged and wooed his wife, his wife would hold on a course inclining constantly farther from the union he desired. Yet how could he begin to woo her if he saw no spark of womanly tenderness? He asked himself, because the beginning of the wooing might be checked by the call on him for words of repentance only just possible to conceive. Imagine them uttered, and she has the initiative for life.

She would not have it, certainly, with a downright brute. But he was not that. In an extremity of bitterness, he fished up a drowned old thought, of all his torments being due to the impulsive half-brute he was. And between the good and the bad in him, the sole point of strength was a pride likely, as the smooth simplicity of her indifference showed him, soon to be going down prostrate beneath her feet. Wholly a brute--well? He had to say, that playing the perfect brute with any other woman he would have his mastery. The summoning of an idea of personal power to match this woman in a contest was an effort exhausting the idea.

They passed out of Esslemont gates together at that hour of the late afternoon when South-westerly breezes, after a summer gale, drive their huge white flocks over blue fields fresh as morning, on the march to pile the crown of the sphere, and end a troubled day with grandeur. Up the lane by the park they had open land to the heights of Croridge.

'Splendid clouds,' Fleetwood remarked.

She looked up, thinking of the happy long day's walk with her brother to the Styrian Baths. Pleasure in the sight made her face shine superbly. 'A flying Switzerland, Mr. Woodseer says,' she replied. 'England is beautiful on days like these.--For walking, I think the English climate very good.'

He dropped a murmur: 'It should suit so good a walker,' and burned to compliment--her spirited easy stepping, and scorned himself for the sycophancy it would be before they were on the common ground of a restored understanding. But an approval of any of her acts threatened him with enthusiasm for the whole of them, her person included; and a dam in his breast had to keep back the flood.

'You quote Woodseer to me, Carinthia. I wish you knew Lord Feltre. He can tell you of every cathedral, convent, and monastery in Europe and Syria. Nature is well enough; she is, as he says, a savage. Men's works, acting under divine direction to escape from that tangle, are

better worthy of study, perhaps. If one has done wrong, for example.'

'I could listen to him,' she said.

'You would not need--except, yes, one thing. Your father's book speaks of not forgiving an injury.'

'My father does. He thinks it weakness to forgive an injury. Women do, and are disgraced, they are thought slavish. My brother is much stronger than I am. He is my father alive in that.'

'It is anti-Christian, some would think.'

'Let offending people go. He would not punish them. They may go where they will be forgiven. For them our religion is a happy retreat; we are glad they have it. My father and my brother say that injury forbids us to be friends again. My father was injured by the English Admiralty: he never forgave it; but he would have fought one of their ships and offered his blood any day, if his country called to battle.'

'You have the same feeling, you mean.'

'I am a woman. I follow my brother, whatever he decides. It is not to say he is the enemy of persons offending him; only that they have put the division.'

'They repent?'

'If they do, they do well for themselves.'

'You would see them in sackcloth and ashes?'

'I would pray to be spared seeing them.'

'You can entirely forget--well, other moments, other feelings?'

'They may heighten the injury.'

'Carinthia, I should wish to speak plainly, if I could, and tell you....'

'You speak quite plainly, my lord.'

'You and I cannot be strangers or enemies.'

'We cannot be, I would not be. To be friends, we should be separate.'

'You say you are a woman; you have a heart, then?--for, if not, what have you? was added in the tone.

'My heart is my brother's,' she said.

'All your heart?'

'My heart is my brother's until one of us drops.'

'There is not another on earth beside your brother Chillon?'

'There is my child.'

The dwarf square tower of Croridge village church fronted them against the sky, seen of both.

'You remember it,' he said; and she answered: 'I was married there.'

'You have not forgotten that injury, Carinthia?'

'I am a mother.'

'By all the saints! you hit hard. Justly. Not you. Our deeds are the hard hitters. We learn when they begin to flagellate, stroke upon stroke! Suppose we hold a costly thing in the hand and dash it to the ground--no recovery of it, none! That must be what your father meant. I can't regret you are a mother. We have a son, a bond. How can I describe the man I was!' he muttered,--'possessed! sort of werewolf! You are my wife?'

'I was married to you, my lord.'

'It's a tie of a kind.'

'It binds me.'

'Obey, you said.'

'Obey it. I do.'

'You consider it holy?'

'My father and my mother spoke to me of the marriage-tie. I read the service before I stood at the altar. It is holy. It is dreadful. I will be true to it.'

'To your husband?'

'To his name, to his honour.'

'To the vow to live with him?'

'My husband broke that for me.'

'Carinthia, if he bids you, begs you to renew it? God knows what you may save me from!'

'Pray to God. Do not beg of me, my lord. I have my brother and my little son. No more of husband for me! God has given me a friend, too, --a man of humble heart, my brother's friend, my dear Rebecca's husband.'

He can take them from me: no one but God. See the splendid sky we have.'

With those words she barred the gates on him; at the same time she bestowed the frank look of an amiable face brilliant in the lively red of her exercise, in its bent-bow curve along the forehead, out of the line of beauty, touching, as her voice was, to make an undertone of anguish swell an ecstasy. So he felt it, for his mood was now the lover's. A torture smote him, to find himself transported by that voice at his ear to the scene of the young bride in thirty-acre meadow.

'I propose to call on Captain Kirby-Levellier tomorrow, Carinthia,' he said. 'The name of his house?'

'My brother is not now any more in the English army,' she replied. 'He has hired a furnished house named Stoneridge.'

'He will receive me, I presume?'

'My brother is a courteous gentleman, my lord.'

'Here is the church, and here we have to part for today. Do we?'

'Good-bye to you, my lord,' she said.

He took her hand and dropped the dead thing.

'Your idea is, to return to Esslemont some day or other?'

'For the present,' was her strange answer.

She bowed, she stepped on. On she sped, leaving him at the stammered beginning of his appeal to her.

Their parting by the graveyard of the church that had united them was what the world would class as curious. To him it was a further and a well-marked stroke of the fatality pursuing him. He sauntered by the graveyard wall until her figure slipped out of sight. It went like a puffed candle, and still it haunted the corner where last seen. Her vanishing seemed to say, that less of her belonged to him than the phantom his eyes retained behind them somewhere.

There was in his pocket a memento of Ambrose Mallard, that the family had given him at his request. He felt the lump. It had an answer for all perplexities. It had been charged and emptied since it was in his possession; and it could be charged again. The thing was a volume as big as the world to study. For the touch of a finger, one could have its entirely satisfying contents, and fly and be a raven of that night wherein poor Ambrose wanders lost, but cured of human wounds.

He leaned on the churchyard wall, having the graves to the front of eyes bent inward. They were Protestant graves, not so impressive to him as the wreathed and gilt of those under dedication to Feltre's Madonna. But whatever they were, they had ceased to nurse an injury or feel the

pain for having inflicted it. Their wrinkles had gone from them, whether of anger or suffering. Ambrose Mallard lay as peaceful in consecrated ground: and Chumley Potts would be unlikely to think that the helping to lay Ambrose in his quiet last home would cost him a roasting until priestly intercession availed. So Chummy continues a Protestant; dull consciences can! But this is incomprehensible, that she, nursing her injury, should be perfectly civil. She is a woman without emotion. She is a woman full of emotion, one man knows. She ties him to her, to make him feel the lash of his remorse. He feels it because of her casting him from her--and so civilly. If this were a Catholic church, one might go in and give the stained soul free way to get a cleansing. As it is, here are the graves; the dead everywhere have their sanctity, even the heathen.

Fleetwood read the name of the family of Meek on several boards at the head of the graves. Jonathan Meek died at the age of ninety-five. A female Meek had eighty-nine years in this life. Ezra Meek gave up the ghost prematurely, with a couplet, at eighty-one. A healthy spot, Croridge, or there were virtues in the Meek family, he reflected, and had a shudder that he did not trace to its cause, beyond an acknowledgement of a desire for the warm smell of incense.

## CHAPTER XLIII

### ON THE ROAD TO THE ACT OF PENANCE

His customary wrestle with the night drove Lord Fleetwood in the stillness of the hour after matins from his hated empty Esslemont up again to the village of the long-lived people, enjoying the moist earthiness of the air off the ironstone. He rode fasting, a good preparatory state for the simple pleasures, which are virtually the Great Nourisher's teats to her young. The earl was relieved of his dejection by a sudden filling of his nostrils. Fat Esslemont underneath had no such air. Except on the mornings of his walk over the Salzkammergut and Black Forest regions, he had never consciously drawn that deep breath of the satisfied rapture, charging the whole breast with thankfulness. Huntsmen would know it, if the chase were not urgent to pull them at the tail of the running beast. Once or twice on board his yacht he might have known something like it, but the salt sea-breeze could not be disconnected from his companion Lord Feltre, and a thought of Feltre swung vapour of incense all about him. Breathing this air of the young sun's kiss of earth, his invigoration repelled the seductions of the burnt Oriental gums.

Besides, as he had told his friend, it was the sincerity of the Catholic religion, not the seductiveness, that won him to a form of homage--the bend of the head of a foreign observer at a midnight mass. Asceticism, though it may not justify error, is a truth in itself, it is the essence extracted of the scourge, flesh vanquished; and it stands apart from controversy. Those monks of the forested mountain heights, rambling for

their herbs, know the blessedness to be found in mere breathing: a neighbour readiness to yield the breath inspires it the more. For when we do not dread our end, the sense of a free existence comes back to us: we have the prized gift to infancy under the piloting of manhood. But before we taste that happiness we must perform our penance; 'No living happiness can be for the unclean,' as the holy father preached to his flock of the monastery dispersing at matins.

Ay, but penance? penance? Is there not such a thing as the doing of penance out of the Church, in the manly fashion? So to regain the right to be numbered among the captains of the world's fighting men, incontestably the best of comrades, whether or no they led away on a cataract leap at the gates of life. Boldly to say we did a wrong will clear our sky for a few shattering peals.

The penitential act means, youth put behind us, and a steady course ahead. But, for the keeping of a steady course, men made of blood in the walks of the world must be steadied. Say it plainly-mated. There is the humiliating point of our human condition. We must have beside us and close beside us the woman we have learned to respect; supposing ourselves lucky enough to have found her; 'that required other scale of the human balance,' as Woodseer calls her now he has got her, wiser than Lord Feltre in reference to men and women. We get no balance without her. That is apparently the positive law; and by reason of men's wretched enslavement, it is the dance to dissolution when we have not honourable union with women. Feltre's view of women sees the devilish or the angelical; and to most men women are knaves or ninnies. Hence do we behold rascals or imbeciles in the offspring of most men.

He embraced the respected woman's character, with the usual effect: --to see with her sight; and she beheld a speckled creature of the intermittent whims and moods and spites; the universal Patron, whose ambition to be leader of his world made him handle foul brutes--corrupt and cause their damnation, they retort, with curses, in their pangs. She was expected to pardon the husband, who had not abstained from his revenge on her for keeping him to the pledge of his word. And what a revenge!--he had flung the world at her. She is consequently to be the young bride she was on the memorable morning of the drive off these heights of Croridge down to thirty-acre meadow! It must be a saint to forgive such offences; and she is not one, she is deliciously not one, neither a Genevieve nor a Griselda. He handed her the rod to chastise him. Her exchange of Christian names with the Welshman would not do it; she was too transparently sisterly, provincially simple; she was, in fact, respected. Any whipping from her was child's play to him, on whom, if he was to be made to suffer, the vision of the intense felicity of austere asceticism brought the sensation as bracingly as the Boreal morning animates men of high blood in ice regions. She could but gently sting, even if vindictive.

Along the heights, outside the village, some way below a turn of the road to Lekkatts, a gentleman waved hand. The earl saluted with his whip, and waited for him.



'Nothing wrong, Mr. Wythan?'

'Nothing to fear, my lord.'

'I get a trifle uneasy.'

'The countess will not leave her brother.'

A glow of his countess's friendliness for this open-faced, prompt-speaking, good fellow of the faintly inky eyelids, and possibly sheepish inclinations, melted Fleetwood. Our downright repentance of misconduct toward a woman binds us at least to the tolerant recognition of what poor scraps of consolation she may have picked up between then and now--when we can stretch fist in flame to defy it on the oath of her being a woman of honour.

The earl alighted and said: 'Her brother, I suspect, is the key of the position.'

'He's worth it--she loves her brother,' said Mr. Wythan, betraying a feature of his quick race, with whom the reflection upon a statement is its lightning in advance.

Gratified by the instant apprehension of his meaning, Fleetwood interpreted the Welshman's. 'I have to see the brother worthy of her love. Can you tell me the hour likely to be convenient?'. . . .

Mr. Wythan thought an appointment unnecessary which conveyed the sufficient assurance of audience granted.

'You know her brother well, Mr. Wythan?'

'Know him as if I had known him for years. They both come to the mind as faith comes--no saying how; one swears by them.'

Fleetwood eyed the Welsh gentleman, with an idea that he might readily do the same by him.

Mr. Wythan's quarters were at the small village inn, whither he was on his way to breakfast. The earl slipped an arm through the bridle reins and walked beside him, listening to an account of the situation at Lekkatts. It was that extraordinary complication of moves and checks which presents in the main a knot, for the powers above to cut. A miserly old lord withholds arrears of wages; his workmen strike at a critical moment; his nephew, moved by common humanity, draws upon crippled resources to supply their extremer needs, though they are ruining his interests. They made one night a demonstration of the terrorizing sort round Lekkatts, to give him a chorus; and the old lord fired at them out of window and wounded a man. For that they vowed vengeance. All the new gunpowder milled in Surrey was, for some purpose of his own, stored by Lord Levellier on the alder island of the pond near his workshops, a quarter of a mile below the house. They refused, whatever their object, to let a pound of it be moved, at a time when at

last the Government had undertaken to submit it to experiments. And there they stood on ground too strong for 'the Captain,' as they called him, to force, because of the quantity stored at Lekkatts being largely beyond the amount under cover of Lord Levellier's licence. The old lord was very ill, and he declined to see a doctor, but obstinately kept from dying. His nephew had to guard him and at the same time support an enemy having just cause of complaint. This, however, his narrow means would not much longer permit him to do. The alternative was then offered him of either siding arbitrarily against the men and his conscience or of taking a course 'imprudent on the part of a presumptive heir,' Mr. Wythan said hurriedly at the little inn's doorsteps.

'You make one of his lordship's guard?' said Fleetwood.

'The countess, her brother, and I, yes'

'Danger at all?'

'Not so much to fear while the countess is with us.'

'Fear is not a word for Carinthia.'

Her name on the earl's lips drew a keen shot of the eye from Mr. Wythan, and he read the signification of the spoken name. 'You know what every Cambrian living thinks of her, my lord.'

'She shall not have one friend the less for me.'

Fleetwood's hand was out for a good-bye, and the hand was grasped by one who looked happy in doing it. He understood and trusted the man after that, warmed in thinking how politic his impulses could be.

His intention of riding up to Croridge at noon to request his interview with Mr. Kirby-Levellier was then stated.

'The key of the position, as you said,' Mr. Wythan remarked, not proffering an opinion of it more than was expressed by a hearty, rosy countenance, that had to win its way with the earl before excuse was found for the venturesome repetition of his phrase.

Cantering back to that home of the loves of Gower Woodseer and Madge Winch, the thought of his first act of penance done, without his feeling the poorer for it, reconciled Fleetwood to the aspect of the hollow place.

He could not stay beneath the roof. His task of breakfasting done, he was off before the morning's delivery of letters, riding round the country under Croridge, soon up there again. And Henrietta might be at home, he was reminded by hearing band-music as he followed the directions to the house named Stoneridge. The band consisted of eight wind instruments; they played astonishingly well for itinerant musicians. By curious chance, they were playing a selection from the Pirata; presently he heard the notes to 'il mio tradito amor.' They had hit upon

Henrietta's favourite piece!

At the close of it he dismounted, flung the reins to his groom, and, addressing a compliment to the leader, was deferentially saluted with a 'my lord.' Henrietta stood at the window, a servant held the door open for him to enter; he went in, and the beautiful young woman welcomed him: 'Oh, my dear lord, you have given me such true delight! How very generous of you!' He protested ignorance. She had seen him speak to the conductor and receive the patron's homage; and who but he knew her adored of operas, or would have had the benevolent impulse to think of solacing her exile from music in the manner so sure of her taste! She was at her loveliest: her features were one sweet bloom, as of the sunny flower garden; and, touched to the heart by the music and the kindness, she looked the look that kisses; innocently, he felt, feeling himself on the same good ground while he could own he admired the honey creature, much as an amateur may admire one of the pictures belonging to the nation.

'And you have come . . .?' she said. 'We are to believe in happy endings?'

He shrugged, as the modest man should, who says:

'If it depends on me'; but the words were firmly spoken and could be credited.

'Janey is with her brother down at Lekkatts. Things are at a deadlock. A spice of danger, enough to relieve the dulness; and where there is danger Janey's at home.' Henrietta mimicked her Janey. 'Parades with her brother at night; old military cap on her head; firearms primed; sings her Austrian mountain songs or the Light Cavalry call, till it rings all day in my ears--she has a thrilling contralto. You are not to think her wild, my lord. She's for adventure or domesticity, "whichever the Fates decree." She really is coming to the perfect tone.'

'Speak of her,' said the earl. 'She can't yet overlook . . .?'

'It's in the family. She will overlook anything her brother excuses.'

'I'm here to see him.'

'I heard it from Mr. Wythan.'

'"Owain," I believe?'

Henrietta sketched apologies, with a sidled head, soft pout, wavy hand. 'He belongs to the order of primitive people. His wife--the same pattern, one supposes--pledged them to their Christian names. The man is a simpleton, but a gentleman; and Janey holds his dying wife's wish sacred. We are all indebted to him.'

'Whatever she thinks right!' said Fleetwood.

The fair young woman's warm nature flew out to him on a sparkle of

grateful tenderness in return for his magnanimity, oblivious of the inflamer it was: and her heart thanked him more warmly, without the perilous show of emotion, when she found herself secure.

She was beautiful, she was tempting, and probably the weakest of players in the ancient game of two; and clearly she was not disposed to the outlaw game; was only a creature of ardour. That he could see, seeing the misinterpretation a fellow like Brailstone would put upon a temporary flush of the feminine, and the advantage he would take of it, perhaps not unsuccessfully--the dog! He committed the absurdity of casting a mental imprecation at the cunning tricksters of emotional women, and yelled at himself in the worn old surplice of the converted rake. But letting his mind run this way, the tradito amor of the band outside the lady's window was instantly traced to Lord Brailstone; so convictingly, that he now became a very counsel for an injured husband in denunciation of the seductive compliment.

Henrietta prepared to conduct him to Lekkatts; her bonnet was brought. She drew forth a letter from a silken work-bag, and raised it,--Livia's handwriting. 'I 've written my opinion,' he said.

'Not too severe, pray.'

'Posted.'

'Livia wanted a protector.'

'And chose--what on earth are you saying!'

Livia and her boyish lord were abandoned on the spot, though Henrietta could have affirmed stoutly that there was much to be pleaded, if a female advocate dared it, and a man would but hear.

His fingers were at the leaves of a Spanish dictionary.

'Oh yes, and here we have a book of Travels in Spain,' she said.

'Everything Spanish for Janey now. You are aware?--no?'

He was unaware and desired to be told.

'Janey's latest idea; only she would have conceived the notion. You solve our puzzle, my lord.'

She renewed the thanks she persisted in offering for the military music now just ceasing: vexatiously, considering that it was bad policy for him to be unmasking Brailstone to her. At the same time, the blindness which rendered her unconscious of Brailstone's hand in sending members of a military band to play selections from the favourite opera they had jointly drunk of to ecstasy, was creditable; touching, when one thought of the pursuer's many devices, not omitting some treason on the part of her present friend.

'Tell me--I solve?' he said . . . .

Henrietta spied the donkey-basket bearing the two little ones.

'Yes, I hope so--on our way down,' she made answer. 'I want you to see the pair of love-birds in a nest.'

The boy and girl were seen lying side by side, both fast asleep; fair-haired girl, dark-haired boy, faced to one another.

'Temper?' said Fleetwood, when he had taken observation of them.

'Very imperious--Mr. Boy!' she replied, straightening her back under a pretty frown, to convey the humour of the infant tyrant.

The father's mind ran swiftly on a comparison of the destinies of the two children, from his estimate of their parents; many of Gower Woodseer's dicta converging to reawaken thoughts upon Nature's laws, which a knowledge of his own nature blackened. He had to persuade himself that this child of his was issue of a loving union; he had to do it violently, conjuring a vivid picture of the mother in bud, and his recognition of her young charm; the pain of keeping to his resolve to quit her, lest she should subjugate him and despoil him of his wrath; the fatalism in his coming and going; the romantic freak it had been,--a situation then so clearly wrought, now blurred past comprehension. But there must have been love, or some love on his part. Otherwise he was bound to pray for the mother to predominate in the child, all but excluding its father.

Carinthia's image, as a result, ascended sovereignty, and he hung to it.

For if we are human creatures with consciences, nothing is more certain than that we make our taskmasters of those to whom we have done a wrong, the philosopher says. Between Lord Feltre and Gower Woodseer, influenced pretty equally by each of them, this young nobleman was wakening to the claims of others--Youth's infant conscience. Fleetwood now conceived the verbal supplication for his wife's forgiveness involved in the act of penance; and verbal meant abject; with him, going so far, it would mean naked, precise, no slurring. That he knew, and a tremor went over him. Women, then, are really the half of the world in power as much as in their number, if men pretend to a step above the savage. Or, well, his wife was a power.

He had forgotten the puzzle spoken of by Henrietta, when she used the word again and expressed her happiness in the prospect before them--caused by his presence, of course.

'You are aware, my dear lord, Janey worships her brother. He was defeated, by some dastardly contrivance, in a wager to do wonderful feats--for money! money! money! a large stake. How we come off our high horses! I hadn't an idea of money before I was married. I think of little else. My husband has notions of honour; he engaged himself to pay a legacy of debts; his uncle would not pay debts long due to him. He was reduced to the shift of wagering on his great strength and skill.

He could have done it. His enemy managed--enemy there was! He had to sell out of the army in consequence. I shall never have Janey's face of suffering away from my sight. He is a soldier above all things. It seems hard on me, but I cannot blame him for snatching at an opportunity to win military distinction. He is in treaty for the post of aide to the Colonel--the General of the English contingent bound for Spain, for the cause of the Queen. My husband will undertake to be at the orders of his chief as soon as he can leave this place. Janey goes with him, according to present arrangements.'

Passing through a turnstile, that led from the road across a meadow-slope to the, broken land below, Henrietta had view of the earl's hard white face, and she hastened to say: 'You have altered that, my lord. She is devoted to her brother; and her brother running dangers . . . and danger in itself is an attraction to her. But her husband will have the first claim. She has her good sense. She will never insist on going, if you oppose. She will be ready to fill her station. It will be her pride and her pleasure.'

Henrietta continued in the vein of these assurances; and Carinthia's character was shooting lightnings through him, withering that of the woman who referred to his wife's good sense and her station; and certainly would not have betrayed herself by such drawlings if she had been very positive that Carinthia's disposition toward wealth and luxury resembled hers. She knew the reverse; or so his contemptuously generous effort to frame an apology for the stuff he was hearing considered it. His wife was lost to him. That fact smote on his breast the moment he heard of her desire to go with her brother.

Wildest of enterprises! But a criminal saw himself guilty of a large part in the disaster the two heroic souls were striving desperately to repair. If her Chillon went, Carinthia would go--sure as flame is drawn to air. The exceeding splendour in the character of a young woman, injured as she had been, soft to love, as he knew her, and giving her husband no other rival than a beloved brother, no ground of complaint save her devotion to her brother, pervaded him, without illuminating or lifting; rather with an indication of a foul contrast, that prostrated him.

Half of our funny heathen lives we are bent double to gather things we have tossed away! was one of the numbers of apposite sayings that hummed about him, for a chorus of the world's old wisdom in derision, when he descended the heathy path and had sight of Carinthia beside her Chillon. Would it be the same thing if he had it in hand again? Did he wish it to be the same? Was not he another man? By the leap of his heart to the woman standing down there, he was a better man.

But recent spiritual exercises brought him to see superstitiously how by that sign she was lost to him; for everlastingly in this life the better pays for the worse; thus is the better a proved thing.

Both Chillon and Carinthia, it is probable, might have been stirred to deeper than compassion, had the proud young nobleman taken them into

his breast to the scouring of it; exposing the grounds of his former brutality, his gradual enlightenment, his ultimate acknowledgement of the pricelessness of the woman he had won to lose her. An imploring of forgiveness would not have been necessary with those two, however great their--or the woman's--astonishment at the revelation of an abysmal male humanity. A complete exposure of past meanness is the deed of present courage certain of its reward without as well as within; for then we show our fellows that the slough is cast. But life is a continuous fight; and members of the social world display its degree of civilization by fighting in armour; most of them are born in it; and their armour is more sensitive than their skins. It was Fleetwood's instinct of his inability to fling it off utterly which warned him of his loss of the wife, whose enthusiasm to wait on her brother in danger might have subsided into the channel of duty, even tenderness, had he been able resolutely to strip himself bare. This was the further impossible to him, because of a belief he now imposed upon himself, to cover the cowardly shrinking from so extreme a penitential act, that such confessions are due from men to the priest only, and that he could confess wholly and absolutely to the priest--to heaven, therefore, under seal, and in safety, but with perfect repentance.

So, compelled to keep his inner self unknown, he fronted Chillon; courteously, in the somewhat lofty seeming of a guarded manner, he requested audience for a few minutes; observing the princely figure of the once hated man, and understanding Henrietta's sheer womanly choice of him; Carinthia's idolatry, too, as soon as he had spoken. The man was in his voice.

Chillon said: 'It concerns my sister, I have to think. In that case, her wish is to be present. Your lordship will shorten the number of minutes for the interview by permitting it.'

Fleetwood encountered Carinthia's eyes. They did not entreat or defy. They seconded her brother, and were a civil shining naught on her husband. He bowed his head, constrained, feeling heavily the two to one.

She replied to the look: 'My brother and I have a single mind. We save time by speaking three together, my lord.'

He was led into the long room of the workshop, where various patterns of muskets, rifles, pistols, and swords were stars, crosses, wedges, over the walls, and a varnished wooden model of a piece of cannon occupied the middle place, on a block.

Contempt of military weapons and ridicule of the art of war were common on those days among a people beginning to sit with habitual snugness at the festive board provided for them by the valour of their fathers. Fleetwood had not been on the side of the banqueting citizens, though his country's journals and her feasted popular wits made a powerful current to whelm opposition. But the appearance of the woman, his wife, here, her head surrounded by destructive engines in the form of trophy, and the knowledge that this woman bearing his name designed to be out at the heels of a foreign army or tag-rag of uniformed rascals, inspired him to

reprobate men's bad old game as heartily as good sense does in the abstract, and as derisively as it is the way with comfortable islanders before the midnight trumpet-notes of panic have tumbled them to their legs. He took his chair; sickened.

He was the next moment taking Carinthia's impression of Chillon, compelled to it by an admiration that men and women have alike for shapes of strength in the mould of grace, over whose firm build a flicker of agility seems to run. For the young soldier's figure was visibly in its repose prompt to action as the mind's movement. This was her brother; her enthusiasm for her brother was explained to him. No sooner did he have the conception of it than it plucked at him painfully; and, feeling himself physically eclipsed by the object of Carinthia's enthusiasm, his pride of the rival counselled him to preserve the mask on what was going on within, lest it should be seen that he was also morally beaten at the outset. A trained observation told him, moreover, that her Chillon's correctly handsome features, despite their conventional urbanity, could knit to smite, and held less of the reserves of mercy behind them than Carinthia's glorious barbaric ruggedness. Her eyes, each time she looked at her brother, had, without doating, the light as of the rise of happy tears to the underlids as they had on a certain day at the altar, when 'my lord' was 'my husband,'--more shyly then. He would have said, as beautifully, but for envy of the frank, pellucid worship in that look on her proved hero. It was the jewel of all the earth to win back to himself; and it subjected him, through his desire for it, to a measurement with her idol, in character, quality, strength, hardness. He heard the couple pronouncing sentence of his loss by anticipation.

Why had she primed her brother to propose the council of three? Addressing them separately, he could have been his better or truer self. The sensation of the check imposed on him was instructive as to her craft and the direction of her wishes. She preferred the braving of hazards and horrors beside her brother, in scorn of the advantages he could offer; and he yearned to her for despising by comparison the bribe he proposed in the hope that he might win her to him. She was with religion to let him know the meanness of wealth.

Thus, at the edge of the debate, or contest, the young lord's essential nobility disarmed him; and the revealing of it, which would have appealed to Carinthia and Chillon both, was forbidden by its constituent pride, which helped him to live and stood obstructing explanatory speech.

## CHAPTER XLIV

### BETWEEN THE EARL, THE COUNTESS AND HER BROTHER, AND OF A SILVER CROSS

Carinthia was pleased by hearing Lord Fleetwood say to her: 'Your Madge and my Gower are waiting to have the day named for them.'

She said: 'I respect him so much for his choice of Madge. They shall not



wait, if I am to decide.'

'Old Mr. Woodseer has undertaken to join them.'

'It is in Whitechapel they will be married.'

The blow that struck was not intended, and Fleetwood passed it, under her brother's judicial eye. Any small chance word may carry a sting for the neophyte in penitence.

'My lawyers will send down the settlement on her, to be read to them to-day or to-morrow. With the interest on that and the sum he tells me he has in the Funds, they keep the wolf from the door--a cottage door. They have their cottage. There's an old song of love in a cottage. His liking for it makes him seem wiser than his clever sayings. He'll work in that cottage.'

'They have a good friend to them in you, my lord. It will not be poverty for their simple wants. I hear of the little cottage in Surrey where they are to lodge at first, before they take one of their own.'

'We will visit them.'

'When I am in England I shall visit them often.'

He submitted.

'The man up here wounded is recovering?'

'Yes, my lord. I am learning to nurse the wounded, with the surgeon to direct me.'

'Matters are sobering down?--The workmen?'

'They listen to reason so willingly when we speak personally, we find.'

The earl addressed Chillon. 'Your project of a Spanish expedition reminds me of favourable reports of your chief.'

'Thoroughly able and up to the work,' Chillon answered.

'Queer people to meddle with.'

'We 're on the right side on the dispute.'

'It counts, Napoleon says. A Spanish civil war promises bloody doings.'

'Any war does that.'

'In the Peninsula it's war to the knife, a merciless business.'

'Good schooling for the profession.'

Fleetwood glanced: she was collected and attentive. 'I hear from Mrs. Levellier that Carinthia would like to be your companion.'

'My sister has the making of a serviceable hospital nurse.'

'You hear the chatter of London!'

'I have heard it.'

'You encourage her, Mr. Levellier?'

'She will be useful--better there than here, my lord.'

'I claim a part in the consultation.'

'There 's no consultation; she determines to go.'

'We can advise her of all the risks.'

'She has weighed them, every one.'

'In the event of accidents, the responsibility for having persuaded her would rest on you.'

'My brother has not persuaded me,' Carinthia's belltones intervened. 'I proposed it. The persuasion was mine. It is my happiness to be near him, helping, if I can.'

'Lady Fleetwood, I am entitled to think that your brother yielded to a request urged in ignorance of the nature of the risks a woman runs.'

'My brother does not yield to a request without examining it all round, my lord, and I do not. I know the risks. An evil that we should not endure,--life may go. There can be no fear for me.'

She spoke plain truth. The soul of this woman came out in its radiance to subdue him, as her visage sometimes did; and her voice enlarged her words. She was a warrior woman, Life her sword, Death her target, never to be put to shame, unconquerable. No such symbolical image smote him, but he had an impression, the prose of it. As in the scene of the miners' cottages, her lord could have knelt to her: and for an unprotesting longer space now. He choked a sigh, shrugged, and said, in the world's patient manner with mad people: 'You have set your mind on it; you see it rose-coloured. You would not fear, no, but your friends would have good reason to fear. It's a menagerie in revolt over there. It is not really the place for you. Abandon the thought, I beg.'

'I shall, if my brother does not go,' said Carinthia.

Laughter of spite at a remark either silly or slyly defiant was checked in Fleetwood by the horror of the feeling that she had gone, was ankle-deep in bloody mire, captive, prey of a rabble soldiery, meditating the shot or stab of the blessed end out of woman's half of our human muddle.

He said to Chillon: 'Pardon me, war is a detestable game. Women in the thick of it add a touch to the brutal hideousness of the whole thing.'

Chillon said: 'We are all of that opinion. Men have to play the game; women serving in hospital make it humaner.'

'Their hospitals are not safe.'

'Well! Safety!'

For safety is nowhere to be had. But the earl pleaded: 'At least in our country.'

'In our country women are safe?'

'They are, we may say, protected.'

'Laws and constables are poor protection for them.'

'The women we name ladies are pretty safe, as a rule.'

'My sister, then, was the exception.'

After a burning half minute the earl said: 'I have to hear it from you, Mr. Levellier. You see me here.'

That was handsomely spoken. But Lord Fleetwood had been judged and put aside. His opening of an old case to hint at repentance for brutality annoyed the man who had let him go scathless for a sister's sake.

'The grounds of your coming, my lord, are not seen; my time is short.'

'I must, I repeat, be consulted with regard to Lady Fleetwood's movements.'

'My sister does not acknowledge your claim.'

'The Countess of Fleetwood's acts involve her husband.'

'One has to listen at times to what old sailors call Caribbee!' Chillon exclaimed impatiently, half aloud. 'My sister received your title; she has to support it. She did not receive the treatment of a wife:-- or lady, or woman, or domestic animal. The bond is broken, as far as it bears on her subjection. She holds to the rite, thinks it sacred. You can be at rest as to her behaviour. In other respects, your lordship does not exist for her.'

'The father of her child must exist for her.'

'You raise that curtain, my lord!'

In the presence of three it would not bear a shaking.

Carinthia said, in pity of his torture:--

'I have my freedom, and am thankful for it, to follow my brother, to share his dangers with him. That is more to me than luxury and the married state. I take only my freedom.'

'Our boy? You take the boy?'

'My child is with my sister Henrietta!

'Where?'

'We none know yet.'

'You still mistrust me?'

Her eyes were on a man that she had put from her peaceably; and she replied, with sweetness in his ears, with shocks to a sinking heart, 'My lord, you may learn to be a gentle father to the child. I pray you may. My brother and I will go. If it is death for us, I pray my child may have his father, and God directing his father.'

Her speech had the clang of the final.

'Yes, I hope--if it be the worst happening, I pray, too,' said he, and drooped and brightened desperately: 'But you, too, Carinthia, you could aid by staying, by being with the boy and me. Carinthia!' he clasped her name, the vapour left to him of her: 'I have learnt learnt what I am, what you are; I have to climb a height to win back the wife I threw away. She was unknown to me; I to myself nearly as much. I sent a warning of the kind of husband for you--a poor kind; I just knew myself well enough for that. You claimed my word--the blessing of my life, if I had known it! We were married; I played--I see the beast I played. Money is power, they say. I see the means it is to damn the soul, unless we-- unless a man does what I do now.'

Fleetwood stopped. He had never spoken such words--arterial words, as they were, though the commonest, and with moist brows, dry lips, he could have resumed, have said more, have taken this woman, this dream of the former bride, the present stranger, into his chamber of the brave aims and sentenced deeds. Her brother in the room was the barrier; and she sat mute, large-eyed, expressionless. He had plunged low in the man's hearing; the air of his lungs was thick, hard to breathe, for shame of a degradation so extreme.

Chillon imagined him to be sighing. He had to listen further. 'Soul' had been an uttered word. When the dishonouring and mishandling brute of a young nobleman stuttered a compliment to Carinthia on her 'faith in God's assistance and the efficacy of prayer,' he jumped to his legs, not to be shouting 'Hound!' at him. He said, under control: 'God's name shall be left to the Church. My sister need not be further troubled. She has shown she is not persuaded by me. Matters arranged here

quickly,--we start. If I am asked whether I think she does wisely to run the risks in an insurrectionary country rather than remain at home exposed to the honours and amusements your lordship offers, I think so; she is acting in her best interests. She has the choice of being abroad with me or staying here unguarded by me. She has had her experience. She chooses rightly. Paint the risks she runs, you lay the colours on those she escapes.' She thanks the treatment she has undergone for her freedom to choose. I am responsible for nothing but the not having stood against her most wretched marriage. It might have been foreseen. Out there in the war she is protected. Here she is with--I spare your lordship the name.'

Fleetwood would have heard harsher had he not been Carinthia's husband. He withheld his reply. The language moved him to proud hostility: but the speaker was Carinthia's brother.

He said to her: 'You won't forget Gower and Madge?'

She gave him a smile in saying: 'It shall be settled for a day after next week.'

The forms of courtesy were exchanged.

At the closing of the door on him, Chillon said: 'He did send a message: I gathered it--without the words--from our Uncle Griphard. I thought him in honour bound to you--and it suited me that I should.'

'I was a blindfold girl, dearest; no warning would have given me sight,' said Carinthia. 'That was my treachery to the love of my brother. . . I dream of father and mother reproaching me.'

The misery of her time in England had darkened her mind's picture of the early hour with Chillon on the heights above the forsaken old home; and the enthusiasm of her renewed devotion to her brother giving it again, as no light of a lost Eden, as the brilliant step she was taking with him from their morning Eastern Alps to smoky-crimson Pyrenees and Spanish Sierras; she could imagine the cavernous interval her punishment for having abandoned a sister's duties in the quest of personal happiness.

But simultaneously, the growing force of her mind's intelligence, wherein was no enthusiasm to misdirect by overcolouring, enabled her to gather more than a suspicion of comparative feebleness in the man stripped of his terrors. She penetrated the discrowned tyrant's nature some distance, deep enough to be quit of her foregoing alarms. These, combined with his assured high style, had woven him the magical coat, threadbare to quiet scrutiny. She matched him beside her brother. The dwarfed object was then observed; and it was not for a woman to measure herself beside him. She came, however, of a powerful blood, and he was pressing her back on her resources: without the measurement or a thought of it, she did that which is the most ordinary and the least noticed of our daily acts in civilized intercourse, she subjected him to the trial of the elements composing him, by collision with what she felt of her own; and it was because she felt them strongly, aware of her feeling

them, but unaware of any conflict, that the wrestle occurred. She flung him, pitied him, and passed on along her path elsewhere. This can be done when love is gone. It is done more or less at any meeting of men and men; and men and women who love not are perpetually doing it, unconsciously or sensibly. Even in their love, a time for the trial arrives among certain of them; and the leadership is assumed, and submission ensues, tacitly; nothing of the contention being spoken, perhaps, nothing definitely known.

In Carinthia's case, her revived enthusiasm for her brother drove to the penetration of the husband pleading to thwart its course. His offer was wealth: that is, luxury, amusement, ease. The sub-audible 'himself' into the bargain was disregarded, not counting with one who was an upward rush of fire at the thought that she was called to share her brother's dangers.

Chillon cordially believed the earl to be the pestilent half madman, junction with whom is a constant trepidation for the wife, when it is not a screaming plight. He said so, and Carinthia let him retain his opinion. She would have said it herself to support her scheme, though 'mad' applied to a man moving in the world with other men was not understood by her.

With Henrietta for the earl's advocate, she was patient as the deaf rock-wall enthusiasm can be against entreaties to change its direction or bid it disperse: The 'private band of picked musicians' at the disposal of the Countess of Fleetwood, and Opera singers (Henrietta mentioned resonant names) hired for wonderful nights at Esslemont and Calesford or on board the earl's beautiful schooner yacht, were no temptation. Nor did Henrietta's allusions to his broken appearance move his wife, except in her saying regretfully: 'He changes.'

On the hall table at Esslemont, a letter from his bankers informed the earl of a considerable sum of money paid in to his account in the name of Lord Brailstone. Chumley Potts, hanging at him like a dog without a master since the death of his friend Ambrose, had journeyed down: 'Anxious about you,' he said. Anxious about or attracted by the possessor of Ambrose Mallard's 'clean sweeper,' the silver-mounted small pistol; sight of which he begged to have; and to lengthened his jaw on hearing it was loaded. A loaded pistol, this dark little one to the right of the earl's blotting-pad and pens, had the look of a fearful link with his fallen chaps and fishy hue. Potts maundered moralities upon 'life,' holding the thing in his hand, weighing it, eyeing the muzzle. He 'couldn't help thinking of what is going to happen to us after it all': and 'Brosey knows now!' was followed by a twitch of one cheek and the ejaculation 'Forever!' Fleetwood alive and Ambrose dead were plucking the startled worldling to a peep over the verge into our abyss; and the young lord's evident doing of the same commanded Chumley Potts' imitation of him under the cloud Ambrose had become for both of them.

He was recommended to see Lord Feltre, if he had a desire to be instructed on the subject of the mitigation of our pains in the regions below. Potts affirmed that he meant to die a Protestant Christian.

Thereupon, carrying a leaden burden of unlaughed laughable stuff in his breast, and Chummy's concluding remark to speed him: 'Damn it, no, we'll stick to our religion!' Fleetwood strode off to his library, and with the names of the Ixionides of his acquaintance ringing round his head, proceeded to strike one of them off the number privileged at the moment to intrude on him. Others would follow; this one must be the first to go. He wrote the famous letter to Lord Brailstone, which debarred the wily pursuer from any pretext to be running down into Mrs. Levellier's neighbourhood, and also precluded the chance of his meeting the fair lady at Calesford. With the brevity equivalent to the flick of a glove on the cheek, Lord Brailstone was given to understand by Lord Fleetwood that relations were at an end between them. No explanation was added; a single sentence executed the work, and in the third person. He did not once reflect on the outcry in the ear of London coming from the receiver of such a letter upon payment of a debt.

The letter posted and flying, Lord Fleetwood was kinder to Chumley Potts; he had a friendly word for Gower Woodseer; though both were heathens, after their diverse fashions, neither of them likely ever to set out upon the grand old road of Rome: Lord Feltre's 'Appian Way of the Saints and Comforters.'

Chummy was pardoned when they separated at night for his reiterated allusions to the temptation of poor Ambrose Mallard's conclusive little weapon lying on the library table within reach of a man's arm-chair: in its case, and the case locked, yes, but easily opened, 'provoking every damnable sort of mortal curiosity!' The soundest men among us have their fits of the blues, Fleetwood was told. 'Not wholesome!' Chummy shook his head resolutely, and made himself comprehensibly mysterious. He meant well. He begged his old friend to promise he would unload and keep it unloaded. 'For I know the infernal worry you have--deuced deal worse than a night's bad luck!' said he; and Fleetwood smiled sourly at the world's total ignorance of causes. His wretchedness was due now to the fact that the aforetime huntress refused to be captured. He took a silver cross from a table-drawer and laid it on the pistol-case. 'There, Chummy,' he said; that was all; not sermonizing or proselytizing. He was partly comprehended by Chumley Potts, fully a week later. The unsuspecting fellow, soon to be despatched in the suite of Brailstone, bore away an unwontedly affectionate dismissal to his bed, and spoke some rather squeamish words himself, as he recollected with disgust when he ran about over London repeating his executioner's.

The Cross on the pistol-case may have conduced to Lord Fleetwood's thought, that his days among unrepentant ephemeral Protestant sinners must have their immediate termination. These old friends were the plague-infected clothes he flung off his body. But the Cross where it lay, forbidding a movement of the hand to that box, was authoritative to decree his passage through a present torture, by the agency of the hand he held back from the solution of his perplexity, at the cost which his belief in the Eternal would pay. Henrietta had mentioned her husband's defeat, by some dastardly contrivance. He had to communicate, for the disburdening of his soul, not only that he was guilty, but the meanest of criminals, in being no more than half guilty. His training told him

of the contempt women entertain toward the midway or cripple sinner, when they have no special desire to think him innocent. How write, or even how phrase his having merely breathed in his ruffian's hearing the wish that he might hear of her husband's defeat! And with what object? Here, too, a woman might, years hence, if not forgive, bend her head resignedly over the man's vile nature, supposing strong passion his motive. But the name for the actual motive? It would not bear writing, or any phrasing round it. An unscathed despot bidden take a fair woman's eyes into his breast, saw and shrank. And now the eyes were Carinthia's: he saw a savage bridegroom, and a black ladder-climber, and the sweetest of pardoning brides, and the devil in him still insatiate for revenge upon her who held him to his word.

He wrote, read, tore the page, trimmed the lamp, and wrote again. He remembered Gower Woodseer's having warned him he would finish his career a monk. Not, like Feltre, an oily convert, but under the hood, yes, and extracting a chartreuse from his ramble through woods richer far than the philosopher's milk of Mother Nature's bosom. There flamed the burning signal of release from his torments; there his absolving refuge, instead of his writing fruitless, intricate, impossible stuff to a woman. The letter was renounced and shredded: the dedicated ascetic contemplated a hooded shape, washed of every earthly fleck. It proved how men may by power of grip squeeze raptures out of pain.

## CHAPTER XLV

### CONTAINS A RECORD OF WHAT WAS FEARED, WHAT WAS HOPED, AND WHAT HAPPENED

The Dame is at her thumps for attention to be called to 'the strangeness of it,' that a poor, small, sparse village, hardly above a hamlet, on the most unproductive of Kentish heights, part of old forest land, should at this period become 'the cynosure of a city beautifully named by the poet Great Augusta, and truly indeed the world's metropolis.'

Put aside her artful pother to rouse excitement at stages of a narrative, London's general eye upon little Croridge was but another instance of the extraordinary and not so wonderful. Lady Arpington, equal to a Parliament in herself, spoke of the place and the countess courted by her repentant lord. Brailstone and Chumley Potts were town criers of the executioner letter each had received from the earl; Potts with his chatter of a suicide's pistol kept loaded in a case under a two-inch-long silver Cross, and with sundry dramatic taps on the forehead, Jottings over the breast, and awful grimace of devoutness. There was no mistaking him. The young nobleman of the millions was watched; the town spyglass had him in its orbit. Tales of the ancestral Fleetwoods ran beside rumours of a Papist priest at the bedside of the Foredoomed to Error's dying mother. His wealth was counted, multiplied by the ready naughts of those who know little and dread much. Sir Meeson Corby referred to an argument Lord Fleetwood had held on an occasion hotly against the logical consistency of the Protestant faith; and to his alarm lest some day 'all



that immense amount of money should slip away from us to favour the machinations of Roman Catholicism!' The Countess of Cressett, Livia, anticipated her no surprise at anything Lord Fleetwood might do: she knew him.

So thereupon, with the whirr of a covey on wing before the fowler, our crested three of immemorial antiquity and a presumptive immortality, the Ladies Endor, Eldritch, and Cowry, shot up again, hooting across the dormant chief city Old England's fell word of the scarlet shimmer above the nether pit-flames, Rome. An ancient horror in the blood of the population, conceiving the word to signify, beak, fang, and claw, the fiendish ancient enemy of the roasting day of yore, heard and echoed. Sleepless at the work of the sapper, in preparation for the tiger's leap, Rome is keen to spy the foothold of English stability, and her clasp of a pillar of the structure sends tremors to our foundations.

The coupling of Rome and England's wealthiest nobleman struck a match to terrorize the Fire Insurance of Smithfield. That meteoric, intractable, perhaps wicked, but popular, reputedly clever; manifestly evil-starred, enormously wealthy, young Earl of Fleetwood, wedded to an adventuress, and a target for the scandals emanating from the woman, was daily, without omission of a day, seen walking Piccadilly pavement in company once more with the pervert, the Jesuit agent, that crafty Catesby of a Lord Feltre, arm in arm the pair of them, and uninterruptedly conversing, utterly unlike Englishmen. Mr. Rose Mackrell passed them, and his breezy salutation of the earl was unobserved in my lord's vacant glass optics, as he sketched the scene. London had report of the sinister tempter and the imperilled young probationer undisguisedly entering the Roman Catholic chapel of a fashionable district-chapel erected on pervert's legacies, down a small street at the corner of a grandee square, by tolerance or connivance of our constabulary,--entering it linked; and linked they issued, their heads bent; for the operation of the tonsure, you would say. Two English noblemen! But is there no legislation to stop the disease? Our female government asks it vixenly of our impotent male; which pretends, beneath an air of sympathy, that we should abstain from any compulsory action upon the law to interfere, though the situation is confessedly grave; and the aspect men assume is correspondingly, to the last degree provokingly, grave-half alive that they are, or void of patriotism, or Babylonian at heart!

Lord Fleetwood's yet undocked old associates vowed he 'smelt strong' of the fumes of the whirled silver censer-balls. His disfavour had caused a stoppage of supplies, causing vociferous abomination of their successful rivals, the Romish priests. Captain Abrane sniffed, loud as a horse, condemnatory as a cat, in speaking of him. He said: 'By George, it comes to this; we shall have to turn Catholics for a loan!' Watchdogs of the three repeated the gigantic gambler's melancholy roar. And, see what gap, cried the ratiocination of alarm, see the landslip it is in our body, national and religious, when exalted personages go that way to Rome!

As you and the world have reflected in your sager moods, an ordinary pebble may roll where it likes, for individualism of the multitudinously

obscure little affects us. Not so the costly jewel, which is a congregation of ourselves, in our envies and longings and genuflexions thick about its lustres. The lapses of precious things must needs carry us, both by weight and example, and it will ceaselessly be, that we are possessed by the treasure we possess, we hang on it. A still, small voice of England's mind under panic sent up these truisms containing admonitions to the governing Ladies. They, the most conservative of earthly bodies, clamoured in return, like cloud-scud witches that have caught fire at their skirts from the torches of marsh-fire radicals. They cited for his arrest the titled millionaire who made a slide for the idiots of the kingdom; they stigmatized our liberty as a sophistry, unless we have in it the sustaining element of justice; and where is the justice that punishes his country for any fatal course a mad young Croesus may take! They shackled the hands of testators, who endangered the salvation of coroneted boys by having sanction to bequeath vast wealth in bulk. They said, in truth, that it was the liberty to be un-Christian. Finally, they screeched a petitioning of Parliament to devote a night to a sitting, and empower the Lord Chancellor to lay an embargo on the personal as well as the real estate of wealthy perverts; in common prudence depriving Rome of the coveted means to turn our religious weapons against us.

The three guardian ladies and their strings of followers headed over the fevered and benighted town, as the records of the period attest, windpiping these and similar Solan notes from the undigested cropful of alarms Lord Fleetwood's expected conduct crammed into them. They and all the world traced his present madness to the act foregoing: that marriage! They reviewed it to deplore it, every known incident and the numbers imagined; yet merely to deplore: frightful comparisons of then with now rendered the historical shock to the marriage market matter for a sick smile. Evil genius of some sort beside him the wealthy young nobleman is sure to have. He has got rid of one to take up with a viler. First, a sluttish trollop of German origin is foisted on him for life; next, he is misled to abjure the faith of his fathers for Rome. But patently, desperation in the husband of such a wife weakened his resistance to the Roman Catholic pervert's insinuations. There we punctuate the full stop to our inquiries; we have the secret.

And upon that, suddenly comes a cyclonic gust; and gossip twirls, whines, and falls to the twanging of an entirely new set of notes, that furnish a tolerably agreeable tune, on the whole. O hear! The Marchioness of Arpington proclaims not merely acquaintanceship with Lord Fleetwood's countess, she professes esteem for the young person. She has been heard to say, that if the Principality of Wales were not a royal title, a dignity of the kind would be conferred by the people of those mountains on the Countess of Fleetwood: such unbounded enthusiasm there was for her character when she sojourned down there. As it is, they do speak of her in their Welsh by some title. Their bards are offered prizes to celebrate her deeds. You remember the regiment of mounted Welsh gentlemen escorting her to her Kentish seat, with their band of the three-stringed harps! She is well-born, educated, handsome, a perfectly honest woman, and a sound Protestant. Quite the reverse of Lord Fleetwood's seeking to escape her, it is she who flies; she cannot

forgive him his cruelties and infidelities: and that is the reason why he threatens to commit the act of despair. Only she can save him! She has flown for refuge to her uncle, Lord Levellier's house at a place named Croridge--not in the gazetteer--hard of access and a home of poachers, where shooting goes on hourly; but most picturesque and romantic, as she herself is! Lady Arpington found her there, nursing one of the wounded, and her uncle on his death-bed; obdurate all round against her husband, but pensive when supplicated to consider her country endangered by Rome. She is a fervent patriot. The tales of her Whitechapel origin, and heading mobs wielding bludgeons, are absolutely false, traceable to scandalizing anecdotists like Mr. Rose Mackrell. She is the beautiful example of an injured wife doing honour to her sex in the punishment of a faithless husband, yet so little cherishing her natural right to deal him retribution, that we dare hope she will listen to her patriotic duty in consenting to the reconciliation, which is Lord Fleetwood's alternative: his wife or Rome! They say she has an incommunicable charm, accounting for the price he puts on her now she holds aloof and he misses it. Let her but rescue him from England's most vigilant of her deadly enemies, she will be entitled to the nation's lasting gratitude. She has her opportunity for winning the Anglican English, as formerly she won the Dissenter Welsh. She may yet be the means of leading back the latter to our fold.

A notation of the cries in air at a time of surgent public excitement can hardly yield us music; and the wording of them, by the aid of compounds and transplants, metaphors and similes only just within range of the arrows of Phoebus' bow (i.e. the farthest flight known), would, while it might imitate the latent poetry, expose venturesome writers to the wrath of a people commendably believing their language a perfected instrument when they prefer the request for a plateful, and commissioning their literary police to brain audacious experimenters who enlarge or wing it beyond the downright aim at that mark. The gossip of the time must therefore appear commonplace, in resemblance to the panting venue a terre of the toad, instead of the fiery steed's; although we have documentary evidence that our country's heart was moved;--in no common degree, Dr. Glossop's lucid English has it, at the head of a broadsheet ballad discovered by him, wherein the connubially inclined young earl and the nation in turn beseech the countess to resume her place at Esslemont, and so save both from a terrific dragon's jaw, scarlet as the infernal flames; described as fascinating--

'The classes with the crests,  
And the lining to their vests,  
Till down they jump, and empty leave  
A headless trunk that rests.'

These ballads, burlesque to present reading, mainly intended for burlesque by the wits who dogged without much enlivening an anxious period of our history, when corner-stones were falling the way the young lord of the millions threatened to go, did, there is little doubt, according to another part of their design (Rose Mackrell boasts it indirectly in his Memoirs), interpret public opinion, that is, the English humour of it--the half laugh in their passing and not simulated

shudder.

Carinthia had a study of the humours of English character in the person of the wounded man she nursed on little Croridge, imagining it the most unobserved of English homes, and herself as unimportant an object. Daniel Charner took his wound, as he took his medicine and his posset from her hand, kindly, and seemed to have a charitable understanding of Lord Levellier now that the old nobleman had driven a pellet of lead into him and laid him flat. It pleased him to assure her that his mates were men of their word, and had promised to pay the old lord with a 'rouse' for it, nothing worse. Her father used to speak of the 'clean hearts of the English' as to the husbanding of revenge; that is, the 'no spot of bad blood' to vitiate them. Captain John Peter seconded all good-humoured fighters 'for the long account': they will surely win; and it was one of his maxims: 'My foe can spoil my face; he beats me if he spoils my temper.'

Recalling the scene of her bridal day--the two strong Englishmen at the shake of hands, that had spoiled one another's faces, she was enlightened with a comprehension of her father's love for the people; seeing the spiritual of the gross ugly picture, as not every man can do, and but a warrior Joan among women. Chillon shall teach the Spanish people English heartiness, she thought. Lord Fleetwood's remarks on the expedition would have sufficed to stamp it righteous with her; that was her logic of the low valuation of him. She fancied herself absolutely released at his departure. Neither her sister Riette nor her friend Owain, administering sentiment and common sense to her by turns, could conceive how the passion for the recovery of her brother's military name fed the hope that she might aid in it, how the hope fed the passion. She had besides her hunger to be at the work she could do; her Chillon's glory for morning sky above it.

Such was the mind Lady Arpington brought the world's wisdom to bear upon; deeming it in the end female only in its wildness and obstinacy.

Carinthia's answers were few, barely varied. Her repetition of 'my brother' irritated the great lady, whose argument was directed to make her see that these duties toward her brother were primarily owing to her husband, the man she would reclaim and could guide. And the Countess of Fleetwood's position, her duty to society, her dispensing of splendid hospitality, the strengthening of her husband to do his duty to the nation, the saving of him from a fatal step--from Rome; these were considerations for a reasonable woman to weigh before she threw up all to be off on the maddest of adventures. 'Inconceivable, my dear child!' Lady Arpington proceeded until she heard herself as droning.

Carinthia's unmoved aspect of courteous attention appeared to invoke the prolongation of the sermon it criticized. It had an air of reversing their positions while she listened to the charge of folly, and incidentally replied.

Her reason for not fearing Roman Catholic encroachments was, she said, her having known good Catholics in the country she came from. For herself, she should die professing the faith of her father and mother.

Behind her correct demeanour a rustic intelligence was exhibited. She appreciated her duty to her marriage oath: 'My husband's honour is quite safe with me.' Neither England nor religion, nor woman's proper devotion to a husband's temporal and spiritual welfare, had claims rivalling her devotion to her brother. She could not explain a devotion that instigated her to an insensate course. It seemed a kind of enthusiasm; and it was coldly spoken; in the tone referring to 'her husband's honour.' Her brother's enterprise had her approval because 'her mother's prayer was for him to serve in the English army.' By running over to take a side in a Spanish squabble? she was asked and answered: 'He will learn war; my Chillon will show his value; he will come back a tried soldier.'

She counted on his coming back? She did.

'I cannot take a step forward without counting on success. We know the chances we are to meet. My father has written of death. We do not fear it, so it is nothing to us. We shall go together; we shall not have to weep for one another.'

The strange young woman's avoidance of any popular sniffle of the pathetic had a recognized merit.

'Tell me,' Lady Arpington said abruptly; 'this maid of yours, who is to marry the secretary, or whatever he was--you are satisfied with her?'

'She is my dear servant Madge.' A cloud opened as Carinthia spoke the name. 'She will be a true wife to him. They will always be my friends!'

Nothing against the earl in that direction, apparently; unless his countess was blest with the density of frigidity.

Society's emissary sketched its perils for unprotected beautiful woman; an outline of the London quadrille Henrietta danced in; and she glanced at Carinthia and asked: 'Have you thought of it?'

Carinthia's eyes were on the great lady's. Their meaning was, 'You hit my chief thought.' They were read as her farthest thought. For the hint of Henrietta's weakness deadened her feelings with a reminder of warm and continued solicitations rebutted; the beautiful creature's tortures at the idea of her exile from England. An outwearied hopelessness expressed a passive sentiment very like indifference in the clear wide gaze. She replied: 'I have. My proposal to her was Cadiz, with both our young ones. She will not.'

And there is an end to that part of the question! Lady Arpington interpreted it, by the gaze more than the words, under subjection of the young woman's character. Nevertheless, she bore away Carinthia's consent to a final meeting with the earl at her house in London, as soon as things were settled at Croridge. Chillon, whom she saw, was just as hard, unforgiving, careless of his country's dearest interests; brother and sister were one heart of their one blood. She mentioned the general impression in town, that the countess and only she could save the earl

from Rome. A flash of polite laughter was Chillon's response. But after her inspection of the elegant athlete, she did fancy it possible for a young wife, even for Henrietta, to bear his name proudly in his absence --if that was worth a moment's consideration beside the serious issues involved in her appeal to the countess; especially when the suggestion regarding young wives left unprotected, delicately conveyed to the husband, had failed of its purpose. The handsome husband's brows fluttered an interrogation, as if her clear-obscure should be further lighted; and it could not be done. He weighed the wife by the measure of the sister, perhaps; or his military head had no room for either. His callousness to the danger of his country's disintegration, from the incessant, becoming overt, attacks of a foreign priesthood might--an indignant great lady's precipitation to prophecy said would--bring chastisement on him. She said it, and she liked Henrietta, vowing to defeat her forecast as well as she could in a land seeming forsaken by stable principles; its nobles breaking up its national church, going over to Rome, embracing the faith of the impostor Mahomet.

Gossip fed to the starvation bone of Lady Arpington's report, until one late afternoon, memorable for the breeding heat in the van of elemental artillery, newsboys waved damp sheets of fresh print through the streets, and society's guardians were brought to confess, in shame and gladness, that they had been growing sceptical of the active assistance of Providence. At first the 'Terrible explosion of gunpowder at Croridge' alarmed them lest the timely Power should have done too much. A day later the general agitation was pacified; Lady Arpington circulated the word 'safe,' and the world knew the disaster had not engulfed Lady Fleetwood's valuable life. She had the news by word of mouth from the lovely Mrs. Kirby-Levellier, sister-in-law to the countess. We are convinced we have proof of Providence intervening when some terrific event of the number at its disposal accomplishes the thing and no more than the thing desired. Pitiful though it may seem for a miserly old lord to be blown up in his bed, it is necessarily a subject of congratulation if the life, or poor remnant of a life, sacrificed was an impediment to our righteous wishes. But this is a theme for the Dame, who would full surely have committed another breach of the treaty, had there not been allusion to her sisterhood's view of the government of human affairs.

On the day preceding the catastrophe, Chillon's men returned to work. He and Carinthia and Mr. Wythan lunched with Henrietta at Stoneridge. Walking down to Lekkatts, they were astounded to see the figure of the spectral old lord on the plank to the powder store, clad in his long black cloak, erect. He was crossing, he told them, to count his barrels; a dream had disturbed him. Chillon fell to rapid talk upon various points of business, and dispersed Lord Levellier's memory relating to his errand. Leaning on Carinthia's arm, he went back to the house, where he was put to bed in peace of mind. His resuscitated physical vigour blocked all speculation for the young people assembled at Stoneridge that night. They hardly spoke; they strangled thoughts forming as larvae of wishes. Henrietta would be away to Lady Arpington's next day, Mr. Wythan to Wales. The two voyagers were sadder by sympathy than the two whom they were leaving to the clock's round of desert sameness. About ten at

night Chillon and Mr. Wythan escorted Carinthia, for the night's watch beside her uncle, down to Lekkatts. It was midway that the knocks on air, as of a muffled mallet at a door and at farther doors of caverns, smote their ears and shook the ground.

After an instant of the silence following a shock, Carinthia touched her brother's arm; and Chillon said:

'Not my powder!'

They ran till they had Lekkatts in sight. A half moon showed the house; it stood. Fifty paces below, a column of opal smoke had begun to wreath and stretch a languid flag. The 'rouse' promised to Lord Levellier by Daniel Charner's humorous mates had hit beyond its aim. Intended to give him a start--or 'One-er in return,' it surpassed his angry shot at the body of them in effect.

Carinthia entered his room and saw that he was lying stretched restfully. She whispered of this to Chillon, and began upon her watch, reading her Spanish phrasebook; and she could have wept, if she had been a woman for tears. Her duty to stay in England with Chillon's fair wife crossed the beckoning pages like a black smoke. Her passion to go and share her brother's dangers left the question of its righteousness at each fall of the big breath.

Her uncle's grey head on his pillow was like a flintstone in chalk under her look by light of dawn; the chin had dropped.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### A CHAPTER OF UNDERCURRENTS AND SOME SURFACE FLASHES

Thus a round and a good old English practical repartee, worthy a place in England's book of her historical popular jests; conceived ingeniously, no bit murderously, even humanely, if Englishmen are to be allowed indulgence of a jolly hit back for an injury--more a feint than a real stroke--gave the miserly veteran his final quake and cut Chillon's knot.

Lord Levellier dead of the joke detracted from the funny idea there had been in the anticipation of his hearing the libertine explosion of his grand new powder, and coming out cloaked to see what walls remained upright. Its cleverness, however, was magnified by the shades into which it had despatched him. The man who started the 'rouse for old Griphard' was named: nor did he shuffle his honours off. Chillon accused him, and he regretfully grinned; he would have owned to it eloquently, excited by the extreme ingenuity, but humour at the criminal bar is an abject thing, that has to borrow from metaphysics for the expository words. He lacked them entirely, and as he could not, fronting his master, supply the defect with oaths, he drew up and let out on the dead old lord, who wanted a few pounds of blasting powder, like anything else in everybody's

way. Chillon expected the lowest of his countrymen to show some degree of chivalry upon occasions like the present. He was too young to perceive how it is, that a block of our speech in the needed direction drives it storming in another, not the one closely expressing us. Carinthia liked the man; she was grieved to hear of his having got the sack summarily, when he might have had a further month of service or a month's pay. Had not the workmen's forbearance been much tried? And they had not stolen, they had bought the powder, only intending to startle.

She touched her brother's native sense of fairness and vexed him with his cowardly devil of impatience, which kicked at a simply stupid common man, and behaved to a lordly offender, smelling rascal, civilly. Just as her father would have--treated the matter, she said: 'Are we sorry for what has happened, Chillon?' The man had gone, the injustice was done; the master was left to reflect on the part played by his inheritance of the half share of ninety thousand pounds in his proper respect for Lord Levellier's memory. Harsh to an inferior is a horrible charge. But the position of debtor to a titled cur brings a worse for endurance. Knowing a part of Lord Fleetwood's message to Lord Levellier suppressed, the bride's brother, her chief guardian, had treated the omission as of no importance, and had all the while understood that he ought to give her his full guess at the reading of it: or so his racked mind understood it now. His old father had said: A dumb tongue can be a heavy liar; and, Lies are usurers' coin we pay for ten thousand per cent. His harshness in the past hour to a workman who had suffered with him and had not intended serious mischief was Chillon's unsounded motive for the resolution to be out of debt to the man he loathed. There is a Muse that smiles aloft surveying our acts from the well-springs.

Carinthia heard her brother's fuller version of the earl's communication to her uncle before the wild day of her marriage. 'Not particularly fitted for the married state,' Chillon phrased it, saying: 'He seems to have known himself, he was honest so far.' She was advised to think it over, that the man was her husband.

She had her brother's heart in her breast, she could not misread him. She thought it over, and felt a slight drag of compassion for the reluctant bridegroom. That was a stretch long leagues distant from love with her; the sort of feeling one has for strange animals hurt and she had in her childish blindness done him a hurt, and he had bitten her. He was a weak young nobleman; he had wealth for a likeness of strength; he had no glory about his head. Why had he not chosen a woman to sit beside him who would have fancied his coronet a glory and his luxury a kindness? But the poor young nobleman did not choose! The sadly comic of his keeping to the pledge of his word--his real wife--the tyrant of the tyrant--clothed him; the vision of him at the altar, and on the coach, and at the Royal Sovereign Inn, and into the dimness where a placidly smiling recollection met a curtain and lost the smile.

Suppose that her duty condemned her to stay in England on guard over Chillon's treasure! The perpetual struggle with a weak young nobleman of aimless tempers and rightabout changes, pretending to the part of



husband, would, she foresaw, raise another figure of duty, enchaining a weak young woman. The world supported his pretension; and her passion to serve as Chillon's comrade sank at a damping because it was flame. Chillon had done that; Lady Arpington, to some extent; Henrietta more. A little incident, pointing in no direction, had left a shadow of a cloud, consequent upon Lady Arpington's mention of Henrietta's unprotectedness. Stepping up the hill to meet her sister, on the morning of Henrietta's departure for London under the convoy of Mr. Wythan, Carinthia's long sight spied Kit Ines, or a man like him, in the meadow between Lekkatts and Croridge. He stood before Henrietta, and vanished light-legged at a gesture. Henrietta was descending to take her leave of her busied husband; her cheeks were flushed; she would not speak of the fellow, except to reply, 'oh, a beggar,' and kept asking whether she ought not to stay at Stoneridge. And if she did she would lose the last of the Opera in London! How could she help to investigate the cause of an explosion so considerate to them? She sang snatches of melodies, clung to her husband, protested her inability to leave him, and went, appearing torn away. As well bid healthy children lie abed on a bright summer morning, as think of holding this fair young woman bound to the circle of safety when she has her view of pleasure sparkling like the shore-sea mermaid's mirror.

Suspicious were not of the brood Carinthia's bosom harboured. Suspicion of Chillon's wife Carinthia could not feel. An uncaptured vessel in the winds on high seas was imagined without a picturing of it. The apparition of Ives, if it was he, would not fit with any conjecture. She sent a warning to Madge, and at the same time named the girl's wedding day for her; pained in doing it. She had given the dear girl her word that she would be present at this of all marriages. But a day or two days or more would have to be spent away from Chillon; and her hunger for every hour beside her brother confessed to the war going on within her, as to which was her holier duty, the one on the line of her inclinations, or that one pointing to luxury-choice between a battle-horse and a cushioned-chair; between companionship with her glorious brother facing death, and submission to a weak young nobleman claiming his husband's rights over her. She had submitted, had forgotten his icy strangeness, had thought him love; and hers was a breast for love, it was owned by the sobbing rise of her breast at the thought. And she might submit again--in honour? scorning the husband? Chillon scorned him. Yet Chillon left the decision to her, specified his excuses. And Henrietta and Owain, Lady Arpington, Gower Woodseer, all the world--Carinthia shuddered at the world's blank eye on what it directs for the acquiescence of the woman. That shred of herself she would become, she felt herself becoming it when the view of her career beside her brother waned. The dead Rebecca living in her heart was the only soul among her friends whose voice was her own against the world's.

But there came a turn where she and Rebecca separated. Rebecca's insurgent wishes taking shape of prophecy, robbed her of her friend Owain, to present her an impossible object, that her mind could not compass or figure. She bade Rebecca rest and let her keep the fancy of Owain as her good ghost of a sun in the mist of a frosty morning; sweeter to her than an image of love, though it were the very love, the love of

maidens' dreams, bursting the bud of romance, issuing its flower. Delusive love drove away with a credulous maiden, under an English heaven, on a coach and four, from a windy hill-top, to a crash below, and a stunned recovery in the street of small shops, mud, rain, gloom, language like musket-fire and the wailing wounded.

No regrets, her father had said; they unman the heart we want for to-morrow. She kept her look forward at the dead wall Chillon had thrown up. He did not reject her company; his prospect of it had clouded; and there were allusions to Henrietta's loneliness. 'His Carin could do her service by staying, if she decided that way.' Her enthusiasm dropped to the level of life's common ground. With her sustainment gone, she beheld herself a titled doll, and had sternly to shut her eyes on the behind scenes, bar any shadowy approaches of womanly softness; thinking her father's daughter dishonoured in the submissive wife of the weak young nobleman Chillon despised as below the title of man.

Madge and Gower came to Stoneridge on their road to London three days before their union. Madge had no fear of Ines, but said: 'I never let Mr. Gower out of my sight.' Perforce of studying him with the thirsty wonder consequent upon his proposal to her, she had got fast hold of the skirts of his character; she 'knew he was happy because he was always making her laugh at herself.' Her manner of saying, 'She hoped to give him a comfortable home, so that he might never be sorry for what he had done,' was toned as in a church, beautiful to her mistress. Speaking of my lord's great kindness, her eyes yearned for a second and fell humbly. She said of Kit Ives, 'He's found a new "paytron," Sarah says Mr. Woodseer tells her, my lady. It's another nobleman, Lord Brailstone, has come into money lately and hired him for his pugilist when it's not horseracing.' Gower spoke of thanks to Lord Fleetwood for the independence allowing him to take a wife and settle to work in his little Surrey home. He, too, showed he could have said more and was advised not to push at a shut gate. My lord would attend their wedding as well as my lady, Carinthia heard from Madge; counting it a pity that wealthy noblemen had no professions to hinder the doing of unprofitable things.

Her sensibility was warmer on the wedding-day of these two dear ones. He graced the scene, she admitted, when reassured by his perfect reserve toward her personally. He was the born nobleman in his friendliness with the bridal pair and respectfulness to Mr. Woodseer. High social breeding is an exquisite performance on the instrument we are, and his behaviour to her left her mind at liberty for appreciation of it. Condescension was not seen, his voice had no false note. During the ceremony his eyelids blinked rapidly. At the close, he congratulated the united couple, praising them each for the wisdom of their choice. He said to his countess:

'This is one of the hopeful marriages; chiefly of your making.'

She replied: 'My prayers will be for them always.'

'They are fortunate who have your prayers,' he said, and turned to Sarah Winch. She was to let him know when she also had found her 'great

philosopher.' Sarah was like a fish on a bank, taking gasps at the marvel of it all; she blushed the pale pink of her complexion, and murmured of 'happiness.' Gower had gone headlong into happiness, where philosophers are smirkers and mouthers of ordinary stuff. His brightest remark was to put the question to his father: 'The three good things of the Isle of Britain?' and treble the name of Madge Woodseer for a richer triad than the Glamorgan man could summon. Pardonably foolish; but mindful of a past condition of indiscipline, Nature's philosopher said to the old minister: 'Your example saved me for this day at a turn of my road, sir.' Nature's poor wild scholar paid that tribute to the regimental sectarian. Enough for proud philosophy to have done the thing demonstrably right, Gower's look at his Madge and the world said. That 'European rose of the coal-black order,' as one of his numerous pictures of her painted the girl, was a torch in a cavern for dusky redness at her cheeks. Her responses beneath the book Mr. Woodseer held open had flashed a distant scene through Lord Fleetwood. Quaint to notice was her reverence for the husband she set on a towering monument, and her friendly, wifely; whispered jogs at the unpractical creature's forgetfulness of his wraps, his books; his writing-desk--on this tremendous occasion, his pipe. Again the earl could have sworn, that despite her antecedents, she brought her husband honest dower, as surely as she gave the lucky Pagan a whole heart; and had a remarkably fine bust to house the organ, too; and a clarionet of a voice, curiously like her, mistress's. And not a bad fellow, but a heathen dog, a worshipper of Nature, walked off with the girl, whose voice had the ring of Carinthia's. The Powers do not explain their dispensations.

These two now one by united good-will for the junction Lord Fleetwood himself drove through Loudon to the hills, where another carriage awaited them by his orders, in the town of London's race-course. As soon as they were seated he nodded to them curtly from his box, and drove back, leaving them puzzled. But his countess had not so very coldly seen him start his horses to convey the modest bridal pair. His impulses to kindness could be politic. Before quitting Whitechapel, she went with Sarah to look at the old shop of the fruits and vegetables. They found it shut, untenanted; Mr. Woodseer told them that the earl was owner of it by recent purchase, and would not lease it. He had to say why; for the countess was dull to the notion of a sentimental desecration in the occupying of her bedchamber by poor tradespeople. She was little flattered. The great nobleman of her imagination when she lay there dwindled to a whimsy infant, despot of his nursery, capricious with his toys; likely to damage himself, if left to himself.

How it might occur, she heard hourly from her hostess, Lady Arpington; from Henrietta as well, in different terms. He seemed to her no longer the stationed nobleman, but one of other idle men, and the saddest of young men. His weakness cast a net on her. Worse than that drag of compassion, she foresaw the chance of his having experience of her own weakness, if she was to be one among idle women: she might drop to the love of him again. Chillon's damping of her enthusiasm sank her to a mere breathing body, miserably an animal body, no comrade for a valiant brother; this young man's feeble consort, perhaps: and a creature thirsting for pleasure, disposed to sigh in the prospect of caresses.

Enthusiasm gone, her spirited imagination of active work on the field of danger beside her brother flapped a broken wing.

She fell too low in her esteem to charge it upon Henrietta that she stood hesitating, leaning on the hated side of the debate; though she could almost have blamed Chillon for refusing her his positive counsel, and not ordering his wife to follow him. Once Lady Arpington, reasoning with her on behalf of the husband who sought reconciliation, sneered at her brother's project, condemned it the more for his resolve to carry it out now that he had means. The front of a shower sprang to Carinthia's eyelids. Now that her brother had means, he from whom she might be divided was alert to keep his engagement and study war on the field, as his father had done in foreign service, offering England a trained soldier, should his country subsequently need him. The contrast of her heroic brother and a luxurious idle lord scattering blood of bird or stag, and despising the soldier's profession, had a singular bitter effect, consequent on her scorn of words to defend the man her heart idolized. This last of young women for weeping wept in the lady's presence.

The feminine trick was pardoned to her because her unaccustomed betrayal of that form of enervation was desired. It was read as woman's act of self-pity over her perplexity: which is a melting act with the woman when there is no man to be dissolved by it. So far Lady Arpington judged rightly; Carinthia's tears, shed at the thought of her brother under the world's false judgement of him, left her spiritless to resist her husband's advocates. Unusual as they were, almost unknown, they were thunder-drops and shook her.

All for the vivid surface, the Dame frets at stresses laid on undercurrents. There is no bridling her unless the tale be here told of how Lord Brailstone in his frenzy of the disconcerted rival boasted over town the counterstroke he had dealt Lord Fleetwood, by sending Mrs. Levellier a statement of the latter nobleman's base plot to thwart her husband's wager, with his foul agent, the repentant and well-paid ruffian in person, to verify every written word. The town's conception of the necessity for the reunion of the earl and countess was too intense to let exciting scandal prosper. Moreover, the town's bright anticipation of its concluding festivity on the domain of Calesford argued such tattle down to a baffled adorer's malice. The Countess of Cressett, having her cousin, the beautiful Mrs. Kirby-Levellier, in her house, has denied Lord Brailstone admission at her door, we can affirm. He has written to her vehemently, has called a second time, has vowed publicly that Mrs. Levellier shall have her warning against Lord Fleetwood. The madness of jealousy was exhibited. Lady Arpington pronounced him in his conduct unworthy the name of gentleman. And how foolish the scandal he circulates! Lord Fleetwood's one aim is to persuade his offended wife to take her place beside him. He expresses regret everywhere, that the death of her uncle Lord Levellier withholds her presence from Calesford during her term of mourning; and that he has given his word for the fete on a particular day, before London runs quite dry. His pledge of his word is notoriously inviolate. The Countess of Cressett--an extraordinary instance of a thrice married woman corrected in her addiction to play by

her alliance with a rakish juvenile--declares she performs the part of hostess at the request of the Countess of Fleetwood. Perfectly convincing. The more so (if you have the gossips' keen scent of a deduction) since Lord Fleetwood and young Lord Cressett and the Jesuit Lord Feltre have been seen confabulating with very sacerdotal countenances indeed. Three English noblemen! not counting eighty years for the whole three! And dear Lady Cressett fears she may be called on to rescue her boy-husband from a worse enemy than the green tables, if Lady Fleetwood should unhappily prove unyielding, as it shames the gentle sex to imagine she will be. In fact, we know through Mrs. Levellier, the meeting of reconciliation between the earl and the countess comes off at Lady Arpington's, by her express arrangement, to-morrow: 'none too soon,' the expectant world of London declared it.

The meeting came to pass three days before the great day at Calesford. Carinthia and her lord were alone together. This had been his burning wish at Croridge, where he could have poured his heart to her and might have moved the wife's. But she had formed her estimate of him there: she had, in the comparison or clash of forces with him, grown to contemplate the young man of wealth and rank, who had once been impatient of an allusion to her father, and sought now to part her from her brother--stop her breathing of fresh air. Sensationally, too, her ardour for the exercise of her inherited gifts attributed it to him that her father's daughter had lived the mean existence in England, pursuing a husband, hounded by a mother's terrors. The influences environing her and pressing her to submission sharpened her perusal of the small object largely endowed by circumstances to demand it. She stood calmly discoursing, with a tempered smile: no longer a novice in the social manner. An equal whom he had injured waited for his remarks, gave ready replies; and he, bowing to the visible equality, chafed at a sense of inferiority following his acknowledgement of it. He was alone with her, and next to dumb; she froze a full heart. As for his heart, it could not speak at all, it was a swinging lump. The rational view of the situation was exposed to her; and she listened to that favourably, or at least attentively; but with an edge to her civil smile when he hinted of entertainments, voyages, travels, an excursion to her native mountain land. Her brother would then be facing death. The rational view, she admitted, was one to be considered. Yes, they were married; they had a son; they were bound to sink misunderstandings, in the interests of their little son. He ventured to say that the child was a link uniting them; and she looked at him. He blinked rapidly, as she had seen him do of late, but kept his eyes on her through the nervous flutter of the lids; his pride making a determined stand for physical mastery, though her look was but a look. Had there been reproach in it, he would have found the voice to speak out. Her look was a cold sky above a hungering man. She froze his heart from the marble of her own.

And because she was for adventuring with her brother at bloody work of civil war in the pay of a foreign government!--he found a short refuge in that mute sneer, and was hurled from it by an apparition of the Welsh scene of the bitten infant, and Carinthia volunteering to do the bloody work which would have saved it; which he had contested, ridiculed. Right then, her insanity now conjured the wretched figure of him opposing the

martyr her splendid humaneness had offered her to be, and dominated his reason, subjected him to admire--on to worship of the woman, whatever she might do. Just such a feeling for a woman he had dreamed of in his younger time, doubting that he would ever meet the fleshly woman to impose it. His heart broke the frost she breathed. Yet, if he gave way to the run of speech, he knew himself unmanned, and the fatal habit of superiority stopped his tongue after he had uttered the name he loved to speak, as nearest to the embrace of her.

'Carinthia--so I think, as I said, we both see the common sense of the position. I regret over and over again--we'll discuss all that when we meet after this Calesford affair. I shall have things to say. You will overlook, I am sure--well, men are men!--or try to. Perhaps I'm not worse than--we'll say, some. You will, I know,--I have learnt it,--be of great service, help to me; double my value, I believe; more than double it. You will receive me--here? Or at Croridge or Esslemont; and alone together, as now, I beg.'

That was what he said. Having said it, his escape from high tragics in the comfortable worldly tone rejoiced him; to some extent also the courteous audience she gave him. And her hand was not refused. Judging by her aspect, the plain common-sense ground of their situation was accepted for the best opening step to their union; though she must have had her feelings beneath it, and God knew that he had! Her hand was friendly. He could have thanked her for yielding her hand without a stage scene; she had fine breeding by nature. The gracefulest of trained ladies could not have passed through such an interview so perfectly in the right key; and this was the woman he had seen at the wrestle with hideous death to save a muddy street-child! She touched the gentleman in him. Hard as it was while he held the hand of the wife, his little son's mother, who might be called his bride, and drew him by the contact of their blood to a memory, seeming impossible, some other world's attested reality,--she the angel, he the demon of it,--unimaginable, yet present, palpable, a fact beyond his mind, he let her hand fall scarce pressed. Did she expect more than the common sense of it to be said? The 'more' was due to her, and should partly be said at their next meeting for the no further separating; or else he would vow in his heart to spread it out over a whole life's course of wakeful devotion, with here and there a hint of his younger black nature. Better that except for a desire seizing him to make sacrifice of the demon he had been, offer him up hideously naked to her mercy. But it was a thing to be done by hints, by fits, by small doses. She could only gradually be brought to the comprehension of how the man or demon found indemnification under his yoke of marriage in snatching her, to torment, perhaps betray; and solace for the hurt to his pride in spreading a snare for the beautiful Henrietta. A confession! It could be to none but the priest.

Knowledge of Carinthia would have urged him to the confession straightway. In spite of horror, the task of helping to wash a black soul white would have been her compensation for loss of companionship with her soldier brother. She would have held hot iron to the rabid wound and come to a love of the rescued sufferer.

It seemed to please her when he spoke of Mr. Rose Mackrell's applications to get back his volume of her father's Book of Maxims.

'There is mine,' she said.

For the sake of winning her quick gleam at any word of the bridal couple, he conjured a picture of her Madge and his Gower, saying: 'That marriage --as you will learn--proves him honest from head to foot; as she is in her way, too.'

'Oh, she is,' was the answer.

'We shall be driving down to them very soon, Carinthia.'

'It will delight them to see either of us, my lord.'

'My lady, adieu until I am over with this Calesford,' he gestured, as in fetters.

She spared him the my lording as she said adieu, sensitive as she was, and to his perception now.

Lady Arpington had a satisfactory two minutes with him before he left the house. London town, on the great day at Calesford, interchanged communications, to the comforting effect, that the Countess of Fleetwood would reign over the next entertainment.

## CHAPTER XLVII

### THE LAST: WITH A CONCLUDING WORD BY THE DAME

It is of seemingly good augury for the cause of a suppliant man, however little for the man himself, when she who has much to pardon can depict him in a manner that almost smiles, not unlike a dandling nurse the miniature man-child sobbing off to sleep after a frenzy; an example of a genus framed for excuses, and he more than others. Chillon was amused up to inquisitive surprise by Carinthia's novel idea of her formerly dreaded riddle of a husband. As she sketched the very rational alliance proposed to her, and his kick at the fetters of Calesford, a shadowy dash for an image of the solicitous tyrant was added perforce to complete the scene; following which, her head moved sharply, the subject was flung over her shoulder.

She was developing; she might hold her ground with the husband, if the alliance should be resumed; and she would be a companion for Henrietta in England: she was now independent, as to money, and she could break an intolerable yoke without suffering privation. He kept his wrath under, determined not to use his influence either way, sure though he was of her old father's voting for her to quit the man and enter the field where

qualities would be serviceable. The man probably feared a scandal more than the loss of his wife in her going. He had never been thrashed--the sole apology Chillon discovered for him, in a flushed review of the unavenged list of injuries Carinthia had sustained. His wise old father insisted on the value of an early thrashing to trim and shape the growth of most young men. There was no proof of Lord Fleetwood's having schemed to thwart his wager, so he put that accusation by: thinking for an instant, that if the man desired to have his wife with him, and she left the country with her brother, his own act would recoil; or if she stayed to hear of a villany, Carinthia's show of scorn could lash. Henrietta praised my lord's kindness. He had been one of the adorers--as what man would not be!--and upon her at least (he could hardly love her husband) he had not wreaked his disappointment. A young man of huge wealth, having nothing to do but fatten his whims, is the monster a rich country breeds under the blessing of peace. His wife, if a match for him, has her work traced out:--mean work for the child of their father, Chillon thought. She might be doing braver, more suitable to the blood in her veins. But women have to be considered as women, not as possible heroines; and supposing she held her own with this husband of hers, which meant, judging by the view of their unfolded characters at present, a certain command of the freakish beast; she, whatever her task, would not be the one set trotting. He came to his opinion through the estimate he had recently formed of Lord Fleetwood, and a study of his changed sister.

Her brows gloomed at a recurrence to that subject. Their business of the expedition absorbed her, each detail, all the remarks he quoted of his chief, hopeful or weariful; for difficulties with the Spanish Government, and with the English too, started up at every turn; and the rank and file of the contingent were mostly a rough lot, where they were rather better than soaked weeds. A small body of trained soldiers had sprung to the call to arms; here and there an officer could wheel a regiment.

Carinthia breasted discouragement. 'English learn from blows, Chillon.'

'He might have added, they lose half their number by having to learn from blows, Carin.'

'He said, "Let me lead Britons!"'

'When the canteen's fifty leagues to the rear, yes!'

'Yes, it is a wine country,' she sighed. 'But would the Spaniards have sent for us if their experience told them they could not trust us?'

Chillon brightened rigorously: 'Yes, yes; there's just a something about our men at their best, hard to find elsewhere. We're right in thinking that. And our chief 's the right man.'

'He is Owain's friend and countryman,' said Carinthia, and pleased, her brother for talking like a girl, in the midst of methodical calculations of the cost of this and that, to purchase the supplies he would need. She had an organizing head. On her way down from London she had drawn on instructions from a London physician of old Peninsula experience to



pencil a list of the medical and surgical stores required by a campaigning army; she had gained information of the London shops where they were to be procured; she had learned to read medical prescriptions for the composition of drugs. She was at her Spanish still, not behind him in the ordinary dialogue, and able to correct him on points of Spanish history relating to fortresses, especially the Basque.

A French bookseller had supplied her with the Vicomte d'Eschague's recently published volume of a Travels in Catalonia. Chillon saw paragraphs marked, pages dog-eared, for reference. At the same time, the question of Henrietta touched her anxiously. Lady Arpington's hints had sunk into them both.

'I have thought of St. Jean de Luz, Chillon, if Riette would consent to settle there. French people are friendly. You expect most of your work in and round the Spanish Pyrenees.'

'Riette alone there?' said he, and drew her by her love of him into his altered mind; for he did not object to his wife's loneliness at Cadiz when their plan was new.

London had taught her that a young woman in the giddy heyday of her beauty has to be guarded; her belonging to us is the proud burden involving sacrifices. But at St. Jean de Luz, if Riette would consent to reside there, Lord Fleetwood's absence and the neighbourhood of the war were reckoned on to preserve his yokefellow from any fit of the abominated softness which she had felt in one premonitory tremor during their late interview, and deemed it vile compared with the life of action and service beside, almost beside, her brother, sharing his dangers at least. She would have had Chillon speak peremptorily to his wife regarding the residence on the Spanish borders, adding, in a despair: 'And me with her to protect her!'

'Unfair to Riette, if she can't decide voluntarily,' he said.

All he refrained from was, the persuading her to stay in England and live reconciled with the gaoler of the dungeon, as her feelings pictured it.

Chillon and Carinthia journeyed to London for purchases and a visit to lawyer, banker, and tradesmen, on their way to meet his chief and Owain Wythan at Southampton. They lunched with Livia. The morrow was the great Calesford day; Henrietta carolled of it. Lady Arpington had been afflictingly demure on the theme of her presence at Calesford within her term of mourning. 'But I don't mourn, and I'm not related to the defunct, and I can't be denied the pleasure invented for my personal gratification,' Henrietta's happy flippancy pouted at the prudish objections. Moreover, the adored Columelli was to be her slave of song. The termination of the London season had been postponed a whole week for Calesford: the utmost possible strain; and her presence was understood to represent the Countess of Fleetwood, temporarily in decorous retirement. Chillon was assured by her that the earl had expressed himself satisfied with his wife's reasonableness. 'The rest will follow.' Pleading on the earl's behalf was a vain effort, but she had her grounds for painting Lord Fleetwood's present mood to his countess in warm colours. 'Nothing

short of devotion, Chillon!' London's extreme anxiety to see them united, and the cause of it, the immense good Janey could do to her country, should certainly be considered by her, Henrietta said. She spoke feverishly. A mention of St. Jean de Luz for a residence inflicted, it appeared, a more violent toothache than she had suffered from the proposal of quarters in Cadiz. And now her husband had money? . . . she suggested his reinstatement in the English army. Chillon hushed that: his chief had his word. Besides, he wanted schooling in war. Why had he married! His love for her was the answer; and her beauty argued for the love. But possessing her, he was bound to win her a name. So his reasoning ran to an accord with his military instincts and ambition. Nevertheless, the mournful strange fact she recalled, that they had never waltzed together since they were made one, troubled his countenance in the mirror of hers. Instead of the waltz, grief, low worries, dulness, an eclipse of her, had been the beautiful creature's portion.

It established mighty claims to a young husband's indulgence. She hummed a few bars of his favourite old Viennese waltz, with 'Chillon!' invitingly and reproachfully. His loathing of Lord Fleetwood had to withstand an envious jump at the legs in his vision of her partner on the morrow. He said: 'You'll think of some one absent.'

'You really do wish me to go, my darling? It is Chillon's wish?' She begged for the words; she had them, and then her feverishness abated to a simple sparkling composure.

Carinthia had observed her. She was heart-sick under pressure of thoughts the heavier for being formless. They signified in the sum her doom to see her brother leave England for the war, and herself crumble to pieces from the imagined figure of herself beside him on or near the field. They could not be phrased, for they accused the beloved brother of a weakness in the excessive sense of obligation to the beautiful woman who had wedded him. Driving down to Southampton by the night-coach, her tenderness toward Henrietta held other thoughts unshaped, except one, that moved in its twilight, murmuring of how the love of pleasure keeps us blind children. And how the innocents are pushed by it to snap at wicked bait, which the wealthy angle with, pointed a charitable index on some of our social story. The Countess Livia, not an innocent like Henrietta had escaped the poisoned tongues by contracting a third marriage--'in time!' Lady Arpington said; and the knotty question was presented to a young mind: Why are the innocents tempted to their ruin, and the darker natures allowed an escape? Any street-boy could have told her of the virtue in quick wits. But her unexercised reflectiveness was on the highroad of accepted doctrines, with their chorus of the moans of gossips for supernatural intervention to give us justice. She had not learnt that those innocents, pushed by an excessive love of pleasure, are for the term lower in the scale than their wary darker cousins, and must come to the diviner light of intelligence through suffering.

However, the result of her meditations was to show her she was directed to be Henrietta's guardian. After that, she had no thoughts; travelling beside Chillon, she was sheer sore feeling, as of a body aching for its

heart plucked out. The bitterness of the separation to come between them prophesied a tragedy. She touched his hand. It was warm now.

During six days of travels from port to port along the Southern and Western coasts, she joined in the inspection of the English contingent about to be shipped. They and their chief and her brother were plain to sight, like sample print of a book's first page, blank sheets for the rest of the volume. If she might have been one among them, she would have dared the reckless forecast. Her sensations were those of a bird that has flown into a room, and beats wings against the ceiling and the window-panes. A close, hard sky, a transparent prison wall, narrowed her powers, mocked her soul. She spoke little; what she said impressed Chillon's chief, Owain Wythan was glad to tell her. The good friend had gone counter to the tide of her breast by showing satisfaction with the prospect that she would take her rightful place in the world. Her concentrated mind regarded the good friend as a phantom of a man, the world's echo. His dead Rebecca would have understood her passion to be her brother's comrade, her abasement in the staying at home to guard his butterfly. Owain had never favoured her project; he could not now perceive the special dangers Chillon would be exposed to in her separation from him. She had no means of explaining what she felt intensely, that dangers, death, were nothing to either of them, if they shared the fate together.

Her rejected petition to her husband for an allowance of money, on the day in Wales, became the vivid memory which brings out motives in its glow. Her husband hated her brother; and why? But the answer was lighted fierily down another avenue. A true husband, a lord of wealth, would have rejoiced to help the brother of his wife. He was the cause of Chillon's ruin and this adventure to restore his fortunes. Could she endure a close alliance with the man while her brother's life was imperilled? Carinthia rebuked her drowsy head for not having seen his reason for refusing at the time. 'How long I am before I see anything that does not stare in my face!' She was a married woman, whose order of mind rendered her singularly subject to the holiness of the tie; and she was a weak woman, she feared. Already, at intervals, now that action on a foreign field of the thunders and lightnings was denied, imagination revealed her dissolving to the union with her husband, and cried her comment on herself as the world's basest of women for submitting to it while Chillon's life ran risks; until finally she said: 'Not before I have my brother home safe!' an exclamation equal to a vow.

That being settled, some appearance of equanimity returned; she talked of the scarlet business as one she participated in as a distant spectator. Chillon's chief was hurrying the embarkation of his troops; within ten days the whole expedition would be afloat. She was to post to London for further purchases, he following to take leave of his wife and babe. Curiously, but hardly remarked on during the bustle of work, Livia had been the one to send her short account of the great day at Calesford; Henrietta, the born correspondent, pencilling a couple of lines; she was well, dreadfully fatigued, rather a fright from a trip of her foot and fall over a low wire fence. Her message of love thrice underlined the repeated word.

Henrietta was the last person Carinthia would have expected to meet midway on the London road. Her name was called from a carriage as she drove up to the door of the Winchester hostlery, and in the lady, over whose right eye and cheek a covering fold of silk concealed a bandage, the voice was her sister Riette's. With her were two babes and their nursemaids.

'Chillon is down there--you have left him there?' Henrietta greeted her, saw the reply, and stepped out of her carriage. 'You shall kiss the children afterwards; come into one of the rooms, Janey.'

Alone together, before an embrace, she said, in the voice of tears hardening to the world's business, 'Chillon must not enter London. You see the figure I am. My character's in as bad case up there--thanks to those men! My husband has lost his "golden Riette." When you see beneath the bandage! He will have the right to put me away. His "beauty of beauties"! I'm fit only to dress as a page-boy and run at his heels. My hero! my poor dear! He thinking I cared for nothing but amusement, flattery. Was ever a punishment so cruel to the noblest of generous husbands! Because I know he will overlook it, make light of it, never reproach his Riette. And the rose he married comes to him a shrivelled leaf of a potpourri heap. You haven't seen me yet. I was their "beautiful woman." I feel for my husband most.'

She took breath. Carinthia pressed her lips on the cheek sensible to a hiss, and Henrietta pursued, in words liker to sobs: 'Anywhere, Cadiz, St. Jean de Luz, hospital work either, anywhere my husband likes, anything! I want to work, or I'll sit and rock the children. I'm awake at last. Janey, we're lambs to vultures with those men. I don't pretend I was the perfect fool. I thought myself so safe. I let one of them squeeze my hand one day, he swears. You know what a passion is; you have it for mountains and battles, I for music. I do remember, one morning before sunrise, driving back to town out of Windsor,--a dance, the officers of the Guards,--and my lord's trumpeter at the back of the coach blowing notes to melt a stone, I found a man's hand had mine. I remember Lord Fleetwood looking over his shoulder and smiling hard and lashing his horses. But listen--yes, at Calesford it happened. He--oh, hear the name, then; Chillon must never hear it;--Lord Brailstone was denied the right to step on Lord Fleetwood's grounds. The Opera company had finished selections from my Pirata. I went out for cool air; little Sir Meeson beside me. I had a folded gauze veil over my head, tied at the chin in a bow. Some one ran up to me--Lord Brailstone. He poured forth their poetry. They suppose it the wine for their "beautiful woman." I dare say I laughed or told him to go, and he began a tirade against Lord Fleetwood. There's no mighty difference between one beast of prey and another. Let me get away from them all! Though now! they would not lift an eyelid. This is my husband's treasure returning to him. We have to be burnt to come to our senses. Janey--oh! you do well!--it was fiendish; old ballads, melodrama plays, I see they were built on men's deeds. Janey, I could not believe it, I have to believe it, it is forced down my throat;--that man, your husband, because he could not forgive my choosing Chillon, schemed for Chillon's ruin. I could not believe it

until I saw in the glass this disfigured wretch he has made of me. Livia serves him, she hates him for the tyrant he is; she has opened my eyes. And not for himself, no, for his revenge on me, for my name to be as my face is. He tossed me to his dogs; fair game for them! You do well, Janey; he is capable of any villany. And has been calling at Livia's door twice a day, inquiring anxiously; begs the first appointment possible. He has no shame; he is accustomed to buy men and women; he thinks his money will buy my pardon, give my face a new skin, perhaps. A woman swears to you, Janey, by all she holds holy on earth, it is not the loss of her beauty--there will be a wrinkled patch on the cheek for life, the surgeon says; I am to bear a brown spot, like a bruised peach they sell at the fruit-shops cheap. Chillon's Riette! I think of that, the miserable wife I am for him without the beauty he loved so! I think of myself as guilty, a really guilty woman, when I compare my loss with my husband's.'

'Your accident, dearest Riette--how it happened?' Carinthia said, enfolding her.

'Because, Janey, what have I ever been to Chillon but the good-looking thing he was proud of? It's gone. Oh, the accident. Brailstone had pushed little Corby away; he held my hand, kept imploring, he wanted the usual two minutes, and all to warn me against--I've told you; and he saw Lord Fleetwood coming. I got my hand free, and stepped back, my head spinning; and I fell. That I recollect, and a sight of flames, like the end of the world. I fell on one of the oil-lamps bordering the grass; my veil lighted; I had fainted; those two men saw nothing but one another; and little Sir Meeson was no help; young Lord Cressett dashed out the flames. They brought me to my senses for a second swoon. Livia says I woke moaning to be taken away from that hated Calesford. It was, oh! never to see that husband of yours again. Forgive him, if you can. Not I. I carry the mark of him to my grave. I have called myself "Skin-deep" ever since, day and night--the name I deserve.'

'We will return to Chillon together, my own,' said Carinthia. 'It may not be so bad.' And in the hope that her lovely sister exaggerated a defacement leaving not much worse than a small scar, her heart threw off its load of the recent perplexities, daylight broke through her dark wood. Henrietta brought her liberty. How far guilty her husband might be, she was absolved from considering; sufficiently guilty to release her. Upon that conclusion, pity for the awakened Riette shed purer tear-drops through the gratitude she could not restrain, could hardly conceal, on her sister's behalf and her own. Henrietta's prompt despatch to Croridge to fetch the babes, her journey down out of a sick-room to stop Chillon's visit to London, proved her an awakened woman, well paid for the stain on her face, though the stain were lasting. Never had she loved Henrietta, never shown her so much love, as on the road to the deepening colours of the West. Her sisterly warmth surprised the woeful spotted beauty with a reflection that this martial Janey was after all a woman of feeling, one whom her husband, if he came to know it and the depth of it, the rich sound of it, would mourn in sackcloth to have lost.

And he did, the Dame interposes for the final word, he mourned his loss

of Carinthia Jane in sackcloth and ashes, notwithstanding that he had the world's affectionate condolences about him to comfort him, by reason of his ungovernable countess's misbehaviour once more, according to the report, in running away with a young officer to take part in a foreign insurrection; and when he was most the idol of his countrymen and countrywomen, which it was once his immoderate aim to be, he mourned her day and night, knowing her spotless, however wild a follower of her father's MAXIMS FOR MEN. He believed--some have said his belief was not in error--that the woman to aid and make him man and be the star in human form to him, was miraculously revealed on the day of his walk through the foreign pine forest, and his proposal to her at the ducal ball was an inspiration of his Good Genius, continuing to his marriage morn, and then running downwards, like an overstrained reel, under the leadership of his Bad. From turning to turning of that descent, he saw himself advised to retrieve the fatal steps, at each point attempting it just too late; until too late by an hour, he reached the seaport where his wife had embarked; and her brother, Chillon John, cruelly, it was the common opinion, refused him audience. No syllable of the place whither she fled abroad was vouchsafed to him; and his confessions of sins and repentance of them were breathed to empty air. The wealthiest nobleman of all England stood on the pier, watching the regiments of that doomed expedition mount ship, ready with the bribe of the greater part of his possessions for a single word to tell him of his wife's destination. Lord Feltre, his companion, has done us the service to make his emotions known. He describes them, true, as the Papist who sees every incident contribute to precipitate sinners into the bosom of his Church. But this, we have warrant for saying, did not occur before the earl had visited and strolled in the woods with his former secretary, Mr. Gower Woodseer, of whom so much has been told, and he little better than an infidel, declaring his aim to be at contentedness in life. Lord Fleetwood might envy for a while, he could not be satisfied with Nature.

Within six months of Carinthia Jane's disappearance, people had begun to talk of strange doings at Calesford; and some would have it, that it was the rehearsal of a play, in which friars were prominent characters, for there the frocked gentry were seen flitting across the ground. Then the world learnt too surely that the dreaded evil had happened, its wealthiest nobleman had gone over to the Church of Rome! carrying all his personal and unentailed estate to squander it on images and a dogma. Calesford was attacked by the mob;--one of the notorious riots in our history was a result of the Amazing Marriage, and roused the talk of it again over Great Britain. When Carinthia Jane, after two years of adventures and perils rarely encountered by women, returned to these shores, she was, they say, most anxious for news of her husband; and then, indeed, it has been conjectured, they might have been united to walk henceforward as one for life, but for the sad fact that the Earl of Fleetwood had two months and some days previously abjured his rank, his remaining property, and his title, to become, there is one report, the Brother Russett of the mountain monastery he visited in simple curiosity once with his betraying friend, Lord Feltre. Or some say, and so it may truly be, it was an amateur monastery established by him down among his Welsh mountains, in which he served as a simple brother, without any authority over the priests or what not he paid to act as his superiors.

Monk of some sort he would be. He was never the man to stop at anything half way.

Mr. Rose Mackrell, in his Memoirs, was the first who revealed to the world, that the Mademoiselle de Levellier of the French Court fighting with the Carlists--falsely claimed by him as a Frenchwoman--was, in very truth, Carinthia Jane, the Countess of Fleetwood, to whom Carlists and Legitimises alike were indebted for tender care of them on the field and in hospital; and who rode from one camp through the other up to the tent of the Pretender to the throne of Spain, bearing her petition for her brother's release; which was granted, in acknowledgement of her 'renowned humanity to both conflicting armies,' as the words translated by Dr. Glossop run. Certain it is she brought her wounded brother safe home to England, and prisoners in that war usually had short shrift. For three years longer she was the Countess of Fleetwood, 'widow of a living suicide,' Mr. Rose Mackrell describes the state of the Marriage at that period. No whisper of divorce did she tolerate.

Six months after it was proved that Brother Russett had perished of his austerities, or his heart, we learn she said to the beseeching applicant for her hand, Mr. Owain Wythan, with the gift of it, in compassion: 'Rebecca could foretell events.' Carinthia Jane had ever been ashamed of second marriages, and the union with her friend Rebecca's faithful simpleton gave it, one supposes, a natural air, for he as little as she had previously known the wedded state. She married him, Henrietta has written, because of his wooing her with dog's eyes instead of words. The once famous beauty carried a wrinkled spot on her cheek to her grave; a saving disfigurement, and the mark of changes in the story told you enough to make us think it a providential intervention for such ends as were in view.

So much I can say: the facts related, with some regretted omissions, by which my story has so skeleton a look, are those that led to the lamentable conclusion. But the melancholy, the pathos of it, the heart of all England stirred by it, have been--and the panting excitement it was to every listener--sacrificed in the vain effort to render events as consequent to your understanding as a piece of logic, through an exposure of character! Character must ever be a mystery, only to be explained in some degree by conduct; and that is very dependent upon accident: and unless we have a perpetual whipping of the tender part of the reader's mind, interest in invisible persons must needs flag. For it is an infant we address, and the storyteller whose art excites an infant to serious attention succeeds best; with English people assuredly, I rejoice to think, though I have to pray their patience here while that philosophy and exposure of character block the course along a road inviting to traffic of the most animated kind.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A dumb tongue can be a heavy liar

Advised not to push at a shut gate  
As faith comes--no saying how; one swears by them  
Bent double to gather things we have tossed away  
Contempt of military weapons and ridicule of the art of war  
Everlastingly in this life the better pays for the worse  
Fatal habit of superiority stopped his tongue  
Festive board provided for them by the valour of their fathers  
Flung him, pitied him, and passed on  
Foe can spoil my face; he beats me if he spoils my temper  
He had wealth for a likeness of strength  
Himself in the worn old surplice of the converted rake  
Ideas in gestation are the dullest matter you can have  
Injury forbids us to be friends again  
Lies are usurers' coin we pay for ten thousand per cent  
Love of pleasure keeps us blind children  
Never forgave an injury without a return blow for it  
Pebble may roll where it likes--not so the costly jewel  
Reflection upon a statement is its lightning in advance  
Religion condones offences: Philosophy has no forgiveness  
Sensitiveness to the sting, which is not allowed to poison  
Strengthening the backbone for a bend of the knee in calamity  
Style is the mantle of greatness  
That sort of progenitor is your "permanent aristocracy"  
There's not an act of a man's life lies dead behind him  
Those who have the careless chatter, the ready laugh  
Those who know little and dread much  
To most men women are knaves or ninnies  
Wakening to the claims of others--Youth's infant conscience  
We make our taskmasters of those to whom we have done a wrong  
We shall go together; we shall not have to weep for one another  
Wooing her with dog's eyes instead of words

[The End]

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