Great Love Scenes
from
English Literature



"Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space."

Great Love Scenes
from
English Literature

Chosen and Edited by
LANCELOT OLIPHANT
Editor of "Great Comic Scenes from English Literature"



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PREFACE

Great Love Scenes from English Literature is a companion volume to my *Great Comic Scenes from English Literature*, issued a few months ago, and so encouragingly received by the public and the press.

As, however, there was some occasional misunderstanding in regard to the intended scope of *Great Comic Scenes*, I should here like to make it quite clear that in both that book and this I profess to include no more than a comparatively small number of scenes, and that nothing was further from my purpose than to compile an "omnibus" book, or to make a "representative" collection of scenes. But I would just add that where, so far as *Great Love Scenes* is concerned, there appears to have been a more than usually notable omission, this may perhaps be explained by the fact that the love interest was often found to be diffused through the greater part of a play or novel, and that there was no one scene, more or less complete in itself, that was readily detachable from the context.

The introduction is designed mainly for the general reader.

In conclusion, I have to express my sincere acknowledgments to the following authors and publishers who have so kindly permitted me to use copyright material: to Messrs. Macmillan and the executors of the late Thomas Hardy for the extract from *Jude the Obscure*; to Messrs. Macmillan and Mr. Hugh Walpole for the extract from *The Cathedral*; to Messrs. Constable & Co., for the extract from George Meredith's *Ordeal of Richard Feverel*; to Messrs. Sidgwick & Jackson and the trustees of the late Stanley Houghton for the extract from *Hindle Wakes*; to Messrs. Martin Secker and Mr. Compton Mackenzie

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LANCELOT OLIPHANT.

LONDON, 1931.

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INTRODUCTION

SHAKESPEARE'S *Romeo and Juliet* has long taken its place as the most famous love tragedy in the literature of the world. The story of the two star-crossed lovers who come to a miserable end owing to the insensate strife between the members of their rival houses, was widely familiar, even in Shakespeare's day; but Shakespeare took it for his own, and fashioned it into a thing of shining beauty, radiant with the glory of youthful love. The whole play is suffused with a passion that burns and glows, and that rises to its height in the great garden scene, where the two lovers first realise the dawning wonder of their love. Youth calls to youth, and heart to heart, and nowhere else has the fierce and overmastering power of love, its fearful raptures and its divine enchantment, been expressed with such imaginative vision and revealing truth.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* we find love, or rather passion, of another kind—the languorous, cloying passion of the tired hedonist. Cleopatra has caught Antony in "her strong toils of grace," and weaves her subtlest wiles to hold him. The queen and her adorer move in the close and perfumed atmosphere of lascivious love, and in the soft voluptuousness of Cleopatra's palace Antony ceases to be the man he was. He struggles fitfully against her fascinations, and he struggles in vain. Everything goes—glory, honour, possessions, the world itself. But it seems to him in his infatuation that though he has indeed lost the world, it has been well lost for love.

If in *Romeo and Juliet* we have a sudden and devastating passion resulting in utter wreck, and in *Antony and Cleopatra* a gilded sensualism partly redeemed by Antony's

rugged nobility of soul, in *The Tempest* we have the first awakening of young and innocent love. To Miranda love is something incredibly new and wonderful: something the like of which she has never before even dimly imagined; and the scene in which we are shown her flower-like simplicity, her clear-eyed purity, and her half-shy, half-eager wooing, is a thing of rare and exquisite beauty. If, as some suppose, Shakespeare, in this grand and solemn vision, is, as the enchanter Prospero, finally abjuring his magic, and taking leave for ever of the world that he has peopled with creations of his own starry genius, there is no play in which this could have been more fittingly done.

Among the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists Ben Jonson ranks second only to Shakespeare. *Volpone*, from which our selection has been taken, is one of his three greatest plays, and exhibits his most characteristic qualities: fundamental thought, sardonic humour, keen social satire, and faultless technique. Jonson's powers of characterisation, however, were greatly inferior to those of Shakespeare, for the psychology of most of his stage figures is radically unsound. His comedy is of the type that is known as the comedy of " humours," and his characters are not so much complete human beings as personifications of some outstanding vice or folly which it is Jonson's object to deride. The majority of them, indeed, and Volpone himself is no exception, bear little resemblance to people that have ever existed, but are towering monsters of iniquity, in whom it is impossible to believe. Despite these deficiencies, however, Jonson was a fine literary craftsman, with a high regard for his art, and in sheer intellectual power immensely superior to nearly every other dramatist of his time.

Beaumont and Fletcher were the two great romantic dramatists of the Elizabethan era, and their comedies and romances were more popular than those of any of their contemporaries. Most of their plays are carelessly constructed, defective in character-drawing, and weak in plot; but they contain good individual scenes, and many

passages of extreme poetic beauty. Beaumont and Fletcher's lightness of touch, easy and flowing dialogue, and romantic charm, won the immediate favour of the playgoing public, and their popularity lasted well on into the Restoration period. Among their most successful plays are *The Maid's Tragedy*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *The Scornful Lady*, and *Philaster*. The passage taken from *Philaster* shows a sense of character and a degree of artistic restraint unusual in these two authors, and is perhaps the most notable love scene they have given us.

Of all the Elizabethan dramatists John Webster is the one that comes nearest to the genius of Shakespeare. His tragedies indeed have a concentrated essence and a tragic intensity that is scarcely rivalled by those of Shakespeare himself. *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The Beautiful White Devil* are dramas of sombre and unrelieved gloom. Webster's diseased and tortured imagination loves to brood upon scenes of lust, murder, madness, and revenge; and, lightened by no ray of hope, his tragedies draw to their grim and pitiless close. Writing of *The Duchess of Malfi*, Lamb says: "To move a horror skilfully, to touch a soul to the quick, to lay upon fear as much as it can bear, to wean and weary a life till it is ready to drop, and then to step in with mortal instruments to take its last forfeit; this only a Webster can do."

"Eve's Love for Adam" is taken from Milton's great epic poem of *Paradise Lost*. None of Milton's work is primarily concerned with love, but his incidental love passages are of singular purity and grace, and the more effective by reason of their restrained passion. The grave beauty of the love scene here given is in marked contrast to the artifice of the scene from Congreve that immediately follows.

To the Restoration dramatists love was mainly an affair of idle gallantry, of witty and graceful compliments delicately turned. Any hint of genuine feeling was regarded as absurd, and ridiculed out of existence. Nothing could illustrate this better than the scene selected from

Congreve's *Way of the World.* Millamant, who thinks she can just endure Mirabell as a husband, sets forth, item by item, the conditions on which she will marry him, and Mirabell, not to be outdone, retaliates with a schedule of his own. It is all very polished and elegant and amusing, although a little too palpably shallow and insincere. The characters are lightly but maliciously touched, the dialogue sparkles with wit, and almost every sentence is a pointed and cynical epigram. The whole scene, in short, is thoroughly characteristic of Restoration comedy at its brilliant and artificial best.

In Richardson, Fielding, and Sterne, we have the three master novelists of the eighteenth century.

Richardson did not begin writing novels till he was over fifty, but his skill in depicting the relations between the sexes, his insight into the workings of the female heart, and his power of analysing the passion of love, have rarely, if ever, been surpassed. His method is the gradual and cumulative one: he adds detail to detail, and fact to fact, with slow and patient elaboration, till he produces an overwhelming effect of complete verisimilitude. His fame on the continent has been prodigious. Diderot, Rousseau, De Musset, and Goethe, were all deeply influenced by him, and he was long regarded abroad as one of the world's greatest writers. Of his three novels, *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, and *Sir Charles Grandison*, *Clarissa* is incomparably the finest.

Fielding is a novelist of another kind, and had indeed a profound contempt for Richardson's sentimentality. His work is of almost classical perfection, and *Tom Jones* is admittedly one of the greatest novels in the English language. "What a wonderful art," says Thackeray, "what an admirable gift of nature was it with which the author of these tales was endowed, to waken our sympathy, to seize upon our credulity, so that we believe in his people. . . . What a genius! what a vigour! what a bright-eyed intelligence and observation! what a wholesome hatred for meanness and knavery! what a vast sympathy!

what a cheerfulness ! what a manly relish of life ! what a love of human kind ! " And Gibbon, in what is surely the most splendid compliment that one great author has ever paid to another, predicts that *Tom Jones*, " that exquisite picture of human manners, will outlive the Palace of the Escurial and the imperial eagle of the House of Austria "; a prediction which has to some extent already been realised.

Sterne as a novelist is unique, for his novels are an astonishing mixture of the grotesque, the formless, the obscene, the pathetic, the ludicrous, the irrelevant, and the sentimental. His love scenes, too, are usually unwholesome, suggestive, and full of a prurient innuendo. But after making all possible deductions we are forced to admit that in *Tristram Shandy* and *The Sentimental Journey* he has produced two novels that are undisputed masterpieces of fiction. After we have read only a little of Sterne, we are so provoked by his studied affectation and gratuitous indecency that we are inclined to throw down his novels in disgust ; yet such is the cunning of his art, and the uncanny skill with which he weaves his story, that we feel irresistibly impelled to read on ; and, with apparently little or no effort, he holds our attention to the end.

Scott's novels are very much out of favour at the moment, nor is this difficult to explain ; for Scott's aims and ideals as a novelist were entirely different from those of the writers of to-day. He was a romantic, he had a tale to tell, and his tales were mainly of the historical variety. All this, according to present critical values, has been fatal to Scott's reputation ; for nowadays romance is looked upon with distrust, pure story-telling is taboo, and the historical novel of the kind that Scott wrote is rarely attempted. Further, although Scott, in virtue of his abounding vitality and genuine creative power, may still be ranked as one of our major novelists, he is at the same time undoubtedly deficient in art, and has little intellectual depth or subtlety of conception. He paints on a broad canvas, and is thus often able to achieve massive and spacious

effects; but much of his work is hurried and ineffective, and, while fertile in invention, reveals little sustained imaginative energy of a really high order. He has few great love scenes, for he was interested in love only in so far as it subserved his romantic interests, and it therefore seldom occupies a commanding or wholly convincing place in his work.

Although there are many admirable love scenes in the novels of Jane Austen, she is very rarely concerned with love as a passion. Her stories are delicately etched social satires of exquisite finish, and she no doubt felt that the admission of any scenes of strong emotion would completely destroy their artistic balance. With her, therefore, love is a relatively mild emotion, the deeper feelings of her characters being seldom stirred. This critical detachment and calm restraint are not to the taste of everybody, and they were decidedly not to the taste of Charlotte Brontë, who had some hard things to say about that aspect of Jane Austen's art. "The passions," she says, "are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy sisterhood. What sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study; but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life, and the sentient target of death, this Miss Austen ignores." Nevertheless, the novels of Jane Austen remain.

"Juan and Haidée" is taken from *Don Juan*, Byron's huge unfinished epic satire on things in general. During his lifetime Byron's poetry enjoyed an enormous popularity. On the publication of the first canto of *Childe Harold* he won immediate fame, and thereafter he produced in rapid succession a series of bold, vigorous, and richly-coloured poems. Their glowing rhetoric, gorgeous eastern setting, and vivid presentment of passionate love, gained an instant and resounding success. Lara, Parisina, Mazeppa, and Childe Harold were names of enchantment. But it was not until he wrote *Don Juan* that Byron reached his full poetic development. Here wit, humour, persiflage,

sarcastic mockery, and shallow cynicism, alternated with splendid bursts of genuine poetry, and resulted in a work more truly representative of Byron as he was than any other poem that he wrote. The real greatness of Byron can be appreciated only by those who have read and re-read *Don Juan.*

Tennyson and Browning were the two representative poets of the Victorian era, and each reflects in his own way a different aspect of the national life—Tennyson its domestic piety, its humanitarian zeal, and its self-sufficing patriotism, and Browning its keen analytical spirit and eager interest in the things of the mind. Tennyson expresses what he feels with the proportion, lucidity, and grace of the born artist, but Browning, who " could never beat his music out of him," not infrequently baffles and provokes the reader by the tortuous windings of his thought and the perverse obscurity of his style. After the full-blooded vigour of Browning's work, Tennyson's is apt to seem pale and anæmic, especially in *The Idylls of the King*, in which King Arthur, as portrayed by Tennyson, bears a disconcerting likeness to the Prince Consort. In the treatment of love, Browning is greatly superior to Tennyson. We have an uneasy impression that Tennyson's conception of love is that of " the ideal Victorian gentleman,"—correct, well-bred, and " respectable " ; whereas Browning, with his deeper insight, seems to know the wild goddess for what she is. This superiority of Browning's becomes strikingly manifest if the scene from *In a Balcony* is read directly after the scene from *The Idylls of the King.*

In their combination of burning passion, wild elemental beauty, and sombre tone, *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Brontë, and *Wuthering Heights*, by her sister Emily, are unlike any other novels in the language. The experience of the two sisters was extremely limited, and their range narrow, but they both wrote with a fierce and stormy power that is reminiscent of the lurid grandeur of Webster. Rochester and Heathcliff are scarcely human beings ; but they are unforgettable creations. Which is the finer of the two

novels it is not easy to determine. In *Jane Eyre* we find a wider range, a greater realism, and a more finished art, and in *Wuthering Heights* a greater imaginative intensity and force. Love, as it appears in their work, is a turbulent and unbridled passion that knows no bounds, and the two love scenes here given possess a quality of granite power that is not to be matched in any other writer.

There could scarcely be a greater contrast in fiction than that between Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Mrs. Gaskell's ever-delightful *Cranford*—the one compact of hate, passion, and madness, and the other full of a lavendered fragrance and idyllic charm. And this difference is reflected in the love scene taken from each; for in "A Love Affair of Long Ago," the surface of life is barely rippled by emotion, while in "Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester" we feel that we are witnessing some strange and mighty convulsion of nature.

Great as Dickens was as a humorist he was not very successful in his treatment of love, most of his serious love scenes being marred by a saccharine sentimentality. This excessive emotionalism may sometimes be true to life, but it is rarely true to art, in which, as it has been well said, the half is often so much greater than the whole. We have only to think of Rose Maylie, Agnes Wickfield, Madeline Bray, and Dora Spenlow, to realise the extent of Dickens's failure in this respect. In his happier moments, however, he could write a love scene that was natural and true.

Thackeray also could, on occasion, be just as sentimental as Dickens on the subject of love; but then he has given us one or two love scenes of superlative quality, in which he makes ample amends. The finest of these is that famous chapter in *Esmond*—"The 29th December"—describing the reunion of Henry Esmond and Lady Castlewood; a scene in which the passion of steadily burning love has seldom been rendered with serener beauty or more quiet power.

Charles Reade and Richard Blackmore were each pre-

eminently the author of one great book—Reade of *The Cloister and the Hearth*, a stupendous and realistic work of life in medieval Europe, and one of the greatest historical novels ever written; and Blackmore of *Lorna Doone*, a powerful romance of Exmoor and the legends of the Doone Valley. The love scene from *Lorna Doone* is one of the most famous in the anthology, and reaches towards the close a note of rapturous exaltation.

George Eliot was one of the outstanding novelists of the mid-Victorian era, but of late years her literary reputation has suffered a severe decline, so that nowadays she has comparatively few readers. Yet it has been claimed that there are to be found in her novels some of the highest excellences that a novel can possess: sound construction, tolerant humour, great analytical power, a large human sympathy, and a gift for unravelling the intricate complexities of character. And in this there is much truth. On the other hand, most of her novels are inordinately long, excessively moral in tone, and marked by an unmistakably stuffy Victorian atmosphere. Her touch, too, is by no means certain, her humour sometimes degenerating into farce, and her tragedy into melodrama. Nevertheless, much of her work is of solid and lasting worth, and a writer who can give us three such books as *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Silas Marner*, will not easily be dislodged from her niche in the temple of fame.

The extract here entitled "Richard Feverel and Lucy" is regarded by many good critics as the greatest prose love scene ever written. It is taken from *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, Meredith's finest and most characteristic work. Overflowing with essential wit and humour, and illumined by a wise philosophy and the light of high romance, Meredith's novels are perhaps the most brilliant intellectual achievement in English fiction. None the less, they have never enjoyed a wide popularity, a fact no doubt to be explained by their closely-packed thought and their involved and difficult style—a style that is in its way even more obscure and puzzling than that of Browning. But

though Meredith's novels may not be appreciated by the many, they will always be a rich delight to the few, and the epicure in fiction can hope to relish no choicer morsels than *The Egoist*, *Diana of the Crossways*, and *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*.

The real greatness of Thomas Hardy has probably not even yet been fully realised. His deep, cosmic power, the impression that he is able to create of vast and incalculable forces at work, and the note that he strikes of impending doom, all serve to show that he is the one modern writer who is of the same lineage as the great dramatists of Ancient Greece. To him, as to them, man appears to be the infatuated plaything of the gods, blindly stumbling to destruction. But despite this gloom and pessimism, and sense of the utter hopelessness of things, we feel that his work, whatever its shortcomings, is of the kind that is destined to endure. *Jude the Obscure*, from which the scene in the anthology is taken, was violently attacked on its appearance in 1895, on the ground of its "immorality"; and from that time forth Hardy wrote no more novels.

Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*, a play about the love of the daughter of Herodias for Jokanaan, and her dancing before Herod, is a superb example of the decadent in literature. Its technique is remarkable. By means of a series of short, staccato sentences, rhetorical repetition, multiplied similes, pictorial imagery, and emotional detachment, a portentous and sinister atmosphere is created—an atmosphere peculiarly suited to the consummation of the tragedy of Salomé's mad passion for the Prophet. Few plays have caused a greater sensation or enjoyed a more striking success. "In 1901, within a year of the author's death," says Mr. Robert Ross, "it was produced in Berlin; from that moment it has held the European stage. It has run for a longer consecutive period in Germany than any play by any Englishman, not excepting Shakespeare. It is performed throughout Europe, Asia, and America. It is played even in Yiddish." It was originally written in French, and Sarah Bernhardt was to have played the leading

part at the Palace Theatre, London; but its performance was forbidden by the Censor.

Bella Donna is a characteristic example of the brilliant talent of Mr. Robert Hichens, and is by many accounted his masterpiece. Written about twenty years ago, it was from the beginning a remarkable popular success, and set a fashion in fiction which has been slavishly copied by a host of uninspired imitators. Mr. Hichens' strong points as a novelist are a profound insight into the subtler workings of the human mind, the firm delineation of a certain type of evil but fascinating woman, and an extraordinary skill in suggesting a condition of vague disaster and indefinable fear. In *Bella Donna*, these qualities are to be found at their highest point.

If a list were to be made of recent English poets who have fallen into unmerited neglect, foremost among them would appear the name of Stephen Phillips. Barely thirty years ago, when he produced *Paolo and Francesca*, *Herod*, and *Ulysses*, he was hailed by the critics and by the general public as a great new poetic dramatist, worthy to be ranked with the giant Elizabethans. He had a splendid lyrical gift, a wide-flung imagination, and a true dramatic instinct; and now only sixteen years after his death his name is almost forgotten. Yet anyone who will take the trouble to read his plays and some of his finest poetry, such as *The Wife*, *Marpessa*, and *Christ in Hades*, will agree that this is a fate that he did not deserve; and the scene here given has been included, not only for its intrinsic excellence, but also in the hope that it will help to create renewed interest in the work of a neglected poet. *Marpessa* is a poem filled with a rare beauty, and contains lines of inspired loveliness and perfect expression.

Mr. John Galsworthy is one of the three greatest living English novelists, and his *Forsyte Saga* is the most solid and notable contribution to English fiction during the last generation. Of the various separate novels and short stories that make up that book, *The Man of Property* is certainly the finest; for there we see in their undimmed

glory the wonderful group of Forsytes with their possessive instinct and their ineradicable sense of property. Set against these we have Bosinney and Irene, both fiercely opposed to the material ideals of the Forsytes ; so that the whole book turns upon the clash between these two contrasted groups. Of the result there can be little doubt. " Property triumphs. Bosinney is beaten and killed by the Man of Property, and Irene is brought back to the slavery from which she revolted." Galsworthy is a satirist, but a satirist with a passionate sympathy for all those who are in any way injured or oppressed. He describes life as he sees it—the life of the great upper-middle classes of England ; and his work is a saga of their tenacity of purpose, their greatness and their littleness, their virtues and their vices, their triumphs and their defeats, and their indestructible worth to the nation.

Stanley Houghton was a representative of what has been called the drama of revolt—the type of drama that attacked the prevailing conventions and morality of the English middle classes. In *The Younger Generation* the theme is the rebellion of the children against the cramping restrictions and the oppressive tyranny of their parents ; and in *Hindle Wakes* the looseness of the accepted traditions of irregular relations between the sexes. Other conventions, however, are incidentally attacked. Houghton was a dramatist of courage, insight, incisive wit, and brilliant technique ; but his plays, fine as they are, lack real greatness because they are informed by no great vitalising principle. They are realistic, but their " realism," says Mr. A. E. Morgan, " is rather the realism which depends on careful local colour than the realism which springs from the creation of vital character. . . . Drama," he adds, " has been rightly called a criticism of life, but if it is to be great drama, criticism must mean more than censure and life must mean more than manners. It must reflect life truly and deeply ; it must depend on the creation of great human character." And it is in this respect that Houghton falls short of complete success.

Notwithstanding the excellent work that Mr. Compton Mackenzie has since done, *Carnival*, which was first published in 1912, is still probably his best-known book. Its interest, however, is to some extent now historical, for it presents a vivid and glittering picture of certain aspects of life as lived in pre-war London. The atmosphere of the period dealt with is wonderfully conveyed, and the climax of the story is achieved with an economy of words and a restrained power that are two of the surest marks of the true artist. Mr. Mackenzie's subsequent novels, *Sinister Street*, *Sylvia Scarlett*, and *Guy and Pauline*, have won a great and deserved success.

Flecker's play, *Hassan*, is one of the most notable dramatic achievements of the last two decades. It is a drama of Oriental magnificence, with something of the inconsequent wildness of one of the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*. It begins as fantasy and farce, and ends as the grimmest tragedy. But throughout it displays a rich and teeming poetic imagination and no little dramatic skill. Although Flecker died in 1915, the play was not published until seven years later, and it then proved to be such a curious mixture of the fanciful and the real that some doubts were felt as to its fortunes on the stage. These doubts, however, were completely dispelled in 1923, when it was produced at His Majesty's Theatre with triumphant success.

Mr. Hugh Walpole is a born story-teller, and therefore something of a rarity in these days of " stream of consciousness " method and studied lack of form. But although with him the story is the thing, his novels at the same time possess an imaginative reach and a sense of character that mark them out as works of high distinction. *The Cathedral* is probably the finest novel that Mr. Walpole has yet written, but there are those who see in the sweep and movement and large humanity of *Rogue Herries* unmistakable signs that within the next few years Mr. Walpole will outdistance all his competitors.

Mr. Ashley Dukes is one of the most brilliant and original of contemporary English dramatists, and his play, *The Man*

with a Load of Mischief, is an important contribution to recent English drama. Mr. Dukes' method is that of the expressionists, a method which, as he himself tells us, contains within it the seed which comes to flower in dramatic style. It is therefore his object to concentrate upon the essentials of drama, and to disregard the more or less unimportant details that bulk largely in the naturalistic method, but are often found to prove ineffective in the actual performance of a play. In other words, his aim is to present rather than to represent. In *The Man with a Load of Mischief* we have a work in which this new technique has been attempted with remarkable success, and despite the difficulties of the expressionistic method and the pitfalls that await the unwary, there are few modern plays which exhibit a surer touch or a more exquisite sense of style.

Miss Margaret Kennedy's novel, *The Constant Nymph* has been one of the outstanding successes of the last few years. The bohemian life of the humorously observed Sanger household, the graphic and unusual nature of the scenes described, and the adventures and emotional experiences of the superbly drawn Tessa, made a widespread appeal, and the book was received with a chorus of critical approval. Subsequently it was dramatised, and, as a play, proved no less successful. The chapter of the book which appears in the anthology is in many ways one of the most strikingly original love scenes in modern fiction.

L. O.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1564–1616

1...ROMEO AND JULIET

Capulet's Orchard

Enter Romeo.

Romeo : He jests at scars that never felt a wound.
[*Juliet appears above at a window.*
But, soft ! what light through yonder window breaks ?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun !
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief,
That thou her maid are far more fair than she :
Be not her maid, since she is envious ;
Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
And none but fools do wear it ; cast it off.
It is my lady ; O, it is my love !
O, that she knew she were !
She speaks, yet she says nothing : what of that ?
Her eye discourses, I will answer it.
I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks :
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven
Having some business, do intreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in her head ?
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,
As daylight doth a lamp ; her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night.
See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand !
O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek !

Juliet : Ay me !

Romeo : She speaks :
O, speak again, bright angel ! for thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
As is a wingèd messenger of heaven
Unto the white-upturnèd wondering eyes
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him,
When he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

Juliet : O Romeo, Romeo ! wherefore art thou Romeo ?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name ;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

Romeo (aside) : Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this ?

Juliet : 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy ;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague ? it is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name !
What's in a name ? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet ;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.

Romeo : I take thee at thy word :
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized ;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

Juliet : What man art thou, that, thus bescreen'd in night,
So stumblest on my counsel ?

Romeo : By a name
I know not how to tell thee who I am :
My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,
Because it is an enemy to thee ;
Had I it written, I would tear the word.

Juliet : My ears have yet not drunk a hundred words
Of thy tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound :
Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague ?
Romeo : Neither, fair maid, if either thee dislike.
Juliet : How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore ?
The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here.
Romeo : With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls,
For stony limits cannot hold love out :
And what love can do, that dares love attempt ;
Therefore thy kinsmen are no let to me.
Juliet : If they do see thee, they will murder thee.
Romeo : Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye
Than twenty of their swords : look thou but sweet,
And I am proof against their enmity.
Juliet : I would not for the world they saw thee here.
Romeo : I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes ;
And but thou love me, let them find me here :
My life were better ended by their hate,
Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love.
Juliet : By whose direction found'st thou out this place ?
Romeo : By love, that first did prompt me to inquire ;
He lent me counsel, and I lent him eyes.
I am no pilot ; yet, wert thou as far
As that vast shore wash'd with the farthest sea,
I would adventure for such merchandise.
Juliet : Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face,
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek
For that which thou hast heard me speak to-night.
Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny
What I have spoke : but farewell compliment !
Dost thou love me ? I know thou wilt say " Ay,"
And I will take thy word : yet, if thou swear'st,
Thou mayst prove false : at lovers' perjuries,
They say, Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo,
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully :

Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,
I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay,
So thou wilt woo ; but else, not for the world.
In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond ;
And therefore thou mayst think my 'haviour light :
But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
Than those that have more cunning to be strange.
I should have been more strange, I must confess,
But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware,
My true love's passion : therefore pardon me,
And not impute this yielding to light love,
Which the dark night hath so discoverèd.

Romeo : Lady, by yonder blessèd moon I swear,
That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops,—

Juliet : O, swear not by the moon, th' inconstant moon,
That monthly changes in her circled orb,
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.

Romeo : What shall I swear by ?

Juliet : Do not swear at all,
Or, if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self,
Which is the god of my idolatry,
And I'll believe thee.

Romeo : If my heart's dear love—

Juliet : Well, do not swear : although I joy in thee,
I have no joy of this contract to-night :
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden,
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
Ere one can say " It lightens." Sweet, good-night !
This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath,
May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet.
Good-night, good-night ! as sweet repose and rest
Come to thy heart as that within my breast !

Romeo : O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied ?

Juliet : What satisfaction canst thou have to-night ?

Romeo : The exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.

Juliet : I gave thee mine before thou didst request it :
And yet I would it were to give again.

Romeo : Wouldst thou withdraw it? for what purpose, love?

Juliet : But to be frank, and give it thee again.
And yet I wish but for the thing I have:
My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite.
I hear some noise within; dear love, adieu!
[*Nurse calls within.*
Anon, good nurse! Sweet Montague, be true.
Stay but a little, I will come again. [*Exit.*

Romeo : O blessèd, blessèd night! I am afeard,
Being in night, all this is but a dream,
Too flattering-sweet to be substantial.

Re-enter Juliet, *above.*

Juliet : Three words, dear Romeo, and good-night indeed.
If that thy bent of love be honourable,
Thy purpose marriage, send me word to-morrow,
By one that I'll procure to come to thee,
Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite,
And all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay,
And follow thee, my lord, throughout the world.

Nurse (within) : Madam!

Juliet : I come, anon.—But if thou mean'st not well,
I do beseech thee—

Nurse (within) : Madam!

Juliet : By and by, I come:—
To cease thy suit, and leave me to my grief:
To-morrow will I send.

Romeo : So thrive my soul,—

Juliet : A thousand times good-night! [*Exit.*

Romeo : A thousand times the worse, to want thy light.
Love goes toward love, as schoolboys from their books,
But love from love, toward school with heavy looks.
[*Retiring slowly.*

Re-enter Juliet, *above.*

Juliet : Hist ! Romeo, hist !—O, for a falconer's voice,
To lure this tassel-gentle back again !
Bondage is hoarse, and may not speak aloud ;
Else would I tear the cave where Echo lies,
And make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine,
With repetition of my Romeo's name.
Romeo !
Romeo : It is my soul that calls upon my name :
How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night,
Like softest music to attending ears !
Juliet : Romeo !
Romeo : My dear ?
Juliet : At what o'clock to-morrow
Shall I send to thee ?
Romeo : At the hour of nine.
Juliet : I will not fail : 'tis twenty years till then.
I have forgot why I did call thee back.
Romeo : Let me stand here till thou remember it.
Juliet : I shall forget, to have thee still stand there,
Remembering how I love thy company.
Romeo : And I'll still stay, to have thee still forget,
Forgetting any other home but this.
Juliet : 'Tis almost morning ; I would have thee gone :
And yet no farther than a wanton's bird,
Who lets it hop a little from her hand,
Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves,
And with a silk thread plucks it back again,
So loving-jealous of his liberty.
Romeo : I would I were thy bird.
Juliet : Sweet, so would I :
Yet I should kill thee with much cherishing.
Good-night, good-night ! parting is such sweet sorrow

That I shall say good-night till it be morrow. [*Exit.*

Romeo : Sleep dwell upon thine eyes, peace in thy breast !

Would I were sleep and peace, so sweet to rest ! [*Exit.*

Romeo and Juliet.

2...ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

i

Alexandria. A Room in Cleopatra's *Palace*

Enter Antony *and* Cleopatra, *with their Trains ;*
Eunuchs *fanning her.*

Cleopatra : If it be love indeed, tell me how much.
Antony : There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd.
Cleopatra : I'll set a bourn how far to be beloved.
Antony : Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth.

Enter an Attendant.

Attendant : News, my good lord, from Rome.
Antony : Grates me.—The sum.
Cleopatra : Nay, hear them, Antony :
Fulvia perchance is angry ; or, who knows
If the scarce-bearded Cæsar have not sent
His powerful mandate to you, " Do this, or this,
Take in that kingdom and enfranchise that ;
Perform't, or else we damn thee."
Antony : How, my love !
Cleopatra : Perchance—nay, and most like—
You must not stay here longer ; your dismission
Is come from Cæsar ; therefore hear it, Antony.
Where's Fulvia's process ? Cæsar's, I would say ? Both ?—
Call in the messengers.—As I am Egypt's queen,
Thou blushest, Antony ; and that blood of thine
Is Cæsar's homager : else so thy cheek pays shame
When shrill-tongued Fulvia scolds.—The messengers !
Antony : Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the ranged empire fall ! Here is my space.

Kingdoms are clay: our dungy earth alike
Feeds beast as man: the nobleness of life
Is to do thus (*embracing*), when such a mutual pair
And such a twain can do't; in which I bind,
On pain of punishment, the world to weet,
We stand up peerless.

Cleopatra: Excellent falsehood!
Why did he marry Fulvia, and not love her?—
I'll seem the fool I am not; Antony
Will be himself.

Antony: But stirr'd by Cleopatra.
Now, for the love of Love and her soft hours,
Let's not confound the time with conference harsh:
There's not a minute of our lives should stretch
Without some pleasure now. What sport to-night?

Cleopatra: Hear the ambassadors.

Antony: Fie, wrangling queen!
Whom everything becomes, to chide, to laugh,
To weep; whose every passion fully strives
To make itself, in thee, fair and admired!
No messenger but thine; and all alone
To-night we'll wander through the streets, and note
The qualities of people. Come, my queen;
Last night you did desire it.—Speak not to us.

[*Exeunt Antony and Cleopatra, with their Trains.*

ii

Another Room in the Palace

Enter Cleopatra, Charmian, Iras, *and* Alexas.

Cleopatra: Where is he?

Charmian: I did not see him since.

Cleopatra: See where he is, who's with him, what he does:
I did not send you. If you find him sad,
Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report
That I am sudden sick: quick, and return. [*Exit* Alexas.

Charmian : Madam, methinks, if you did love him dearly,
You do not hold the method to enforce
The like from him.
Cleopatra : What should I do, I do not?
Charmian : In each thing give him way, cross him in nothing.
Cleopatra : Thou teachest like a fool; the way to lose him.
Charmian : Tempt him not so too far; I wish, forbear:
In time we hate that which we often fear.
But here comes Antony.
Cleopatra : I'm sick and sullen.

Enter Antony.

Antony : I'm sorry to give breathing to my purpose,—
Cleopatra : Help me away, dear Charmian; I shall fall:
It cannot be thus long, the sides of nature
Will not sustain it.
Antony : Now, my dearest queen,—
Cleopatra : Pray you, stand farther from me.
Antony : What's the matter?
Cleopatra : I know, by that same eye, there's some good news.
What says the married woman? You may go:
Would she had never given you leave to come!
Let her not say 'tis I that keep you here,
I have no power upon you; hers you are.
Antony : The gods best know—
Cleopatra : O, never was there queen
So mightily betray'd! yet at the first
I saw the treasons planted.
Antony : Cleopatra,—
Cleopatra : Why should I think you can be mine and true,
Though you in swearing shake the thronèd gods,

Who have been false to Fulvia? Riotous madness,
To be entangled with those mouth-made vows,
Which break themselves in swearing!
Antony: Most sweet queen,—
Cleopatra: Nay, pray you, seek no colour for your going,
But bid farewell, and go: when you sued staying,
Then was the time for words: no going then;
Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
Bliss in our brows' bent, none our parts so poor
But was a race of heaven: they are so still,
Or thou, the greatest soldier of the world,
Art turn'd the greatest liar.
Antony: How now, lady!
Cleopatra: I would I had thy inches; thou shouldst know
There were a heart in Egypt.
Antony: Hear me, queen:
The strong necessity of time commands
Our services awhile: but my full heart
Remains in use with you. Our Italy
Shines o'er with civil swords: Sextus Pompeius
Makes his approaches to the port of Rome:
Equality of two domestic powers
Breeds scrupulous faction: the hated, grown to strength,
Are newly grown to love: the condemn'd Pompey,
Rich in his father's honour, creeps apace
Into the hearts of such as have not thrived
Upon the present state, whose numbers threaten;
And quietness grown sick of rest would purge
By any desperate change. My more particular,
And that which most with you should safe my going,
Is Fulvia's death.
Cleopatra: Though age from folly could not give me freedom,
It does from childishness: can Fulvia die?
Antony: She's dead, my queen:
Look here, and at thy sovereign leisure read

The garboils she awaked: at the last, best;
See when and where she died.
Cleopatra: O most false love!
Where be the sacred vials thou shouldst fill
With sorrowful water? Now I see, I see,
In Fulvia's death, how mine received shall be.
Antony: Quarrel no more, but be prepared to know
The purposes I bear, which are, or cease,
As you shall give the advice. By the fire
That quickens Nilus' slime, I go from hence
Thy soldier, servant, making peace or war
As thou affect'st.
Cleopatra: Cut my lace, Charmian, come;
But let it be: I am quickly ill and well,
So Antony loves.
Antony: My precious queen, forbear;
And give true evidence to his love, which stands
An honourable trial.
Cleopatra: So Fulvia told me.
I prithee, turn aside and weep for her;
Then bid adieu to me, and say the tears
Belong to Egypt: good now, play one scene
Of excellent dissembling, and let it look
Like perfect honour.
Antony: You'll heat my blood: no more.
Cleopatra: You can do better yet; but this is meetly.
Antony: Now, by my sword,—
Cleopatra: And target. Still he mends;
But this is not the best. Look, prithee, Charmian,
How this Herculean Roman does become
The carriage of his chafe.
Antony: I'll leave you, lady.
Cleopatra: Courteous lord, one word.
Sir, you and I must part, but that's not it:
Sir, you and I have loved, but there's not it:
That you know well: something it is I would,—
O, my oblivion is a very Antony,
And I am all forgotten.

Antony : But that your royalty
Holds idleness your subject, I should take you
For idleness itself.

Cleopatra : 'Tis sweating labour
To bear such idleness so near the heart
As Cleopatra this. But, sir, forgive me,
Since my becomings kill me when they do not
Eye well to you. Your honour calls you hence ;
Therefore be deaf to my unpitied folly,
And all the gods go with you ! Upon your sword
Sit laurel victory ! and smooth success
Be strew'd before your feet !

Antony : Let us go. Come ;
Our separation so abides and flies,
That thou residing here go'st yet with me,
And I hence fleeing here remain with thee.
Away ! [*Exeunt.*

Antony and Cleopatra.

3...FERDINAND AND MIRANDA

Before Prospero's *Cell*

Enter Ferdinand, *bearing a Log.*

Ferdinand : There be some sports are painful, and their labour
Delight in them sets off : some kinds of baseness
Are nobly undergone, and most poor matters
Point to rich ends. This my mean task
Would be as heavy to me as odious, but
The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead,
And makes my labours pleasures : O, she is
Ten times more gentle than her father's crabbèd,
And he's composed of harshness. I must remove
Some thousands of these logs, and pile them up,
Upon a sore injunction : my sweet mistress
Weeps when she sees me work, and says, such baseness
Had never like executor. I forget :
But these sweet thoughts do even refresh my labours,
Most busy least, when I do it.

Enter Miranda.

Miranda : Alas, now, pray you,
Work not so hard : I would the lightning had
Burnt up those logs that you are enjoin'd to pile !
Pray, set it down, and rest you : when this burns,
'Twill weep for having wearied you. My father
Is hard at study ; pray, now, rest yourself ;
He's safe for these three hours.
Ferdinand : O most dear mistress,
The sun will set before I shall discharge
What I must strive to do.

Miranda : If you'll sit down,
I'll bear your logs the while : pray, give me that ;
I'll carry it to the pile.
Ferdinand : No, precious creature ;
I had rather crack my sinews, break my back,
Than you should such dishonour undergo,
While I sit lazy by.
Miranda : It would become me
As well as it does you : and I should do it
With much more ease ; for my good will is to it,
And yours it is against. You look wearily.
Ferdinand : No, noble mistress ; 'tis fresh morning with me
When you are by at night. I do beseech you,—
Chiefly that I might set it in my prayers,—
What is your name ?
Miranda : Miranda.—O my father,
I have broke your hest to say so !
Ferdinand : Admired Miranda !
Indeed the top of admiration ! worth
What's dearest to the world ! Full many a lady
I have eyed with best regard, and many a time
The harmony of their tongues hath into bondage
Brought my too diligent ear : for several virtues
Have I liked several women ; never any
With so full soul, but some defect in her
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she owed,
And put it to the foil : but you, O you,
So perfect and so peerless, are created
Of every creature's best !
Miranda : I do not know
One of my sex ; no woman's face remember,
Save, from my glass, mine own ; nor have I seen
More that I may call men than you, good friend,
And my dear father : how features are abroad,
I am skilless of ; but, by my modesty,
The jewel in my dower, I would not wish
Any companion in the world but you ;

Nor can imagination form a shape,
Besides yourself, to like of. But I prattle
Something too wildly, and my father's precepts
I therein do forget.
Ferdinand : I am, in my condition,
A prince, Miranda ; I do think, a king ;
I would, not so !—and would no more endure
This wooden slavery than to suffer
The flesh-fly blow my mouth. Hear my soul speak :
The very instant that I saw you, did
My heart fly to your service ; there resides,
To make me slave to it ; and for your sake
Am I this patient log-man.
Miranda : Do you love me ?
Ferdinand : O heaven, O earth, bear witness to this sound,
And crown what I profess with kind event,
If I speak true ! if hollowly, invert
What best is boded me to mischief ! I,
Beyond all limit of what else i' the world,
Do love, prize, honour you.
Miranda : I am a fool
To weep at what I am glad of.
Ferdinand : Wherefore weep you ?
Miranda : At mine unworthiness, that dare not offer
What I desire to give ; and much less take
What I shall die to want. But this is trifling ;
And all the more it seeks to hide itself,
The bigger bulk it shows. Hence, bashful cunning !
And prompt me, plain and holy innocence !
I am your wife, if you will marry me ;
If not, I'll die your maid : to be your fellow
You may deny me ; but I'll be your servant,
Whether you will or no.
Ferdinand : My mistress, dearest ;
And I thus humble ever.
Miranda : My husband, then ?

Ferdinand : Ay, with a heart as willing
As bondage e'er of freedom : here's my hand.
Miranda : And mine, with my heart in't : and now farewell
Till half an hour hence.
Ferdinand : A thousand thousand !

[*Exeunt Ferdinand and Miranda severally.*

The Tempest.

BEN JONSON

1573–1637

4...THE LOVE-MAKING OF VOLPONE

[Volpone, a rich Venetian magnifico and an abandoned sensualist with an embittered hatred for the whole of the human race, pretends to be dying, in order that he may dupe the crew of rogues and parasites by whom he is surrounded. One of these, Corvino, in the hope of gaining Volpone's favour, is even ready to place his young wife Celia at the old monster's disposal, and with that object has forced her to go to Volpone's house. She is now alone with Volpone, in his chamber.]

Volpone's *Chamber*. Volpone *on his Couch*

Celia : Oh, God, and his good angels ! Whither, whither,
Is shame fled human breasts ! That with such ease,
Men dare put off your honours and their own ?
Is that, which ever was a cause of life,
Now placed beneath the basest circumstance,
And modesty an exile made, for money ?

Volpone : Ay, in Corvino, and such earth-fed minds,
[*Leaping from his couch.*
That never tasted the true heaven of love.
Assure thee, Celia, he that would sell thee,
Only for hope of gain, and that uncertain,
He would have sold his part of Paradise
For ready-money, had he met a cope-man.
Why art thou amazed to see me thus revived ?
Rather applaud thy beauty's miracle ;
'Tis thy great work : that hath, not now, alone,
But sundry times raised me, in several shapes,
And, but this morning, like a mountebank,
To see thee at thy window : ay, before

I would have left my practice for thy love,
In varying figures, I would have contended
With the blue Proteus, or the hornèd flood.
Now art thou welcome.

Celia : Sir !

Volpone : Nay, fly me not.
Nor let thy false imagination
That I was bed-rid, make thee think I am so :
Thou shalt not find it. I am, now, as fresh,
As hot, as high, and in as jovial plight,
As when, in that so celebrated scene,
At recitation of our comedy,
For entertainment of the great Valois,
I acted young Antinous ; and attracted
The eyes and ears of all the ladies present,
To admire each graceful gesture, note, and footing. [*Sings.*

Come, my Celia, let us prove,
While we can, the sports of love,
Time will not be ours for ever,
He, at length, our good will sever ;
Spend not then his gifts in vain ;
Suns that set may rise again ;
But if once we lose this light,
'Tis with us perpetual night.
Why should we defer our joys ?
Fame and rumour are but toys.
Cannot we delude the eyes
Of a few poor household spies,
Or his easier ears beguile,
Thus removèd by our wile ?—
'Tis no sin love's fruits to steal ;
But the sweet thefts to reveal ;
To be taken, to be seen,
These have crimes accounted been.

Celia : Some serene blast me, or dire lightning strike
This my offending face !

Volpone : Why droops my Celia ?

Thou hast, in place of a base husband, found
A worthy lover: use thy fortune well,
With secrecy and pleasure. See, behold,
What thou art queen of; not in expectation,
As I feed others; but possessed and crown'd.
See, here, a rope of pearl; and each more orient
Than that the brave Egyptian queen caroused:
Dissolve and drink them. See, a carbuncle
May put out both the eyes of our St. Mark;
A diamond would have bought Lollia Paulina,
When she came in, like star-light, hid with jewels
That were the spoils of provinces; take these,
And wear, and lose them: yet remains an ear-ring
To purchase them again and this whole state.
A gem but worth a private patrimony
Is nothing: we will eat such at a meal.
The heads of parrots, tongues of nightingales,
The brains of peacocks and of ostriches,
Shall be our food; and could we get the phœnix,
Though nature lost her kind, she were our dish.

Celia: Good sir; these things might move a mind affected
With such delights; but I, whose innocence
Is all I can think wealthy or worth th' enjoying,
And which, once lost, I have nought to lose beyond it,
Cannot be taken with these sensual baits:
If you have conscience—

Volpone: 'Tis the beggar's virtue;
If thou hast wisdom, hear me, Celia.
Thy baths shall be the juice of July-flowers,
Spirit of roses and of violets,
The milk of unicorns, and panthers' breath
Gather'd in bags and mixt with Cretan wines.
Our drink shall be preparèd gold and amber;
Which we will take until my roof whirl round
With the vertigo; and my dwarf shall dance,
My eunuch sing, my fool make up the antic,
Whilst we, in changèd shapes, act Ovid's tales;

Thou like Europa now, and I like Jove,
Then I like Mars, and thou like Erycine:
So of the rest, till we have quite run through
And wearied all the fables of the gods.
Then will I have thee in more modern forms,
Attirèd like some sprightly dame of France,
Brave Tuscan lady, or proud Spanish beauty;
Sometimes unto the Persian sophy's wife,
Or the grand signior's mistress; and, for change,
To one of our most artful courtezans,
Or some quick negro, or cold Russian;
And I will meet thee in as many shapes
Where we may so transfuse our wandering souls
Out at our lips, and score up sums of pleasures— [*Sings*

That the curious shall not know
How to tell them as they flow:
And the envious, when they find
What their number is, be pined.

Celia: If you have ears that will be pierced—or eyes
That can be opened—a heart that may be touched—
Or any part that yet sounds man about you—
If you have touch of holy saints, or heaven—
Do me the grace to let me 'scape; if not,
Be bountiful, and kill me. You do know
I am a creature hither ill-betrayed
By one whose shame I would forget it were.
If you will deign me neither of these graces,
Yet feed your wrath, sir, rather than your lust
(It is a vice comes nearer manliness),
And punish that unhappy crime of Nature
Which you miscall my beauty: flay my face,
Or poison it with ointments, for seducing
Your blood to this rebellion. Rub these hands
With what may cause an eating leprosy
E'en to my bones and marrow; anything
That may disfavour me, save in my honour;
And I will kneel to you, pray for you, pay down

A thousand hourly vows, sir, for your health ;
Report and think you virtuous—
Volpone : Think me cold,
Frozen, and impotent, and so report me ;
I do degenerate and abuse my nation
To play with opportunity thus long ;
I should have done the act, and then have parleyed.
Yield, or I'll force thee. [*Seizes her.*
Celia : Oh ! just God !
Volpone : In vain—
Bonario (*rushing in*) *:* Forbear, foul ravisher, libidinous swine !
Free the forced lady, or thou diest, impostor.
But that I'm loath to snatch thy punishment
Out of the hand of justice, thou shouldst yet
Be made the timely sacrifice of vengeance
Before this altar and this dross, thy idol.—
Lady, let's quit the place ; it is the den
Of villainy ; fear nought, you have a guard !
And he, ere long, shall meet his just reward.
[*Exeunt Bonario and Celia.*

Volpone : or, The Fox.

FRANCIS BEAUMONT AND JOHN FLETCHER

Beaumont : 1584–1616
Fletcher : 1579–1625

5...PHILASTER AND ARETHUSA

[Philaster, the true heir to the throne of Sicily, is being kept out of his kingdom by Arethusa's father, the usurping Duke of Calabria. The Duke allows Philaster to remain at liberty about the Court, as he fears that if he attempts to imprison him the populace will rise in his favour. Moreover, he has lately been trying to arrange a marriage between his daughter and Pharamond, Prince of Spain; but meanwhile, Arethusa and Philaster have been drawn together by a strong mutual attraction, and in the scene that follows Arethusa declares her love.]

Arethusa's *Room in the Palace*

Enter Arethusa *and a* Lady.

Arethusa : Comes he not ?
Lady : Madam ?
Arethusa : Will Philaster come ?
Lady : Dear madam, you were wont to credit me
At first.
Arethusa : But didst thou tell me so ?
I am forgetful, and my woman's strength
Is so o'ercharged with dangers like to grow
About my marriage, that these under-things
Dare not abide in such a troubled sea.
How looked he when he told thee he would come ?
Lady : Why, well.
Arethusa : And not a little fearful ?
Lady : Fear, madam ? sure, he knows not what it is.
Arethusa : You all are of his faction; the whole court

Is bold in praise of him ; whilst I
May live neglected, and do noble things,
As fools in strife throw gold into the sea,
Drowned in the doing. But, I know he fears.
Lady : Fear, madam ? methought, his looks hid more
Of love than fear.
Arethusa : Of love ? to whom ? to you ?
Did you deliver those plain words I sent,
With such a winning gesture and quick look
That you have caught him ?
Lady : Madam, I mean to you.
Arethusa : Of love to me ? alas, thy ignorance
Lets thee not see the crosses of our births !
Nature, that loves not to be questionèd
Why she did this or that, but has her ends,
And knows she does well, never gave the world
Two things so opposite, so contrary,
As he and I am : if a bowl of blood,
Drawn from this arm of mine, would poison thee,
A draught of his would cure thee. Of love to me !
Lady : Madam, I think I hear him.
Arethusa : Bring him in. [*Exit Lady.*
You gods, that would not have your dooms withstood,
Whose holy wisdoms at this time it is,
To make the passions of a feeble maid
The way unto your justice, I obey.

Re-enter Lady *with* Philaster.

Lady : Here is my Lord Philaster.
Arethusa : Oh, 'tis well.
Withdraw yourself. [*Exit Lady.*
Philaster : Madam, your messenger
Made me believe you wished to speak with me.
Arethusa : 'Tis true, Philaster ; but the words are such
I have to say, and do so ill beseem
The mouth of woman, that I wish them said,
And yet am loath to speak them. Have you known

That I have aught detracted from your worth ?
Have I in person wronged you ? or have set
My baser instruments to throw disgrace
Upon your virtues ?

Philaster : Never, madam, you.

Arethusa : Why, then, should you, in such a public place,
Injure a princess, and a scandal lay
Upon my fortunes, famed to be so great,
Calling a great part of my dowry in question ?

Philaster : Madam, this truth which I shall speak will be
Foolish : but, for your fair and virtuous self,
I could afford myself to have no right
To anything you wished.

Arethusa : Philaster, know,
I must enjoy these kingdoms.

Philaster : Madam, both ?

Arethusa : Both, or I die : by heaven, I die, Philaster,
If I not calmly may enjoy them both.

Philaster : I would do much to save that noble life :
Yet would be loath to have posterity
Find in our stories, that Philaster gave
His right unto a sceptre and a crown
To save a lady's longing.

Arethusa : Nay, then, hear :
I must and will have them, and more—

Philaster : What more ?

Arethusa : Or lose that little life the gods prepared
To trouble this poor piece of earth withal.

Philaster : Madam, what more ?

Arethusa : Turn, then, away thy face.

Philaster : No.

Arethusa : Do.

Philaster : I can endure it. Turn away my face !
I never yet saw enemy that looked
So dreadfully, but that I thought myself
As great a basilisk as he ; or spake
So horribly, but that I thought my tongue
Bore thunder underneath, as much as his ;

Nor beast that I could turn from: shall I then
Begin to fear sweet sounds? a lady's voice,
Whom I do love? Say, you would have my life;
Why, I will give it you; for 'tis to me
A thing so loathed, and unto you that ask
Of so poor use, that I shall make no price:
If you entreat, I will unmovedly hear.

Arethusa: Yet, for my sake, a little bend thy looks.

Philaster: I do.

Arethusa: Then know, I must have them and thee.

Philaster: And me?

Arethusa: Thy love; without which, all the land
Discovered yet will serve me for no use
But to be buried in.

Philaster: Is't possible?

Arethusa: With it, it were too little to bestow
On thee. Now, though thy breath do strike me dead
(Which, know, it may), I have unript my breast.

Philaster: Madam, you are too full of noble thoughts,
To lay a train for this contemnèd life,
Which you may have for asking: to suspect
Were base, where I deserve no ill. Love you!
By all my hopes, I do, above my life!
But how this passion should proceed from you
So violently, would amaze a man
That would be jealous.

Arethusa: Another soul into my body shot
Could not have filled me with more strength and spirit
Than this thy breath. But spend not hasty time
In seeking how I came thus: 'tis the gods,
The gods, that make me so; and, sure, our love
Will be the nobler and the better blest,
In that the secret justice of the gods
Is mingled with it. Let us leave, and kiss;
Lest some unwelcome guest should fall betwixt us,
And we should part without it.

Philaster: 'Twill be ill
I should abide here long.

Arethusa : 'Tis true ; and worse
You should come often. How shall we devise
To hold intelligence, that our true loves,
On any new occasion, may agree
What path is best to tread ?
Philaster : I have a boy,
Sent by the gods, I hope, to this intent,
Not yet seen in the court. Hunting the buck,
I found him sitting by a fountain's side,
Of which he borrowed some to quench his thirst,
And paid the nymph again as much in tears.
A garland lay him by, made by himself
Of many several flowers bred in the vale,
Stuck in that mystic order that the rareness
Delighted me : but ever when he turned
His tender eyes upon 'em, he would weep,
As if he meant to make 'em grow again.
Seeing such pretty helpless innocence
Dwell in his face, I asked him all his story :
He told me that his parents gentle died,
Leaving him to the mercy of the fields,
Which gave him roots ; and of the crystal springs,
Which did not stop their courses ; and the sun,
Which still, he thanked him, yielded him his light.
Then took he up his garland, and did show
What every flower, as country-people hold,
Did signify, and how all, ordered thus,
Expressed his grief ; and, to my thoughts, did read
The prettiest lecture of his country art
That could be wished : so that methought I could
Have studied it. I gladly entertained
Him, who was glad to follow ; and have got
The trustiest, loving'st, and the gentlest boy
That ever master kept. Him will I send
To wait on you, and bear our hidden love.
Arethusa : 'Tis well ; no more.

Philaster.

JOHN WEBSTER

c. 1580-*c.* 1625

6...THE DUCHESS AND ANTONIO

[The Duchess of Malfi is in love with Antonio, her house-steward, and the possibility of her marriage with a social inferior is furiously resented by her two proud and villainous brothers, who threaten that if she does anything to disgrace her blood, they will exact a terrible vengeance. The Duchess, however, is not to be intimidated, and goes unhesitatingly forward in her determination to woo and marry the man she loves.]

A Gallery in the Duchess's Palace

The Duchess *and* Cariola, *her Woman.*

Duchess : Shall this move me ? If all my royal kindred
Lay in my way unto this marriage,
I'd make them my low footsteps : and even now,
Even in this hate, as men in some great battles,
By apprehending danger, have achiev'd
Almost impossible actions (I have heard soldiers say so),
So I through frights and threatenings will assay
This dangerous venture. Let old wives report
I wink'd and chose a husband.—Cariola,
To thy known secrecy I have given up
More than my life—my fame.
Cariola : Both shall be safe ;
For I'll conceal this secret from the world
As warily as those that trade in poison
Keep poison from their children.
Duchess : Thy protestation
Is ingenious and hearty : I believe it.
Is Antonio come ?
Cariola : He attends you.
Duchess : Good dear soul,

Leave me; but place thyself behind the arras,
Where thou mayst overhear us. Wish me good speed;
For I am going into a wilderness
Where I shall find nor path nor friendly clue
To be my guide. [Cariola *goes behind the arras.*

Enter Antonio.

I sent for you; sit down;
Take pen and ink, and write: are you ready?
Antonio: Yes.
Duchess: What did I say?
Antonio: That I should write somewhat.
Duchess: Oh, I remember.
After these triumphs and this large expense,
It's fit, like thrifty husbands, we inquire
What's laid up for to-morrow.
Antonio: So please your beauteous excellence.
Duchess: Beauteous?
Indeed, I thank you: I look young for your sake;
You have ta'en my cares upon you.
Antonio: I'll fetch your grace
The particulars of your revenue and expense.
Duchess: Oh, you are an upright treasurer: but you mistook;
For when I said I meant to make inquiry
What's laid up for to-morrow, I did mean
What's laid up yonder for me.
Antonio: Where?
Duchess: In heaven.
I am making my will (as 'tis fit princes should,
In perfect memory), and, I pray, sir, tell me,
Were not one better make it smiling, thus,
Than in deep groans and terrible ghastly looks,
As if the gifts we parted with procur'd
That violent distraction?
Antonio: Oh, much better.
Duchess: If I had a husband now, this care were quit:

But I intend to make you overseer.
What good deed shall we first remember? say.
Antonio: Begin with that first good deed began i' th' world
After man's creation, the sacrament of marriage:
I'd have you first provide for a good husband;
Give him all.
Duchess: All?
Antonio: Yes, your excellent self.
Duchess: In a winding-sheet?
Antonio: In a couple.
Duchess: Saint Winfred,
That were a strange will!
Antonio: 'Twere stranger if there were no will in you
To marry again.
Duchess: What do you think of marriage?
Antonio: I take't, as those that deny purgatory;
It locally contains or heaven or hell;
There's no third place in't.
Duchess: How do you affect it?
Antonio: My banishment, feeding my melancholy,
Would often reason thus.
Duchess: Pray, let's hear it.
Antonio: Say a man never marry, nor have children,
What takes that from him? only the bare name
Of being a father, or the weak delight
To see the little wanton ride a-cock-horse
Upon a painted stick, or hear him chatter
Like a taught starling.
Duchess: Fie, fie, what's all this?
One of your eyes is blood-shot; use my ring to't,
They say 'tis very sovereign: 'twas my wedding-ring,
And I did vow never to part with it
But to my second husband.
Antonio: You have parted with it now.
Duchess: Yes, to help your eyesight.
Antonio: You have made me stark blind.
Duchess: How?

Antonio : There is a saucy and ambitious devil
Is dancing in this circle.
Duchess : Remove him.
Antonio : How ?
Duchess : There needs small conjuration, when your finger
May do it : thus ; is it fit ?
[*She puts the ring upon his finger : he kneels.*
Antonio : What said you ?
Duchess : Sir,
This goodly roof of yours is too low built ;
I cannot stand upright in't nor discourse,
Without I raise it higher : raise yourself ;
Or, if you please, my hand to help you : so. [*Raises him.*
Antonio : Ambition, madam, is a great man's madness,
That is not kept in chains and close-pent rooms,
But in fair lightsome lodgings, and is girt
With the wild noise of prattling visitants,
Which makes it lunatic beyond all cure.
Conceive not I am so stupid but I aim
Whereto your favours tend : but he's a fool
That, being a-cold, would thrust his hands i' th' fire
To warm them.
Duchess : So, now the ground's broke,
You may discover what a wealthy mine
I make you lord of.
Antonio : O my unworthiness !
Duchess : You were ill to sell yourself :
This darkening of your worth is not like that
Which tradesmen use i' th' city ; their false lights
Are to rid bad wares off : and I must tell you,
If you will know where breathes a complete man
(I speak it without flattery), turn your eyes,
And progress through yourself.
Antonio : Were there nor heaven
Nor hell, I should be honest : I have long serv'd virtue,
And ne'er ta'en wages of her.
Duchess : Now she pays it.

The misery of us that are born great!
We are forc'd to woo, because none dare woo us;
And as a tyrant doubles with his words,
And fearfully equivocates, so we
Are forc'd to express our violent passions
In riddles and in dreams, and leave the path
Of simple virtue, which was never made
To seem the thing it is not. Go, go brag
You have left me heartless; mine is in your bosom:
I hope 'twill multiply love there. You do tremble:
Make not your heart so dead a piece of flesh,
To fear more than to love me. Sir, be confident:
What is't distracts you? This is flesh and blood, sir;
'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster
Kneels at my husband's tomb. Awake, awake, man!
I do here put off all vain ceremony,
And only do appear to you a young widow
That claims you for her husband, and, like a widow,
I use but half a blush in't.
Antonio: Truth speak for me;
I will remain the constant sanctuary
Of your good name.
Duchess: I thank you, gentle love:
And 'cause you shall not come to me in debt,
Being now my steward, here upon your lips
I sign your Quietus est. This you should have begg'd now:
I have seen children oft eat sweetmeats thus,
As fearful to devour them too soon.
Antonio: But for your brothers?
Duchess: Do not think of them:
All discord without this circumference
Is only to be pitied, and not fear'd:
Yet, should they know it, time will easily
Scatter the tempest.
Antonio: These words should be mine,
And all the parts you have spoke, if some part of it
Would not have savour'd flattery.

Duchess : Kneel.

[Cariola *comes from behind the arras.*

Antonio : Ha !

Duchess : Be not amazed, this woman's of my counsel :
I have heard lawyers say, a contract in a chamber
Per verba de presenti is absolute marriage.
[*She and* Antonio *kneel.*
Bless, Heaven, this sacred Gordian, which let violence
Never untwine !

Antonio : And may our sweet affections, like the spheres,
Be still in motion !

Duchess : Quickening, and make
The like soft music !

Antonio : That we may imitate the loving palms,
Best emblem of a peaceful marriage, that ne'er
Bore fruit, divided !

Duchess : What can the Church force more ?

Antonio : That fortune may not know an accident,
Either of joy or sorrow, to divide
Our fixèd wishes !

Duchess : How can the Church build faster ?
We now are man and wife, and 'tis the Church
That must but echo this.—Maid, stand apart :
I now am blind.

Antonio : What's your conceit in this ?

Duchess : I would have you lead your fortune by the hand
Unto your marriage bed :
(You speak in me this, for we now are one :)
We'll only lie, and talk together, and plot
To appease my humorous kindred ; and if you please,
Like the old tale in " Alexander and Lodowick,"
Lay a naked sword between us, keep us chaste.
Oh, let me shroud my blushes in your bosom,
Since 'tis the treasury of all my secrets !

[*Exeunt* Duchess *and* Antonio.

Cariola : Whether the spirit of greatness or of woman
Reign most in her, I know not ; but it shows
A fearful madness : I owe her much of pity.

[*Exit.*

The Duchess of Malfi.

JOHN MILTON

1608–1674

7...EVE'S LOVE FOR ADAM

To whom thus Eve replied :—" O thou for whom
And from whom I was formed flesh of thy flesh,
And without whom am to no end, my guide
And head ! what thou hast said is just and right.
For we to him, indeed, all praises owe,
And daily thanks—I chiefly, who enjoy
So far the happier lot, enjoying thee
Pre-eminent by so much odds, while thou
Like consort to thyself canst nowhere find.
That day I oft remember, when from sleep
I first awaked, and found myself reposed,
Under a shade, on flowers, much wondering where
And what I was, whence thither brought, and how.
Not distant far from thence a murmuring sound
Of waters issued from a cave, and spread
Into a liquid plain ; then stood unmoved
Pure as the expanse of Heaven. I thither went
With unexperienced thought, and laid me down
On the green bank, to look into the clear
Smooth lake, that to me seemed another sky.
As I bent down to look, just opposite
A shape within the watery gleam appeared,
Bending to look on me. I started back,
It started back ; but pleased I soon returned,
Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
Of sympathy and love. There I had fixed
Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire,
Had not a voice thus warned me : ' What thou seest,
What there thou seest, fair creature, is thyself ;

With thee it came and goes: but follow me,
And I will bring thee where no shadow stays
Thy coming, and thy soft embraces—he
Whose image thou art; him thou shalt enjoy
Inseparably thine; to him shalt bear
Multitudes like thyself, and thence be called
Mother of human race.' What could I do,
But follow straight, invisibly thus led?
Till I espied thee, fair, indeed, and tall,
Under a plantane; yet methought less fair,
Less winning soft, less amiably mild,
Than that smooth watery image. Back I turned;
Thou, following, cried'st aloud, 'Return, fair Eve;
Whom fliest thou? Whom thou fliest, of him thou art,
His flesh, his bone; to give thee being I lent
Out of my side to thee, nearest my heart,
Substantial life, to have thee by my side
Henceforth an individual solace dear:
Part of my soul I seek thee, and thee claim
My other half.' With that thy gentle hand
Seized mine: I yielded, and from that time see
How beauty is excelled by manly grace
And wisdom, which alone is truly fair."

So spake our general mother, and, with eyes
Of conjugal attraction unreproved,
And meek surrender, half-embracing leaned
On our first father; half her swelling breast
Naked met his, under the flowing gold
Of her loose tresses hid. He, in delight
Both of her beauty and submissive charms,
Smiled with superior love, as Jupiter
On Juno smiles when he impregns the clouds
That shed May flowers, and pressed her matron lip
With kisses pure . . .

To whom thus Eve, with perfect beauty adorned:—
"My author and disposer, what thou bidd'st
Unargued I obey. So God ordains:
God is thy law, thou mine: to know no more

EVE'S LOVE FOR ADAM

Is woman's happiest knowledge, and her praise.
With thee conversing, I forget all time,
All seasons, and their change; all please alike.
Sweet is the breath of Morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the Sun,
When first on this delightful land he spreads
His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,
Glistering with dew; fragrant the fertile Earth
After soft showers; and sweet the coming-on
Of grateful Evening mild; then silent Night,
With this her solemn bird, and this fair Moon,
And these the gems of Heaven, her starry train:
But neither breath of Morn, when she ascends
With charm of earliest birds; nor rising Sun
On this delightful land; nor herb, fruit, flower,
Glistering with dew; nor fragrance after showers;
Nor grateful Evening mild; nor solemn Night,
With this her solemn bird; nor walk by moon,
Or glittering star-light, without thee is sweet."

Paradise Lost.

WILLIAM CONGREVE

1670–1729

8...MILLAMANT AND HER LOVERS

A Room in Lady Wishfort's *House*

Mrs. Millamant, Mrs. Fainall, Foible.

Foible : Madam, I stayed here, to tell your ladyship that Mr. Mirabell has waited this half-hour for an opportunity to talk with you. Though my lady's orders were to leave you and Sir Wilfull together. Shall I tell Mr. Mirabell that you are at leisure ?

Millamant : No—What would the dear man have ? I am thoughtful, and would amuse myself—bid him come another time.

There never yet was woman made,
Nor shall, but to be cursed.

[*Repeating and walking about.*

That's hard !

Mrs. Fainall : You are very fond of Sir John Suckling to-day, Millamant, and the poets.

Millamant : He ? Ay, and filthy verses—so I am.

Foible : Sir Wilfull is coming, madam. Shall I send Mr. Mirabell away ?

Millamant : Ay, if you please, Foible, send him away,—or send him hither,—just as you will, dear Foible.—I think I'll see him.—Shall I ? Ay, let the wretch come.

[*Foible goes out.*

Thyrsis, a youth of the inspired train. [*Repeating.*

Dear Fainall, entertain Sir Wilfull—thou hast philosophy to undergo a fool, thou art married and hast patience—I would confer with my own thoughts.

Mrs. Fainall : I am obliged to you, that you would make me your proxy in this affair; but I have business of my own.

Enter Sir Wilfull.

Mrs. Fainall : O Sir Wilfull; you are come at the critical instant. There's your mistress up to the ears in love and contemplation, pursue your point, now or never.

Sir Wilfull : Yes; my aunt will have it so.—I would gladly have been encouraged with a bottle or two, because I'm somewhat wary at first, before I am acquainted—(*This while* Millamant *walks about repeating to herself.*) But I hope, after a time, I shall break my mind—that is upon further acquaintance.—So for the present, cousin, I'll take my leave—if so be you'll be so kind to make my excuse, I'll return to my company——

Mrs. Fainall : O fie, Sir Wilfull! What, you must not be daunted.

Sir Wilfull : Daunted, no, that's not it, it is not so much for that—for if so be that I set on't, I'll do't. But only for the present, 'tis sufficient till further acquaintance, that's all—your servant.

Mrs. Fainall : Nay, I'll swear you shall never lose so favourable an opportunity, if I can help it. I'll leave you two together, and lock the door. [*She goes out.*

Sir Wilfull : Nay, nay, cousin,—I have forgot my gloves.—What d'ye do? 'Sheart, a' has locked the door indeed, I think.—Nay, Cousin Fainall, open the door.—Pshaw, what a vixen trick is this?—Nay, now a' has seen me too—cousin, I made bold to pass through as it were—I think this door's enchanted——

Millamant (*repeating*) *:*

I prithee spare me, gentle boy,
Press me no more for that slight toy.

Sir Wilfull : Anan? Cousin, your servant.

Millamant :

That foolish trifle of a heart—

Sir Wilfull!

Sir Wilfull : Yes—your servant. No offence, I hope, cousin.

Millamant (repeating) :

I swear it will not do its part,
Though thou dost thine, employ'st thy power and art.

Natural, easy Suckling !

Sir Wilfull : Anan ? Suckling ? No such suckling neither, cousin, nor stripling : I thank heaven, I'm no minor.

Millamant : Ah, rustic, ruder than Gothic.

Sir Wilfull : Well, well, I shall understand your lingo one of these days, cousin ; in the meanwhile I must answer in plain English.

Millamant : Have you any business with me, Sir Wilfull ?

Sir Wilfull : Not at present, cousin.—Yes, I made bold to see, to come and know if that how you were disposed to fetch a walk this evening, if so be that I might not be troublesome, I would have sought a walk with you.

Millamant : A walk ? What then ?

Sir Wilfull : Nay, nothing—only for the walk's sake, that's all——

Millamant : I nauseate walking ; 'tis a country diversion. I loathe the country and everything that relates to it.

Sir Wilfull : Indeed ! Hah ! Look ye, look ye, you do ? Nay, 'tis like you may.—Here are choice of pastimes here in town, as plays and the like, that must be confessed indeed——

Millamant : Ah l'étourdie ! I hate the town too.

Sir Wilfull : Dear heart, that's much.—Hah ! that you should hate 'em both ! Hah ! 'tis like you may ; there are some can't relish the town, and others can't away with the country,—'tis like you may be one of those, cousin.

Millamant : Ha, ha, ha ! Yes, 'tis like I may.—You have nothing further to say to me ?

Sir Wilfull : Not at present, cousin.—'Tis like when I have an opportunity to be more private, I may break my mind in some measure—I conjecture you partly guess.—However,

that's as time shall try,—but spare to speak and spare to speed, as they say.

Millamant : If it is of no great importance, Sir Wilfull, you will oblige me to leave me : I have just now a little business——

Sir Wilfull : Enough, enough, cousin : yes, yes, all a case—when you're disposed, when you're disposed. Now's as well as another time ; and another time as well as now. All's one for that.—Yes, yes, if your concerns call you, there's no haste ; it will keep cold as they say.—Cousin, your servant.—I think this door's locked.

Millamant : You may go this way, sir.

Sir Wilfull : Your servant ; then with your leave I'll return to my company.

Millamant : Ay, ay. (*He goes out.*) Ha, ha, ha !

Like Phœbus sung the no less am'rous boy.

Enter Mirabell.

Mirabell :

Like Daphne she, as lovely and as coy.

Do you lock yourself up from me, to make my search more curious ? Or is this pretty artifice contrived, to signify that here the chase must end, and my pursuit be crowned, for you can fly no further ?

Millamant : Vanity ! No—I'll fly and be followed to the last moment ; though I am upon the very verge of matrimony, I expect you should solicit me as much as if I were wavering at the grate of a monastery, with one foot over the threshold. I'll be solicited to the very last, nay, and afterwards.

Mirabell : What, after the last ?

Millamant : O, I should think I was poor and had nothing to bestow, if I were reduced to an inglorious ease, and freed from the agreeable fatigues of solicitation.

Mirabell : But do not you know, that when favours are conferred upon instant and tedious solicitation, that

they diminish in their value, and that both the giver loses the grace, and the receiver lessens his pleasure ?

Millamant : It may be in things of common application ; but never sure in love. O, I hate a lover that can dare to think he draws a moment's air, independent of the bounty of his mistress. There is not so impudent a thing in nature, as the saucy look of an assured man, confident of success. The pedantic arrogance of a very husband has not so pragmatical an air. Ah ! I'll never marry, unless I am first made sure of my will and pleasure.

Mirabell : Would you have 'em both before marriage ? Or will you be contented with the first now, and stay for the other till after grace ?

Millamant : Ah, don't be impertinent.—My dear liberty, shall I leave thee ? My faithful solitude, my darling contemplation, must I bid you then adieu ? Ay-h, adieu—my morning thoughts, agreeable wakings, indolent slumbers, all ye *douceurs*, ye *someils du matin*, adieu—I can't do it, 'tis more than impossible.—Positively, Mirabell, I'll lie abed in a morning as long as I please.

Mirabell : Then I'll get up in a morning as early as I please.

Millamant : Ah ! Idle creature, get up when you will.—And d'ye hear, I won't be called names after I'm married ; positively I won't be called names.

Mirabell : Names !

Millamant : Ay, as wife, spouse, my dear, joy, jewel, love, sweetheart, and the rest of that nauseous cant, in which men and their wives are so fulsomely familiar—I shall never bear that.—Good Mirabell, don't let us be familiar or fond, nor kiss before folks, like my Lady Fadler and Sir Francis ; nor go to Hyde Park together the first Sunday in a new chariot, to provoke eyes and whispers ; and then never be seen there together again ; as if we were proud of one another the first week, and ashamed of one another ever after. Let us never visit together, nor go to a play together, but let us be very strange and well bred : let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while ; and as well bred as if we were not married at all.

Mirabell : Have you any more conditions to offer? Hitherto your demands are pretty reasonable.

Millamant : Trifles,—as liberty to pay and receive visits to and from whom I please; to write and receive letters, without interrogatories or wry faces on your part; to wear what I please; and choose conversation with regard only to my own taste; to have no obligation upon me to converse with wits that I don't like, because they are your acquaintance; or to be intimate with fools because they may be your relations. Come to dinner when I please, dine in my dressing-room when I'm out of humour, without giving a reason. To have my closet inviolate; to be sole empress of my tea-table, which you must never presume to approach without first asking leave. And lastly, wherever I am, you shall always knock at the door before you come in. These articles subscribed, if I continue to endure you a little longer, I may by degrees dwindle into a wife.

Mirabell : Your bill of fare is something advanced in this latter account. Well, have I liberty to offer conditions—that when you are dwindled into a wife, I may not be beyond measure enlarged into a husband?

Millamant : You have free leave, propose your utmost, speak and spare not.

Mirabell : I thank you. *Imprimis* then, I covenant that your acquaintance be general; that you admit no sworn confidant, or intimate of your own sex; no she-friend to screen her affairs under your countenance, and tempt you to make trial of a mutual secrecy. No decoy-duck to wheedle you a *fop—scrambling* to the play in a mask—then bring you home in a pretended fright, when you think you shall be found out—and rail at me for missing the play, and disappointing the frolic which you had to pick me up and prove my constancy.

Millamant : Detestable *imprimis*! I go to the play in a mask!

Mirabell : Item, I article, that you continue to like your own face as long as I shall: and while it passes current with me, that you endeavour not to new coin it. To which

end, together with all vizards for the day, I prohibit all masks for the night, made of oiled-skins and I know not what—hog's bones, hare's gall, pig water, and the marrow of a roasted cat. In short, I forbid all commerce with the gentlewoman in *what-d'ye-call-it* Court. *Item*, I shut my doors against all bawds with baskets, and pennyworths of *muslin*, *china*, *fans*, *atlases*, etc. *Item*, I denounce against all strait-lacing, squeezing for a shape. Lastly, to the dominion of the *tea-table* I submit.—But with *proviso*, that you exceed not in your province; but restrain yourself to native and simple *tea-table* drinks, as *tea*, *chocolate*, and *coffee*. As likewise to genuine and authorised *tea-table* talk—such as mending of fashions, spoiling reputations, railing at absent friends, and so forth—but that on no account you encroach upon the men's prerogative, and presume to drink healths, or toast fellows; for prevention of which, I banish all *foreign forces*, all auxiliaries to the *tea-table*, as *orange-brandy*, all *aniseed*, *cinnamon*, *citron*, and *Barbados'-waters*, together with *ratafia* and the most noble spirit of *clary*.—But for *cowslip-wine*, *poppy-water*, and all *dormitives*, those I allow.—These *provisos* admitted, in other things I may prove a tractable and complying husband.

Millamant: O horrid *provisos*! filthy strong waters! I toast fellows, odious men! I hate your odious *provisos*.

Mirabell: Then we're agreed. Shall I kiss your hand upon the contract? and here comes one to be a witness to the sealing of the deed.

Enter Mrs. Fainall.

Millamant: Fainall, what shall I do? Shall I have him? I think I must have him.

Mrs. Fainall: Ay, ay, take him, take him; what should you do?

Millamant: Well then—I'll take my death I'm in a horrid fright—Fainall, I shall never say it.—Well—I think—I'll endure you.

Mrs. Fainall: Fy, fy, have him, have him, and tell him

so in plain terms: for I am sure you have a mind to him.

Millamant: Are you? I think I have—and the horrid man looks as if he thought so too.—Well, you ridiculous thing you, I'll have you—I won't be kissed, nor I won't be thanked.—Here, kiss my hand though—so, hold your tongue now, don't say a word.

Mrs. Fainall: Mirabell, there's a necessity for your obedience;—you have neither time to talk nor stay. My mother is coming; and in my conscience, if she should see you, would fall into fits, and maybe not recover time enough to return to Sir Rowland; who, as Foible tells me, is in a fair way to succeed. Therefore spare your ecstasies for another occasion, and slip down the back stairs, where Foible waits to consult you.

Millamant: Ay, go, go. In the meantime I suppose you have said something to please me.

Mirabell: I am all obedience. [*He goes out.*

The Way of the World.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON

1689–1761

9...LOVELACE AND CLARISSA

[Lovelace, an unprincipled libertine and man of fashion, makes many attempts to deceive and dishonour the pure and high-minded Clarissa Harlowe, who thinks that he really loves her. The scene given below represents one of these attempts. Lovelace, on a specious plea, persuades Clarissa to accompany him to town, and takes her to a house of doubtful reputation where he himself has arranged to stay. In the middle of the night he induces her to come from her room by raising a cry of " Fire ! "—He is here describing the incident, in a letter to his friend Belford.]

Now is my reformation secure ; for I never shall love any other woman ! Oh ! she is all variety ! She must be ever new to me ! *Imagination* cannot form ; much less can the pencil paint ; nor can the soul of painting, poetry, describe an angel so exquisitely, so elegantly lovely !—But I will not by anticipation pacify thy impatience. Although the subject is too hallowed for profane contemplation, yet shalt thou have the whole before thee as it passed : and this not from a spirit wantoning in description upon so rich a subject ; but with a design to put a bound to thy roving thoughts. It will be iniquity, *greater than a Lovelace was ever guilty of*, to carry them farther than I shall acknowledge.

Thus then, connecting my last with the present, I lead to it.

Didst thou not, by the conclusion of my former, perceive the consternation I was in, just as I was about to reperuse thy letter, in order to prevail upon myself to recede from my purpose of awaking in terrors my slumbering charmer ? And what dost think was the matter ?

I'll tell thee—

At a little after two, when the whole house was still, or seemed to be so, and, as it proved, my Clarissa in bed, and fast asleep; I also in a manner undressed (as indeed I was for an hour before) and in my gown and slippers, though, to oblige thee, writing on!—I was alarmed by a trampling noise overhead, and a confused buzz of mixed voices, some louder than others, like scolding, and little short of screaming. While I was wondering what could be the matter, downstairs ran Dorcas, and at my door, in an accent rather frightedly and hoarsely inward than shrilly clamorous, she cried out Fire! Fire! And this the more alarmed me, as she seemed to endeavour to cry out louder, but could not.

My pen (its last scrawl a benediction on my beloved) dropped from my fingers; and up started I; and making but three steps to the door, opening it, cried out, Where! Where! almost as much terrified as the wench; while she, more than half undressed, her petticoats in her hand, unable to speak distinctly, pointed upstairs.

I was there in a moment, and found all owing to the carelessness of Mrs. Sinclair's cook-maid, who, having sat up to read the simple *History of Dorastus and Faunia*, when she should have been in bed, had set fire to an old pair of calico window-curtains.

She had had the presence of mind, in her fright, to tear down the half-burnt vallens, as well as curtains, and had got them, though blazing, into the chimney by the time I came up; so that I had the satisfaction to find the danger happily over.

Meantime Dorcas, after she had directed me upstairs, not knowing the worst was over, and expecting every minute the house would be in a blaze, out of tender regard for her lady (*I shall for ever love the wench for it*), ran to her door, and rapping loudly at it, in a recovered voice cried out, with a shrillness equal to her love, *Fire! Fire! The house is on fire!—Rise, Madam!—This instant rise—if you would not be burnt in your bed!*

No sooner had she made this dreadful outcry, but I heard

her lady's door, with hasty violence unbar, unbolt, unlock, and open, and my charmer's voice sounding like that of one going into a fit.

Thou mayest believe that I was greatly affected. I trembled with concern for her, and hastened down faster than the alarm of fire had made me run up, in order to satisfy her that all the danger was over.

When I had *flown down* to her chamber-door, there I beheld the most charming creature in the world, supporting herself on the arm of the gasping Dorcas, sighing, trembling, and ready to faint, with nothing on but an under petticoat, her lovely bosom half open, and her feet just slipped into her shoes. As soon as she saw me, she panted and struggled to speak; but could only say, O Mr. Lovelace! and down was ready to sink.

I clasped her in my arms with an ardour she never felt before: My dearest life! fear nothing: I have been up—the danger is over—the fire is got under—and how, foolish devil (to Dorcas), could you thus, by your hideous yell, alarm and frighten my angel!

O Jack! how her sweet bosom, as I clasped her to mine, heaved and panted! I could even distinguish her dear heart flutter, flutter, flutter, against mine; and for a few minutes I feared she would go into fits.

Lest the half-lifeless charmer should catch cold in this undress, I lifted her to her bed, and sat down by her upon the side of it, endeavouring with the utmost tenderness, as well of action as expression, to dissipate her terrors.

But what did I get by this my generous care of her, and my *successful* endeavour to bring her to herself?—Nothing (ungrateful as she was!) but the most passionate exclamations: for we had both already forgotten the occasion, dreadful as it was, which had thrown her into my arms; I, from the joy of encircling the almost disrobed body of the loveliest of her sex; she, from the greater terrors that arose from finding herself in my arms, and both seated on the bed, from which she had been so lately frighted.

And now, Belford, reflect upon the distance at which the

watchful charmer had hitherto kept me; reflect upon my love, upon my sufferings for her: reflect upon her vigilance, and how long I had laid in wait to elude it; the awe I had stood in, because of her frozen virtue and over-niceness; and that I never before was so happy with her; and then think how ungovernable must be my transports in those happy moments! And yet, in my own account, I was both decent and generous.

But, far from being affected, as I wished, by an address so fervent (although from a man for whom she had so lately owned a regard, and with whom, but an hour or two before, she had parted with so much satisfaction), I never saw a bitterer, or more moving grief, when she came fully to herself.

She appealed to Heaven against my *treachery*, as she called it; while I, by the most solemn vows, pleaded my own equal fright, and the reality of the danger that had alarmed us both.

She conjured me, in the most solemn and affecting manner, by turns threatening and soothing, to quit her apartment, and to permit her to hide herself from the light, and from every human eye.

I besought her pardon, yet could not avoid offending; and repeatedly vowed that the next morning's sun should witness our espousals. But taking, I suppose, all my protestations of this kind as an indication that I intended to proceed to the last extremity, she would hear nothing that I said; but redoubling her struggles to get from me, in broken accents, and exclamations the most vehement, she protested that she would not survive what she called a treatment so disgraceful and villainous; and, looking all wildly round her, as if for some instrument of mischief, she espied a pair of sharp-pointed scissors on a chair by the bedside, and endeavoured to catch them up, with design to make her words good on the spot.

Seeing her desperation, I begged her to be pacified; that she would hear me speak but one word; declaring that I intended no dishonour to her: and having seized the scissors, I threw them into the chimney; and she still

insisting vehemently upon my distance, I permitted her to take a chair.

But, oh, the sweet discomposure !—Her bared shoulders, and arms so inimitably fair and lovely : her spread hands crossed over her charming neck ; yet not half concealing its glossy beauties : the scanty coat, as she rose from me, giving the whole of her admirable shape, and fine-turned limbs : her eyes running over, yet seeming to threaten future vengeance : and at last her lips uttering what every indignant look and glowing feature portended ; exclaiming as if I had done the worst I could do, and vowing never to forgive me ; wilt thou wonder if I resumed the incensed, the already too much provoked fair one ?

I did ; and clasped her once more to my bosom : but, considering the delicacy of her frame, her force was amazing, and showed how much in earnest she was in her resentment ; for it was with the utmost difficulty that I was able to hold her : nor could I prevent her sliding through my arms, to fall upon her knees : which she did at my feet : and there in the anguish of her soul, her streaming eyes lifted up to my face with supplicating softness, hands folded, dishevelled hair ; for her night head-dress having fallen off in her struggling, her charming tresses fell down in naturally shining ringlets, as if officious to conceal the dazzling beauties of her neck and shoulders ; her lovely bosom too heaving with sighs and broken sobs, as if to aid her quivering lips pleading for her—in this manner, but when her grief gave way to her speech, in words pronounced with that emphatical propriety, which distinguishes this admirable creature in her elocution from all the women I ever heard speak, did she implore my compassion and my honour.

" Consider me, *dear* Lovelace " (*dear* was her charming word !), " on my knees I beg you to consider me as a poor creature who has no protector but you ; who has no defence but your honour : by that honour ! by your humanity ! by all you have vowed ! I conjure you not to make me abhor myself ! not to make me vile in my own eyes ! "

I mentioned to-morrow as the happiest day of my life.

Tell me not of to-morrow. If indeed you mean me honourably, *now*, this very instant NOW ! you must show it, and be gone ! you can never in a whole long life repair the evils you may NOW make me suffer !

Wicked wretch !—Insolent villain !—Yes, she called me insolent villain, although so much in my power ! And for what !—only for kissing (*with passion indeed*) her inimitable neck, her lips, her cheeks, her forehead, and her streaming eyes, as this assemblage of beauties offered itself at once to my ravished sight ; she continuing kneeling at my feet as I sat.

If I *am* a villain, Madam !—And then my grasping, but trembling hand—I hope I did not hurt the tenderest and loveliest of all her beauties—If I *am* a villain, Madam—

She tore my ruffle, shrunk from my happy hand, with amazing force and agility, as with my other arm I would have encircled her waist.

Indeed you are !—The worst of villains !—Help ! dear, blessed people ! and screamed out.—No help for a poor creature !

Am I then a villain, Madam ?—*Am* I then a villain, say you ?—and clasped both my arms about her, offering to raise her to my bounding heart.

Oh no ! And yet you are !—And again I was her *dear* Lovelace !—her hands again clasped over her charming bosom.—Kill me ! kill me !—if I am odious enough in your eyes to deserve this treatment : and I will thank you !—Too long, much too long has my life been a burden to me !—Or (wildly looking all round her) give me but the means, and I will instantly convince you that my honour is dearer to me than my life !

Then, with still folded hands, and fresh streaming eyes, I was her *blessed* Lovelace ; and she would thank me with her latest breath if I would permit her to make that preference, or free her from further indignities.

I sat suspended for a moment : by my soul, thought I, thou art, upon full proof, an angel and no woman ! still,

however, close clasping her to my bosom, as I raised her from her knees, she again slid through my arms, and dropped upon them.—" See, Mr. Lovelace !—Good God ! that I should live to see this hour, and to bear this treatment !—See at your feet a poor creature, imploring your pity ; who, for your sake, is abandoned of all the world. Let not my father's curse thus dreadfully operate ! Be not *you* the inflicter, who have been the *cause* of it : but spare me, I beseech you, spare me !—for how have I deserved this treatment from you ? for *your own sake*, if not for *my sake*, and as you would that God Almighty, in your last hour, should have mercy upon *you*, spare me ! "

What heart but must have been penetrated !

I would again have raised the dear suppliant from her knees ; but she would not be raised, till my softened mind, she said, had yielded to her prayer, and bid her rise to be innocent.

Rise then, my angel ! rise, and be what you are, and all you wish to be ! only pronounce me pardoned for what has passed, and tell me you will continue to look upon me with that eye of favour and serenity which I have been blessed with for some days past, and I will submit to my beloved conqueress, whose power never was at so great a height with me, as now, and retire to my apartment.

God Almighty, said she, hear your prayers in your most arduous moments, as you have heard mine ! and now leave me, this moment leave me, to my own recollections : in *that* you will leave me to misery enough, and more than you ought to wish to your bitterest enemy.

Impute not everything, my best beloved, to design, for design it was not—

O Mr. Lovelace !

Upon my soul, Madam, the fire was real—(*and so it was, Jack !*)—The house, my dearest life, might have been consumed by it, as you will be convinced in the morning by ocular demonstration.

O Mr. Lovelace !—

Let my passion for you, Madam, and the unexpected

meeting of you at your chamber-door, in an attitude so charming—

Leave me, leave me, this moment!—I beseech you leave me; looking wildly and in confusion about her, and upon herself.

Excuse me, dearest creature, for those liberties which, innocent as they were, your too great delicacy may make you take amiss—

No more! no more!—leave me, I beseech you! again looking upon herself, and round her, in a sweet confusion.—Begone! begone!—

Then weeping, she struggled vehemently to withdraw her hands, which all the while I held between mine.—Her struggles!—Oh, what additional charms, as I now reflect, did her struggles give to every feature, every limb, of a person so sweetly elegant and lovely!

Impossible, my dearest life, till you pronounce my pardon!—Say but you forgive me!—say but you forgive me!

I beseech you to be gone! leave me to myself, that I may think what I *can* do, and what I *ought* to do.

That, my dearest creature, is not enough. You must tell me that I am forgiven; that you will see me to-morrow as if nothing had happened.

And then I clasped her again in my arms, hoping she would not forgive me.

I will—I do forgive you—wretch that you are!

Nay, my Clarissa! and is it such a reluctant pardon, mingled with a word so upbraiding, that I am to be put off with, when you are thus (clasping her close to me) in my power!

I do, I *do* forgive you!

Heartily?

Yes, heartily!

And freely?

Freely!

And will you look upon me to-morrow as if nothing had passed?

Yes, yes!

I cannot take these peevish affirmatives, so much like intentional negatives !—Say, you will, upon your honour.

Upon my honour, then—Oh ! now, begone ! begone !—and never, never—

What ! never, my angel !—Is this forgiveness ?

Never, said she, let what has passed be remembered more !

I insisted upon one kiss to seal my pardon—and retired like a fool, a woman's fool, as I was !—I sneakingly retired ! —Couldst thou have believed it ?

But I had no sooner entered my own apartment, than reflecting upon the opportunity I had lost, and that all I had gained was but an increase of my own difficulties ; and upon the ridicule I should meet with below upon a weakness so much out of my usual character ; I repented, and hastened back, in hope that, through the distress of mind which I left her in, she had not so soon fastened the door ; and I was fully resolved to execute all my purposes, be the consequence what it would ; for, thought I, I have already sinned beyond *cordial* forgiveness, I doubt ; and if fits and desperation ensue, I can but marry at last, and then I shall make her amends.

But I was justly punished ; for her door was fast : and hearing her sigh and sob, as if her heart would burst, My beloved creature, said I, rapping gently (the sobbings then ceasing), I want but to say three words to you, which must be the most acceptable you ever heard from me. Let me see you but for one moment.

I thought I heard her coming to open the door, and my heart leaped in that hope ; but it was only to draw another bolt, to make it still the faster ; and she either could not or would not answer me, but retired to the farther end of her apartment, to her closet, probably ; and more like a fool than before, again I sneaked away.

This was mine, my plot ! and this was all I made of it !—I love her more than ever !—And well I may !—never saw I polished ivory so beautiful as her arms and shoulders ; never touched I velvet so soft as her skin : her virgin bosom —O Belford, she is all perfection ! then such an elegance !—

In her struggling losing her shoe (but just slipped on, as I told thee), her pretty foot equally white and delicate as the hand of any other woman, or even as her own hand!

But seest thou not that I have a claim of merit for a grace that everybody hitherto had denied me? and that is for a capacity of being moved by prayers and tears.—Where, where, on this occasion, was the *callous*, where the flint, by which my heart was said to be surrounded?

This, indeed, is the first instance, in the like case, that ever I was wrought upon. But why? *because I never before encountered a resistance so much in earnest*: a resistance, in short, so irresistible.

What a triumph has her sex obtained in my thoughts by this trial, and this resistance!

Clarissa.

12922

HENRY FIELDING

1707–1754

10...TOM JONES AND SOPHIA WESTERN

JONES was become perfectly easy by possession of this secret with regard to Molly; but as to Sophia, he was far from being in a state of tranquillity; nay, indeed, he was under the most violent perturbation: his heart was now, if I may use the metaphor, entirely evacuated, and Sophia took absolute possession of it: he loved her with an unbounded passion, and plainly saw the tender sentiments she had for him; yet could not this assurance lessen his despair of obtaining the consent of her father, nor the horrors which attended his pursuit of her by any base or treacherous method. The injury which he must thus do to Mr. Western, and the concern which would accrue to Mr. Allworthy, were circumstances that tormented him all day, and haunted him on his pillow at night. His life was a constant struggle between honour and inclination, which alternately triumphed over each other in his mind. He often resolved, in the absence of Sophia, to leave her father's house and see her no more; and as often, in her presence, forgot all those resolutions, and determined to pursue her at the hazard of his life, and at the forfeiture of what was much dearer to him. This conflict began soon to produce very strong and visible effects; for he lost all his usual sprightliness and gaiety of temper, and became not only melancholy when alone, but dejected and absent in company; nay, if ever he put on a forced mirth to comply with Mr. Western's humour, the constraint appeared so plain, that he seemed to have been giving the strongest evidence of what he endeavoured to conceal by such ostentation. It may perhaps be a question, whether the art which he used

to conceal his passion, or the means which honest nature employed to reveal it, betrayed him most: for while art made him more than ever reserved to Sophia, and forbade him to address any of his discourse to her; nay, to avoid meeting her eyes, with the utmost caution; nature was no less busy in counter-plotting him: hence, at the approach of the young lady, he grew pale; and, if this was sudden, started: if his eyes accidentally met hers, the blood rushed into his cheeks, and his countenance became all over scarlet: if common civility ever obliged him to speak to her, as to drink her health at table, his tongue was sure to falter: if he touched her, his hand, nay his whole frame, trembled; and if any discourse tended, however remotely, to raise the idea of love, an involuntary sigh seldom failed to steal from his bosom: most of which accidents nature was wonderfully industrious to throw daily in his way.

All these symptoms escaped the notice of the squire; but not so of Sophia. She soon perceived these agitations of mind in Jones, and was at no loss to discover the cause; for indeed, she recognised it in her own breast; and this recognition is, I suppose, that sympathy which has been so often noted in lovers, and which will sufficiently account for her being so much quicker-sighted than her father. But to say the truth, there is a more simple and plain method for accounting for that prodigious superiority of penetration which we must observe in some men over the rest of the human species, and one which will serve not only in the case of lovers, but of all others. From whence is it that the knave is generally so quick-sighted to those symptoms and operations of knavery, which often dupe an honest man of a much better understanding? There surely is no general sympathy among knaves; nor have they, like freemasons, any common sign of communication. In reality, it is only because they have the same thing in their heads, and their thoughts are turned the same way. Thus, that Sophia saw, and that Western did not see, the plain symptoms of love in Jones, can be no wonder, when we consider that the idea of love never entered into the head of

the father, whereas the daughter at present thought of nothing else.

When Sophia was well satisfied of the violent passion which tormented poor Jones, and no less certain that she herself was its object, she had not the least difficulty in discovering the true causes of his present behaviour: this highly endeared him to her, and raised in her mind two of the best affections which any lover can wish to raise in a mistress; these were esteem and pity: for sure the most outrageously rigid among her sex will excuse her pitying a man whom she saw miserable on her own account; nor can they blame her for esteeming one, who visibly, from the most honourable motives, endeavoured to smother a flame in his own bosom, which, like the famous Spartan theft, was preying upon and consuming his very vitals: thus his backwardness, his shunning her, his coldness, and his silence, were the forwardest, the most diligent, the warmest and most eloquent advocates; and wrought so violently on her sensible and tender heart, that she soon felt for him all those gentle sensations which are consistent with a virtuous and elevated female mind; in short, all which esteem, gratitude, and pity can inspire in such towards an agreeable man; indeed, all which the nicest delicacy can allow: in a word, she was in love with him to distraction.

One day this young couple accidentally met in the garden, at the end of the two walks, which were both bounded by that canal in which Jones had formerly risked drowning to retrieve the little bird that Sophia had there lost. This place had been of late much frequented by Sophia: here she used to ruminate, with a mixture of pain and pleasure, on an incident which, however trifling in itself, had possibly sown the first seeds of that affection which was now arrived to such maturity in her heart. Here then this young couple met. They were almost close together before either of them knew anything of the other's approach: a bystander would have discovered sufficient marks of confusion in the countenance of each; but they felt too much themselves to make any observation. As Jones had a little recovered

his first surprise, he accosted the young lady with some of the ordinary forms of salutation, which she in the same manner returned; and their conversation began, as usual, on the delicious beauty of the morning: hence they passed to the beauty of the place, on which Jones launched forth very high encomiums. When they came to the tree whence he had formerly tumbled into the canal, Sophia could not help reminding him of that accident, and said, "I fancy, Mr. Jones, you have some little shuddering when you see that water."—"I assure you, madam," answered Jones, "the concern you felt at the loss of your little bird will always appear to me the highest circumstance in that adventure. Poor little Tommy! there is the branch he stood upon. How could the little wretch have the folly to fly away from that state of happiness in which I had the honour to place him? His fate was a just punishment for his ingratitude."—"Upon my word, Mr. Jones," said she, "your gallantry very narrowly escaped as severe a fate; sure the remembrance must affect you."—"Indeed, madam," answered he, "if I have any reason to reflect with sorrow on it, it is perhaps that the water had not been a little deeper, by which I might have escaped many bitter heart-aches that fortune seems to have in store for me."—"Fie, Mr. Jones," replied Sophia; "I am sure you cannot be in earnest now. This affected contempt of life is only an excess of your complaisance to me: you would endeavour to lessen the obligation of having twice ventured it for my sake. Beware the third time."

She spoke these last words with a smile, and a softness inexpressible. Jones answered, with a sigh, "He feared it was already too late for caution," and then, looking tenderly and steadfastly on her, he cried, "Oh, Miss Western! can you desire me to live? Can you wish me so ill?" Sophia, looking down on the ground, answered, with some hesitation, "Indeed, Mr. Jones, I do not wish you ill."—"Oh, I know too well that heavenly temper," cries Jones, "that divine goodness, which is beyond every other charm!"—"Nay, now," answered she, "I understand you not: I

can stay no longer."—" I—I would not be understood ! " cries he ; " nay, I can't be understood : I know not what I say. Meeting you here so unexpectedly, I have been unguarded : for Heaven's sake, pardon me, if I have said anything to offend you. I did not mean it ; indeed I would rather have died—nay, the very thought would kill me."—" You surprise me," answered she : " how can you possibly think you have offended me ? "—" Fear, madam," says he, " easily runs into madness ; and there is no degree of fear like that which I feel of offending you. How can I speak, then ? Nay, don't look angrily at me : one frown will destroy me. I mean nothing. Blame my eyes, or blame those beauties. What am I saying ? Pardon me if I have said too much. My heart overflowed. I have struggled with my love to the utmost, and have endeavoured to conceal a fever which preys on my vitals, and will, I hope, soon make it impossible for me ever to offend you more."

Mr. Jones now fell a-trembling as if he had been shaken with a fit of ague. Sophia, who was in a situation not very different from his, answered in these words : " Mr. Jones, I will not affect to misunderstand you : indeed I understand you too well ; but, for Heaven's sake, if you have any affection for me, let me make the best of my way into the house : I wish I may be able to support myself thither." Jones, who was hardly able to support himself, offered her his arm, which she condescended to accept, but begged he would not mention a word more to her of this nature at present. He promised he would not ; insisting only on her forgiveness of what love, without the leave of his will, had forced from him : this, she told him, he knew how to obtain by his future behaviour ; and thus this young pair tottered and trembled along, the lover not once daring to squeeze the hand of his mistress, though it was locked in his.

Tom Jones.

LAURENCE STERNE

1713–1768

11...MY UNCLE TOBY AND THE WIDOW WADMAN

As soon as the corporal had finished the story of his amour—or rather my uncle *Toby* for him—Mrs. *Wadman* silently sallied forth from her arbour, replaced the pin in her mob, pass'd the wicket-gate, and advanced slowly towards my uncle *Toby's* sentry-box: the disposition which *Trim* had made in my uncle *Toby's* mind, was too favourable a crisis to be let slipp'd——

——The attack was determin'd upon: it was facilitated still more by my uncle *Toby's* having ordered the corporal to wheel off the pioneer's shovel, the spade, the pick-axe, the picquets, and other military stores which lay scatter'd upon the ground where *Dunkirk* stood—the corporal had march'd—the field was clear.

Now, consider, sir, what nonsense it is, either in fighting, or writing, or any thing else (whether in rhyme to it, or not) which a man has occasion to do—to act by plan: for if ever Plan, independent of all circumstances, deserved registering in letters of gold (I mean in the archives of *Gotham*)—it was certainly the PLAN of Mrs. *Wadman's* attack of my uncle *Toby* in his sentry-box, BY PLAN——Now the plan hanging up in it at this juncture, being the Plan of *Dunkirk*—and the tale of *Dunkirk* a tale of relaxation, it opposed every impression she could make: and besides, could she have gone upon it—the manœuvre of fingers and hands in the attack of the sentry-box, was so outdone by that of the fair *Beguine's*, in *Trim's* story—that just then that particular attack, however successful before—became the most heartless attack that could be made——

O ! let woman alone for this. Mrs. *Wadman* had scarce open'd the wicket-gate, when her genius sported with the change of circumstances.

——She formed a new attack in a moment.

——I am half distracted, captain *Shandy*, said Mrs. *Wadman*, holding up her cambrick handkerchief to her left eye, as she approach'd the door of my uncle *Toby's* sentry-box——a mote——or sand——or something——I know not what, has got into this eye of mine——do look into it—it is not in the white—

In saying which, Mrs *Wadman* edged herself close in beside my uncle *Toby*, and squeezing herself down upon the corner of his bench, she gave him an opportunity of doing it without rising up——Do look into it—said she.

Honest soul ! thou didst look into it with as much innocency of heart, as ever child look'd into a raree-shew-box ; and 'twere as much a sin to have hurt thee.

——If a man will be peeping of his own accord into things of that nature——I've nothing to say to it——

My uncle *Toby* never did : and I will answer for him, that he would have sat quietly upon a sofa from *June* to *January* (which, you know, takes in both the hot and cold months), with an eye as fine as the *Thracian Rodope's* beside him, without being able to tell whether it was a black or blue one.

The difficulty was to get my uncle *Toby* to look at one at all.

'Tis surmounted. And

I see him yonder with his pipe pendulous in his hand, and the ashes falling out of it—looking—and looking—then rubbing his eyes—and looking again, with twice the good-nature that ever *Gallileo* look'd for a spot in the sun.

——In vain ! for by all the powers which animate the organ——Widow *Wadman's* left eye shines this moment as lucid as her right——there is neither mote, or sand, or dust,

or chaff, or speck, or particle of opake matter floating in it—There is nothing, my dear paternal uncle! but one lambent delicious fire, furtively shooting out from every part of it, in all directions, into thine——

——If thou lookest, uncle *Toby*, in search of this mote one moment longer——thou art undone.

An eye is for all the world exactly like a cannon, in this respect; That it is not so much the eye or the cannon, in themselves, as it is the carriage of the eye——and the carriage of the cannon, by which both the one and the other are enabled to do so much execution. I don't think the comparison a bad one; However, as 'tis made and placed at the head of the chapter, as much for use as ornament, all I desire in return is, that whenever I speak of Mrs. *Wadman's* eyes (except once in the next period), that you keep it in your fancy.

I protest, Madam, said my uncle *Toby*, I can see nothing whatever in your eye.

It is not in the white; said Mrs. *Wadman*: my uncle *Toby* look'd with might and main into the pupil——

Now of all the eyes which ever were created——from your own, Madam, up to those of *Venus* herself, which certainly were as venereal a pair of eyes as ever stood in a head——there never was an eye of them all, so fitted to rob my uncle *Toby* of his repose, as the very eye, at which he was looking——it was not, Madam, a rolling eye——a romping or a wanton one—nor was it an eye sparkling—petulant or imperious—of high claims and terrifying exactions, which would have curdled at once that milk of human nature, of which my uncle *Toby* was made up——but 'twas an eye full of gentle salutations——and soft responses——speaking——not like the trumpet-stop of some ill-made organ, in which many an eye I talk to, holds coarse converse——but whispering soft——like the last low accent of an expiring saint——" How can you live comfortless, captain *Shandy*, and alone, without a bosom to lean your head on——or trust your cares to? "

MY UNCLE TOBY AND THE WIDOW WADMAN

It was an eye——

But I shall be in love with it myself, if I say another word about it.

——It did my uncle *Toby's* business.

Tristram Shandy.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

1771–1832

12...REBECCA AND THE TEMPLAR

[Isaac of York and his beautiful daughter, Rebecca, on their way back from the tournament at Ashby to their home in York, are captured by De Bracy, captain of a band of mercenaries, and Bois-Guilbert, the Templar, who have assumed the disguise of outlaws. The prisoners are carried off to Front-de-Bœuf's castle of Torquilstone, where Rebecca, for whom the Templar has conceived a violent passion, is torn from her father and placed in a lonely turret.]

WHILE the scenes we have described were passing in other parts of the castle, the Jewess Rebecca awaited her fate in a distant and sequestered turret. Hither she had been led by two of her disguised ravishers, and on being thrust into the little cell, she found herself in the presence of an old sibyl, who kept murmuring to herself a Saxon rhyme, as if to beat time to the revolving dance which her spindle was performing upon the floor. The hag raised her head as Rebecca entered, and scowled at the fair Jewess with the malignant envy with which old age and ugliness, when united with evil conditions, are apt to look upon youth and beauty.

" Thou must up and away, old house-cricket," said one of the men; " our noble master commands it.—Thou must e'en leave this chamber to a fairer guest."

" Ay," grumbled the hag, " even thus is service requited. I have known when my bare word would have cast the best man-at-arms among ye out of saddle and out of service; and now must I up and away at the command of every groom such as thou."

" Good Dame Urfried," said the other man, " stand not to reason on it, but up and away. Lords' hests must be

listened to with a quick ear. Thou hast had thy day, old dame, but thy sun has long been set. Thou art now the very emblem of an old war-horse turned out on the barren heath—thou hast had thy paces in thy time, but now a broken amble is the best of them.—Come, amble off with thee."

" Ill omens dog ye both ! " said the old woman ; " and a kennel be your burying-place ! May the evil demon Zernebock tear me limb from limb, if I leave my own cell ere I have spun out the hemp on my distaff ! "

" Answer it to our lord, then, old housefiend," said the man, and retired ; leaving Rebecca in company with the old woman, upon whose presence she had been thus unwillingly forced.

" What devil's deed have they now in the wind ? " said the old hag, murmuring to herself, yet from time to time casting a sidelong and malignant glance at Rebecca ; " but it is easy to guess.—Bright eyes, black locks, and a skin like paper, ere the priest stains it with his black unguent.—Ay, it is easy to guess why they send her to this lone turret, whence a shriek could no more be heard than at the depth of five hundred fathoms beneath the earth.—Thou wilt have owls for thy neighbours, fair one ; and their screams will be heard as far, and as much regarded, as thine own. Outlandish, too," she said, marking the dress and turban of Rebecca.—" What country art thou of ?—a Saracen ? or an Egyptian ?—Why dost not answer ?—thou canst weep, canst thou not speak ? "

" Be not angry, good mother," said Rebecca.

" Thou needst say no more," replied Urfried ; " men know a fox by the train, and a Jewess by her tongue."

" For the sake of mercy," said Rebecca, " tell me what I am to expect as the conclusion of the violence which hath dragged me hither ! Is it my life they seek, to atone for my religion ? I will lay it down cheerfully."

" Thy life, minion ? " answered the sibyl ; " what would taking thy life pleasure them ?—Trust me, thy life is in no peril. Such usage shalt thou have as was once thought good enough for a noble Saxon maiden. And shall a

Jewess, like thee, repine because she hath no better? Look at me—I was as young and twice as fair as thou, when Front-de-Bœuf, father of this Reginald, and his Normans, stormed this castle. My father and his seven sons defended their inheritance from story to story, from chamber to chamber.—There was not a room, not a step of the stair, that was not slippery with their blood. They died—they died every man; and ere their bodies were cold, and ere their blood was dried, I had become the prey and the scorn of the conqueror!"

"Is there no help?—Are there no means of escape?" said Rebecca.—"Richly, richly would I requite thine aid."

"Think not of it," said the hag; "from hence there is no escape but through the gates of death; and it is late, late," she added, shaking her grey head, "ere these open to us.—Yet it is comfort to think that we leave behind us on earth those who shall be wretched as ourselves. Fare thee well, Jewess!—Jew or Gentile, thy fate would be the same; for thou hast to do with them that have neither scruple nor pity. Fare thee well, I say. My thread is spun out—thy task is yet to begin."

"Stay! stay! for Heaven's sake!" said Rebecca; "stay, though it be to curse and revile me—thy presence is yet some protection."

"The presence of the Mother of God were no protection," answered the old woman. "There she stands," pointing to a rude image of the Virgin Mary, "see if she can avert the fate that awaits thee."

She left the room as she spoke, her features writhed into a sort of sneering laugh, which made them seem even more hideous than their habitual frown. She locked the door behind her, and Rebecca might hear her curse every step for its steepness, as slowly and with difficulty she descended the turret-stair.

Rebecca was now to expect a fate even more dreadful than that of Rowena; for what probability was there that either softness or ceremony would be used towards one of

her oppressed race, whatever shadow of these might be preserved towards the Saxon heiress? Yet had the Jewess this advantage, that she was better prepared by habits of thought, and by natural strength of mind, to encounter the dangers to which she was exposed. Of a strong and observing character, even from her earliest years, the pomp and wealth which her father displayed within his walls, or which she witnessed in the houses of other wealthy Hebrews, had not been able to blind her to the precarious circumstances under which they were enjoyed. Like Damocles at his celebrated banquet, Rebecca perpetually beheld, amid that gorgeous display, the sword which was suspended over the heads of her people by a single hair. These reflections had tamed and brought down to a pitch of sounder judgment a temper which, under other circumstances, might have waxed haughty, supercilious, and obstinate.

From her father's example and injunctions, Rebecca had learnt to bear herself courteously towards all who approached her. She could not indeed imitate his excess of subservience, because she was a stranger to the meanness of mind, and to the constant state of timid apprehension, by which it was dictated; but she bore herself with a proud humility, as if submitting to the evil circumstances in which she was placed as the daughter of a despised race, while she felt in her mind the consciousness that she was entitled to hold a higher rank from her merit, than the arbitrary despotism of religious prejudice permitted her to aspire to.

Thus prepared to expect adverse circumstances, she had acquired the firmness necessary for acting under them. Her present situation required all her presence of mind, and she summoned it up accordingly.

Her first care was to inspect the apartment; but it afforded few hopes either of escape or protection. It contained neither secret passage not trap-door, and unless where the door by which she had entered joined the main building, seemed to be circumscribed by the round exterior

wall of the turret. The door had no inside bolt or bar. The single window opened upon an embattled space surmounting the turret, which gave Rebecca, at first sight, some hopes of escaping; but she soon found it had no communication with any other part of the battlements, being an isolated bartisan, or balcony, secured, as usual, by a parapet, with embrasures, at which a few archers might be stationed for defending the turret, and flanking with their shot the wall of the castle on that side.

There was therefore no hope but in passive fortitude, and in that strong reliance on Heaven natural to great and generous characters. Rebecca, however erroneously taught to interpret the promises of Scripture to the chosen people of Heaven, did not err in supposing the present to be their hour of trial, or in trusting that the children of Zion would be one day called in with the fulness of the Gentiles. In the meanwhile, all around her showed that their present state was that of punishment and probation, and that it was their especial duty to suffer without sinning. Thus prepared to consider herself as the victim of misfortune, Rebecca had early reflected upon her own state, and schooled her mind to meet the dangers which she had probably to encounter.

The prisoner trembled, however, and changed colour, when a step was heard on the stair, and the door of the turret-chamber slowly opened, and a tall man, dressed as one of those banditti to whom they owed their misfortune, slowly entered, and shut the door behind him; his cap, pulled down upon his brows, concealed the upper part of his face, and he held his mantle in such a manner as to muffle the rest. In this guise, as if prepared for the execution of some deed, at the thought of which he was himself ashamed, he stood before the affrighted prisoner; yet, ruffian as his dress bespoke him, he seemed at a loss to express what purpose had brought him thither, so that Rebecca, making an effort upon herself, had time to anticipate his explanation. She had already unclasped two costly bracelets and a collar, which she hastened to proffer to the supposed

outlaw, concluding naturally that to gratify his avarice was to bespeak his favour.

" Take these," she said, " good friend, and for God's sake be merciful to me and my aged father ! These ornaments are of value, yet are they trifling to what he would bestow to obtain our dismissal from this castle, free and uninjured."

" Fair flower of Palestine," replied the outlaw, " these pearls are orient, but they yield in whiteness to your teeth ; the diamonds are brilliant, but they cannot match your eyes ; and ever since I have taken up this wild trade, I have made a vow to prefer beauty to wealth."

" Do not do yourself such wrong," said Rebecca ; " take ransom, and have mercy !—Gold will purchase you pleasure,—to misuse us, could only bring thee remorse. My father will willingly satiate thy utmost wishes ; and if thou wilt act wisely, thou mayst purchase with our spoils thy restoration to civil society—mayst obtain pardon for past errors, and be placed beyond the necessity of committing more."

" It is well spoken," replied the outlaw in French, finding it difficult probably to sustain, in Saxon, a conversation which Rebecca had opened in that language ; " but know, bright lily of the vale of Baca ! that thy father is already in the hands of a powerful alchemist, who knows how to convert into gold and silver even the rusty bars of a dungeon grate. The venerable Isaac is subjected to an alembic, which will distil from him all he holds dear, without any assistance from my request or thy entreaty. Thy ransom must be paid by love and beauty, and in no other coin will I accept it."

" Thou art no outlaw," said Rebecca, in the same language in which he addressed her ; " no outlaw had refused such offers. No outlaw in this land uses the dialect in which thou hast spoken. Thou art no outlaw, but a Norman—a Norman, noble perhaps in birth.—O, be so in thy actions, and cast off this fearful mask of outrage and violence ! "

" And thou, who canst guess so truly," said Brian de

Bois-Guilbert, dropping the mantle from his face, " art no true daughter of Israel, but in all, save youth and beauty, a very witch of Endor. I am not an outlaw, then, fair rose of Sharon. And I am one who will be more prompt to hang thy neck and arms with pearls and diamonds, which so well become them, than to deprive thee of these ornaments."

" What wouldst thou have of me," said Rebecca, " if not my wealth ?—We can have nought in common between us—you are a Christian—I am a Jewess.—Our union were contrary to the laws alike of the church and the synagogue."

" It were so, indeed," replied the Templar, laughing ; " wed with a Jewess ? *Despardieux !*—Not if she were the Queen of Sheba ! And know, besides, sweet daughter of Zion, that were the most Christian king to offer me his most Christian daughter, with Languedoc for a dowry, I could not wed her. It is against my vow to love any maiden, otherwise than *par amours*, as I will love thee. I am a Templar. Behold the cross of my Holy Order."

" Darest thou appeal to it," said Rebecca, " on an occasion like the present ? "

" And if I do so," said the Templar, " it concerns not thee, who art no believer in the blessed sign of our salvation."

" I believe as my fathers taught," said Rebecca ; " and may God forgive me my belief if erroneous ! But you, Sir Knight, what is *yours*, when you appeal without scruple to that which you deem most holy, even while you are about to transgress the most solemn of your vows as a knight, and as a man of religion ? "

" It is gravely and well preached, O daughter of Sirach ! " answered the Templar ; " but, gentle Ecclesiastica, thy narrow Jewish prejudices make thee blind to our high privilege. Marriage were an enduring crime on the part of a Templar ; but what lesser folly I may practise, I shall speedily be absolved from at the next Preceptory of our Order. Not the wisest of monarchs, not his father, whose examples you must needs allow are weighty, claimed wider

privileges than we poor soldiers of the Temple of Zion have won by our zeal in its defence. The protectors of Solomon's Temple may claim license by the example of Solomon."

"If thou readest the Scripture," said the Jewess, "and the lives of the saints, only to justify thine own license and profligacy, thy crime is like that of him who extracts poison from the most healthful and necessary herbs."

The eyes of the Templar flashed fire at this reproof.—"Hearken," he said, "Rebecca; I have hitherto spoken mildly to thee, but now my language shall be that of a conqueror. Thou art the captive of my bow and spear—subject to my will by the laws of all nations; nor will I abate an inch of my right, or abstain from taking by violence what thou refusest to entreaty or necessity."

"Stand back," said Rebecca—"stand back, and hear me ere thou offerest to commit a sin so deadly! My strength thou mayst indeed overpower, for God made women weak, and trusted their defence to man's generosity. But I will proclaim thy villainy, Templar, from one end of Europe to the other. I will owe to the superstition of thy brethren what their compassion might refuse me. Each Preceptory—each Chapter of thy Order, shall learn, that, like a heretic, thou hast sinned with a Jewess. Those who tremble not at thy crime, will hold thee accursed for having so far dishonoured the cross thou wearest, as to follow a daughter of my people."

"Thou art keen-witted, Jewess," replied the Templar, well aware of the truth of what she spoke, and that the rules of his Order condemned in the most positive manner, and under high penalties, such intrigues as he now prosecuted, and that, in some instances, even degradation had followed upon it—"thou art sharp-witted," he said; "but loud must be thy voice of complaint, if it is heard beyond the iron walls of this castle; within these, murmurs, laments, appeals to justice, and screams for help, die alike silent away. One thing only can save thee, Rebecca. Submit to thy fate—embrace our religion, and thou shalt go forth in

such state, that many a Norman lady shall yield as well in pomp as in beauty to the favourite of the best lance among the defenders of the Temple."

"Submit to my fate!" said Rebecca—"and, sacred Heaven! to what fate?—embrace thy religion! and what religion can it be that harbours such a villain?—*thou* the best lance of the Templars!—Craven knight!—forsworn priest! I spit at thee, and defy thee.—The God of Abraham's promise hath opened an escape to his daughter even from this abyss of infamy!"

As she spoke, she threw open the latticed window which led to the bartisan, and in an instant after, stood on the very verge of the parapet, with not the slightest screen between her and the tremendous depth below. Unprepared for such a desperate effort, for she had hitherto stood perfectly motionless, Bois-Guilbert had neither time to intercept nor stop her. As he offered to advance, she exclaimed, "Remain where thou art, proud Templar, or at thy choice advance!—one foot nearer, and I plunge myself from the precipice; my body shall be crushed out of the very form of humanity upon the stones of that courtyard, ere it become the victim of thy brutality!"

As she spoke this, she clasped her hands and extended them towards heaven, as if imploring mercy on her soul before she made the final plunge. The Templar hesitated, and a resolution which had never yielded to pity or distress, gave way to his admiration of her fortitude. "Come down," he said, "rash girl!—I swear by earth, and sea, and sky, I will offer thee no offence."

"I will not trust thee, Templar," said Rebecca; "thou hast taught me better how to estimate the virtues of thine Order. The next Preceptory would grant thee absolution for an oath, the keeping of which concerned nought but the honour or dishonour of a miserable Jewish maiden."

"You do me injustice," exclaimed the Templar fervently; "I swear to you by the name which I bear—by the cross on my bosom—by the sword on my side—by the ancient crest of my fathers do I swear, I will do thee no

injury whatsoever! If not for thyself, yet for thy father's sake forbear! I will be his friend, and in this castle he will need a powerful one."

"Alas!" said Rebecca, "I know it but too well—dare I trust thee?"

"May my arms be reversed, and my name dishonoured," said Brian de Bois-Guilbert, "if thou shalt have reason to complain of me! Many a law, many a commandment have I broken, but my word never."

"I will then trust thee," said Rebecca, "thus far"; and she descended from the verge of the battlement, but remained standing close by one of the embrasures, or *machicolles*, as they were then called.—"Here," she said, "I take my stand. Remain where thou art; if thou shalt attempt to diminish by one step the distance now between us, thou shalt see that the Jewish maiden will rather trust her soul with God, than her honour to the Templar."

While Rebecca spoke thus, her high and firm resolve, which corresponded so well with the expressive beauty of her countenance, gave to her looks, air, and manner, a dignity that seemed more than mortal. Her glance quailed not, her cheek blanched not, for the fear of a fate so instant and so horrible; on the contrary, the thought that she had her fate at her command, and could escape at will from infamy to death, gave a yet deeper colour of carnation to her complexion, and a yet more brilliant fire to her eye. Bois-Guilbert, proud himself and high-spirited, thought he had never beheld beauty so animated and so commanding.

"Let there be peace between us, Rebecca," he said.

"Peace, if thou wilt," answered Rebecca—"Peace—but with this space between."

"Thou needest no longer fear me," said Bois-Guilbert.

"I fear thee not," replied she; "thanks to him that reared this dizzy tower so high, that nought could fall from it and live—thanks to him, and to the God of Israel!—I fear thee not."

"Thou dost me injustice," said the Templar; "by earth, sea, and sky, thou dost me injustice! I am not

naturally that which you have seen me, hard, selfish, and relentless. It was woman that taught me cruelty, and on woman therefore I have exercised it; but not upon such as thou. Hear me, Rebecca.—Never did knight take lance in his hand with a heart more devoted to the lady of his love than Brian de Bois-Guilbert. She, the daughter of a petty baron, who boasted for all his domains but a ruinous tower, and an unproductive vineyard, and some few leagues of the barren Landes of Bourdeaux, her name was known wherever deeds of arms were done, known wider than that of many a lady's that had a county for a dowry.—Yes," he continued, pacing up and down the little platform, with an animation in which he seemed to lose all consciousness of Rebecca's presence—" Yes, my deeds, my danger, my blood, made the name of Adelaide de Montemare known from the court of Castile to that of Byzantium. And how was I requited?—When I returned with my dear-bought honours, purchased by toil and blood, I found her wedded to a Gascon squire, whose name was never heard beyond the limits of his own paltry domain! Truly did I love her, and bitterly did I revenge me of her broken faith! But my vengeance has recoiled on myself. Since that day I have separated myself from life and its ties.—My manhood must know no domestic home—must be soothed by no affectionate wife.—My age must know no kindly hearth.—My grave must be solitary, and no offspring must outlive me, to bear the ancient name of Bois-Guilbert. At the feet of my Superior I have laid down the right of self-action—the privilege of independence. The Templar, a serf in all but the name, can possess neither lands nor goods, and lives, moves, and breathes, but at the will and pleasure of another."

" Alas!" said Rebecca, " what advantages could compensate for such an absolute sacrifice?"

" The power of vengeance, Rebecca," replied the Templar, " and the prospects of ambition."

" An evil recompense," said Rebecca, " for the surrender of the rights which are dearest to humanity."

" Say not so, maiden," answered the Templar; " re-

venge is a feast for the gods ! And if they have reserved it, as priests tell us, to themselves, it is because they hold it an enjoyment too precious for the possession of mere mortals.—And ambition ? it is a temptation which could disturb even the bliss of heaven itself."—He paused a moment, and then added, " Rebecca ! she who could prefer death to dishonour, must have a proud and a powerful soul. Mine thou must be !—Nay, start not," he added, " it must be with thine own consent, and on thine own terms. Thou must consent to share with me hopes more extended than can be viewed from the throne of a monarch !—Hear me ere you answer, and judge ere you refuse.—The Templar loses, as thou hast said, his social rights, his power of free agency, but he becomes a member and a limb of a mighty body, before which thrones already tremble,—even as the single drop of rain which mixes with the sea becomes an individual part of that resistless ocean, which undermines rocks and ingulfs royal armadas. Such a swelling flood is that powerful league. Of this mighty Order I am no mean member, but already one of the Chief Commanders, and may well aspire one day to hold the batoon of Grand Master. The poor soldiers of the Temple will not alone place their foot upon the necks of kings—a hemp-sandall'd monk can do that. Our mailed step shall ascend their throne—our gauntlet shall wrench the sceptre from their gripe. Not the rein of your vainly-expected Messiah offers such power to your dispersed tribes as my ambition may aim at. I have sought but a kindred spirit to share it, and I have found such in thee."

" Sayest thou this to one of my people ? " answered Rebecca. " Bethink thee——"

" Answer me not," said the Templar, " by urging the difference of our creeds ; within our secret conclaves we hold these nursery tales in derision. Think not we long remain blind to the idiotical folly of our founders, who forswore every delight of life for the pleasure of dying martyrs by hunger, by thirst, and by pestilence, and by the swords of savages, while they vainly strove to defend a barren desert,

valuable only in the eyes of superstition. Our Order soon adopted bolder and wider views, and found out a better indemnification for our sacrifices. Our immense possessions in every kingdom of Europe, our high military fame, which brings within our circle the flower of chivalry from every Christian clime—these are dedicated to ends of which our pious founders little dreamed, and which are equally concealed from such weak spirits as embrace our Order on the ancient principles, and whose superstition makes them our passive tools. But I will not further withdraw the veil of our mysteries. That bugle-sound announces something which may require my presence. Think on what I have said.—Farewell !—I do not say forgive me the violence I have threatened, for it was necessary to the display of thy character. Gold can be only known by the application of the touchstone. I will soon return, and hold further conference with thee."

He re-entered the turret chamber, and descended the stair, leaving Rebecca scarcely more terrified at the prospect of the death to which she had been so lately exposed, than at the furious ambition of the bold bad man in whose power she found herself so unhappily placed.

Ivanhoe.

JANE AUSTEN

1775–1817

13...ELIZABETH BENNET AND DARCY

[Elizabeth Bennet has become strongly prejudiced against Mr. Darcy, a proud and arrogant young man of independent means, because she is convinced that he has maliciously contrived to separate his friend Mr. Bingley from her sister Jane, when the two were obviously very much in love with each other. This feeling, moreover, has not been lessened by what she imagines to be his undisguised contempt for herself, and his willingness to humiliate her on every possible occasion.]

WHEN they were gone, Elizabeth, as if intending to exasperate herself as much as possible against Mr. Darcy, chose for her employment the examination of all the letters which Jane had written to her since her being in Kent. They contained no actual complaint, nor was there any revival of past occurrences, or any communication of present suffering. But in all, and in almost every line of each, there was a want of that cheerfulness which had been used to characterise her style, and which, proceeding from the serenity of a mind at ease with itself, and kindly disposed towards every one, had been scarcely ever clouded. Elizabeth noticed every sentence conveying the idea of uneasiness, with an attention which it had hardly received on the first perusal. Mr. Darcy's shameful boast of what misery he had been able to inflict gave her a keener sense of her sister's sufferings. It was some consolation to think that his visit to Rosings was to end on the day after the next, and a still greater that in less than a fortnight she should herself be with Jane again, and enabled to contribute to the recovery of her spirits, by all that affection could do.

She could not think of Darcy's leaving Kent without remembering that his cousin was to go with him; but

Colonel Fitzwilliam had made it clear that he had no intentions at all, and, agreeable as he was, she did not mean to be unhappy about him.

While settling this point, she was suddenly roused by the sound of the door bell; and her spirits were a little fluttered by the idea of its being Colonel Fitzwilliam himself, who had once before called late in the evening, and might now come to inquire particularly after her. But this idea was soon banished, and her spirits were very differently affected, when, to her utter amazement, she saw Mr. Darcy walk into the room. In a hurried manner he immediately began an inquiry after her health, imputing his visit to a wish of hearing that she were better. She answered him with cold civility. He sat down for a few moments, and then getting up, walked about the room. Elizabeth was surprised, but said not a word. After a silence of several minutes, he came towards her in an agitated manner, and thus began,—

"In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you."

Elizabeth's astonishment was beyond expression. She stared, coloured, doubted, and was silent. This he considered sufficient encouragement, and the avowal of all that he felt for her immediately followed. He spoke well, but there were feelings besides those of the heart to be detailed, and he was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride. His sense of her inferiority, of its being a degradation, of the family obstacles which judgment had always opposed to inclination, were dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequence he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit.

In spite of her deeply-rooted dislike, she could not be insensible to the compliment of such a man's affection, and though her intentions did not vary for an instant, she was at first sorry for the pain he was to receive; till, roused to resentment by his subsequent language, she lost all compassion in anger. She tried, however, to compose herself to answer him with patience, when he should have done.

He concluded with representing to her the strength of that attachment which, in spite of all his endeavours, he had found impossible to conquer; and with expressing his hope that it would now be rewarded by her acceptance of his hand. As he said this she could easily see that he had no doubt of a favourable answer. He *spoke* of apprehension and anxiety, but his countenance expressed real security. Such a circumstance could only exasperate farther; and when he ceased the colour rose into her cheeks and she said,—

"In such cases as this, it is, I believe, the established mode to express a sense of obligation for the sentiments avowed, however unequally they may be returned. It is natural that obligation should be felt, and if I could *feel* gratitude, I would now thank you. But I cannot—I have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it most unwillingly. I am sorry to have occasioned pain to any one. It has been most unconsciously done, however, and I hope will be of short duration. The feelings which you tell me have long prevented the acknowledgment of your regard can have little difficulty in overcoming it after this explanation."

Mr. Darcy, who was leaning against the mantelpiece with his eyes fixed on her face, seemed to catch her words with no less resentment than surprise. His complexion became pale with anger, and the disturbance of his mind was visible in every feature. He was struggling for the appearance of composure, and would not open his lips till he believed himself to have attained it. This pause was to Elizabeth's feelings dreadful. At length, in a voice of forced calmness, he said,—

"And this is all the reply which I am to have the honour of expecting! I might, perhaps, wish to be informed why, with so little *endeavour* at civility, I am thus rejected. But it is of small importance."

"I might as well inquire," replied she, "why, with so evident a design of offending and insulting me, you chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your

reason, and even against your character? Was not this some excuse for incivility, if I *was* uncivil? But I have other provocations. You know I have. Had not my own feelings decided against you, had they been indifferent, or had they even been favourable, do you think that any consideration would tempt me to accept the man who has been the means of ruining, perhaps for ever, the happiness of a most beloved sister?"

As she pronounced these words, Mr. Darcy changed colour; but the emotion was short, and he listened without attempting to interrupt her while she continued,—

"I have every reason in the world to think ill of you. No motive can excuse the unjust and ungenerous part you acted *there*. You dare not, you cannot, deny that you have been the principal, if not the only means of dividing them from each other, of exposing one to the censure of the world for caprice and instability, the other to its derision for disappointed hopes, and involving them both in misery of the acutest kind."

She paused, and saw with no slight indignation that he was listening with an air which proved him wholly unmoved by any feeling of remorse. He even looked at her with a smile of affected incredulity.

"Can you deny that you have done it?" she repeated.

With assumed tranquillity he then replied, "I have no wish of denying that I did everything in my power to separate my friend from your sister, or that I rejoice in my success. Towards *him* I have been kinder than towards myself."

Elizabeth disdained the appearance of noticing this civil reflection, but its meaning did not escape, nor was it likely to conciliate her.

"But it is not merely this affair," she continued, "on which my dislike is founded. Long before it had taken place, my opinion of you was decided. Your character was unfolded in the recital which I received many months ago from Mr. Wickham. On this subject, what can you have to say? In what imaginary act of friendship can you

here defend yourself? or under what misrepresentation can you here impose upon others?"

"You take an eager interest in that gentleman's concerns," said Darcy, in a less tranquil tone, and with a heightened colour.

"Who that knows what his misfortunes have been can help feeling an interest in him?"

"His misfortunes!" repeated Darcy, contemptuously,—"yes, his misfortunes have been great indeed."

"And of your infliction," cried Elizabeth, with energy. "You have reduced him to his present state of poverty—comparative poverty. You have withheld the advantages which you must know to have been designed for him. You have deprived the best years of his life of that independence which was no less his due than his desert. You have done all this! and yet you can treat the mention of his misfortunes with contempt and ridicule."

"And this," cried Darcy, as he walked with quick steps across the room, "is your opinion of me! This is the estimation in which you hold me! I thank you for explaining it so fully. My faults, according to this calculation, are heavy indeed! But, perhaps," added he, stopping in his walk, and turning towards her, "these offences might have been overlooked, had not your pride been hurt by my honest confession of the scruples that had long prevented my forming any serious design. These bitter accusations might have been suppressed, had I, with greater policy, concealed my struggles, and flattered you into the belief of my being impelled by unqualified, unalloyed inclination; by reason, by reflection, by everything. But disguise of every sort is my abhorrence. Nor am I ashamed of the feelings I related. They were natural and just. Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections? To congratulate myself on the hope of relations whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?"

Elizabeth felt herself growing more angry every moment; yet she tried to the utmost to speak with composure when she said,—

"You are mistaken, Mr. Darcy, if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected me in any other way than as it spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner."

She saw him start at this; but he said nothing, and she continued,—

"You could not have made me the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it."

Again his astonishment was obvious; and he looked at her with an expression of mingled incredulity and mortification. She went on,—

"From the very beginning, from the first moment, I may almost say, of my acquaintance with you, your manners, impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form that groundwork of disapprobation on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry."

"You have said quite enough, madam. I perfectly comprehend your feelings, and have now only to be ashamed of what my own have been. Forgive me for having taken up so much of your time, and accept my best wishes for your health and happiness."

And with these words he hastily left the room, and Elizabeth heard him the next moment open the front door and quit the house. The tumult of her mind was now painfully great. She knew not how to support herself, and, from actual weakness, sat down and cried for half an hour. Her astonishment, as she reflected on what had passed, was increased by every review of it. That she should receive an offer of marriage from Mr. Darcy! that he should have been in love with her for so many months! so much in love as to wish to marry her in spite of all the objections which had made him prevent his friend's marry-

ing her sister, and which must appear at least with equal force in his own case, was almost incredible ! it was gratifying to have inspired unconsciously so strong an affection. But his pride, his abominable pride, his shameless avowal of what he had done with respect to Jane, his unpardonable assurance in acknowledging, though he could not justify it, and the unfeeling manner in which he had mentioned Mr. Wickham, his cruelty towards whom he had not attempted to deny, soon overcame the pity which the consideration of his attachment had for a moment excited.

She continued in very agitating reflections till the sound of Lady Catherine's carriage made her feel how unequal she was to encounter Charlotte's observation, and hurried her away to her room.

Pride and Prejudice.

LORD BYRON

1788–1824

14...JUAN AND HAIDÉE

It was the cooling hour, just when the rounded
  Red sun sinks down behind the azure hill,
Which then seems as if the whole earth it bounded,
  Circling all nature, hush'd, and dim, and still,
With the far mountain-crescent half surrounded
  On one side, and the deep sea calm and chill,
Upon the other, and the rosy sky,
With one star sparkling through it like an eye.

And thus they wandered forth, and hand in hand,
  Over the shining pebbles and the shells,
Glided along the smooth and harden'd sand,
  And in the worn and wild receptacles
Work'd by the storms, yet work'd as it were
      plann'd,
  In hollow halls, with sparry roofs and cells,
They turn'd to rest; and, each clasp'd by an arm,
Yielded to the deep twilight's purple charm.

They look'd up to the sky, whose floating glow
  Spread like a rosy ocean, vast and bright;
They gazed upon the glittering sea below,
  Whence the broad moon rose circling into sight;
They heard the waves splash, and the wind so low,
  And saw each other's dark eyes darting light
Into each other—and, beholding this,
Their lips drew near, and clung into a kiss;

A long, long kiss, a kiss of youth, and love,
And beauty, all concentrating like rays
Into one focus, kindled from above;
Such kisses as belong to early days,
Where heart, and soul, and sense, in concert move,
And the blood's lava, and the pulse a blaze,
Each kiss a heart-quake,—for a kiss's strength,
I think it must be reckon'd by its length.

By length I mean duration: theirs endured
Heaven knows how long—no doubt they never reckon'd;
And if they had, they could not have secured
The sum of their sensations to a second:
They had not spoken; but they felt allured,
As if their souls and lips each other beckon'd,
Which, being join'd, like swarming bees they clung—
Their hearts the flowers from whence the honey sprung.

They were alone, but not alone as they
Who shut in chambers think it loneliness;
The silent ocean, and the starlight bay,
The twilight glow, which momently grew less,
The voiceless sands, and dropping caves, that lay
Around them, made them to each other press,
As if there were no life beneath the sky
Save theirs, and that their life could never die.

They fear'd no eyes nor ears on that lone beach,
They felt no terrors from the night; they were
All in all to each other; though their speech
Was broken words, they *thought* a language there,—
And all the burning tongues the passions teach
Found in one sigh the best interpreter
Of nature's oracle—first love,—that all
Which Eve has left her daughters since her fall.

Haidée spoke not of scruples, ask'd no vows,
  Nor offer'd any; she had never heard
Of plight and promises to be a spouse,
  Or perils by a loving maid incurr'd;
She was all which pure ignorance allows,
  And flew to her young mate like a young bird,
And, never having dreamt of falsehood, she
Had not one word to say of constancy.

She loved, and was beloved—she adored,
  And she was worshipp'd; after nature's fashion,
Their intense souls, into each other pour'd,
  If souls could die, had perish'd in that passion,—
But by degrees their senses were restored,
  Again to be o'ercome, again to dash on;
And, beating 'gainst *his* bosom, Haidée's heart
Felt as if never more to beat apart.

Alas! they were so young, so beautiful,
  So lonely, loving, helpless, and the hour
Was that in which the heart is always full,
  And, having o'er itself no further power,
Prompts deeds eternity cannot annul,
  But pays off moments in an endless shower
Of hell-fire—all prepared for people giving
Pleasure or pain to one another living.

Alas! for Juan and Haidée: they were
  So loving and so lovely—till then never,
Excepting our first parents, such a pair
  Had run the risk of being damn'd for ever;
And Haidée, being devout as well as fair,
  Had, doubtless, heard about the Stygian river,
And hell and purgatory—but forgot
Just in the very crisis she should not.

They look upon each other, and their eyes
  Gleam in the moonlight; and her white arm clasps
Round Juan's head, and his around her lies
  Half buried in the tresses which it grasps;
She sits upon his knee, and drinks his sighs,
  He hers, until they end in broken gasps;
And thus they form a group that's quite antique,
Half naked, loving, natural, and Greek.

And when those deep and burning moments pass'd,
  And Juan sunk to sleep within her arms,
She slept not, but all tenderly, though fast,
  Sustain'd his head upon her bosom's charms;
And now and then her eye to heaven is cast,
  And then on the pale cheek her breast now warms,
Pillow'd on her o'erflowing heart, which pants
With all it granted, and with all it grants.

An infant when it gazes on a light,
  A child the moment when it drains the breast,
A devotee when soars the Host in sight,
  An Arab with a stranger for a guest,
A sailor when the prize has struck in fight,
  A miser filling his most hoarded chest,
Feel rapture; but not such true joy are reaping
As they who watch o'er what they love while sleeping.

For there it lies so tranquil, so beloved,
  All that it hath of life with us is living;
So gentle, stirless, helpless, and unmoved,
  And all unconscious of the joy 'tis giving;
All it hath felt, inflicted, pass'd, and proved,
  Hush'd into depths beyond the watcher's diving;
There lies the thing we love with all its errors,
And all its charms, like death without its terrors.

The lady watch'd her lover—and that hour
  Of Love's, and Night's, and Ocean's solitude,
O'erflow'd her soul with their united power;
  Amidst the barren sand and rocks so rude
She and her wave-worn love had made their bower,
  Where nought upon their passion could intrude,
And all the stars that crowded the blue space
Saw nothing happier than her glowing face. . . .

And now 'twas done—on the lone shore were plighted
  Their hearts; the stars, their nuptial torches, shed
Beauty upon the beautiful they lighted:
  Ocean their witness, and the cave their bed,
By their own feelings hallow'd and united,
  Their priest was Solitude, and they were wed:
And they were happy, for to their young eyes
Each was an angel, and earth paradise.

Don Juan.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

1809–1892

15...ARTHUR AND GUINEVERE

[Queen Guinevere, who has sinned with Lancelot and fled the court, finds an asylum in a " holy house at Almesbury." There she is sought out by the King, who takes leave of her for ever.]

AND ev'n in saying this,
Her memory from old habit of the mind
Went slipping back upon the golden days
In which she saw him first, when Lancelot came,
Reputed the best knight and goodliest man,
Ambassador, to lead her to his lord
Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead
Of his and her retinue moving, they,
Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love
And sport and tilts and pleasure (for the time
Was maytime, and as yet no sin was dream'd),
Rode under groves that look'd a paradise
Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth
That seem'd the heavens upbreaking thro' the earth,
And on from hill to hill, and every day
Beheld at noon in some delicious dale
The silk pavilions of King Arthur raised
For brief repast or afternoon repose
By couriers gone before ; and on again,
Till yet once more ere set of sun they saw
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,
That crown'd the state pavilion of the King,
Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

But when the Queen immersed in such a trance,
And moving thro' the past unconsciously,

Came to that point where first she saw the King
Ride toward her from the city, sigh'd to find
Her journey done, glanced at him, thought him cold,
High, self-contain'd, and passionless, not like him,
" Not like my Lancelot "—while she brooded thus
And grew half-guilty in her thoughts again,
There rode an armed warrior to the doors.
A murmuring whisper thro' the nunnery ran,
Then on a sudden a cry, " the King." She sat
Stiff-stricken, listening ; but when armed feet
Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors
Rang coming, prone from off her seat she fell,
And grovell'd with her face against the floor :
There with her milkwhite arms and shadowy hair
She made her face a darkness from the King :
And in the darkness heard his armed feet
Pause by her ; then came silence, then a voice,
Monotonous and hollow like a Ghost's
Denouncing judgment, but tho' changed, the King's :

" Liest thou here so low, the child of one
I honour'd, happy, dead before thy shame ?
Well is it that no child is born of thee.
The children born of thee are sword and fire,
Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,
The craft of kindred and the Godless hosts
Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern Sea.
Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right arm,
The mightiest of my knights, abode with me,
Have everywhere about this land of Christ
In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.
And knowest thou now from whence I come—from
him,
From waging bitter war with him : and he,
That did not shun to smite me in worse way,
Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,
He spared to lift his hand against the King
Who made him knight : but many a knight was slain ;

And many more, and all his kith and kin
Clave to him, and abode in his own land.
And many more when Modred raised revolt,
Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.
And of this remnant will I leave a part,
True men who love me still, for whom I live,
To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
Lest but a hair of this low head be harm'd.
Fear not: thou shalt be guarded till my death.
Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies
Have err'd not, that I march to meet my doom.
Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,
That I the King should greatly care to live;
For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.
Bear with me for the last time while I show,
Ev'n for thy sake, the sin which thou hast sinn'd.
For when the Roman left us, and their law
Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways
Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a deed
Of prowess done redress'd a random wrong.
But I was first of all the kings who drew
The knighthood-errant of this realm and all
The realms together under me, their Head,
In that fair order of my Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time.
I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the King, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her; for indeed I knew

Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.
And all this throve before I wedded thee,
Believing, " lo mine helpmate, one to feel
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy."
Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;
Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;
Then others, following these my mightiest knights,
And drawing foul ensample from fair names,
Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite
Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
And all thro' thee! so that this life of mine
I guard as God's high gift from scathe and wrong,
Not greatly care to lose; but rather think
How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,
To sit once more within his lonely hall,
And miss the wonted number of my knights,
And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds
As in the golden days before thy sin.
For which of us, who might be left, could speak
Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at thee?
And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk
Thy shadow still would glide from room to room,
And I should evermore be vext with thee
In hanging robe or vacant ornament,
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.
For think not, tho' thou wouldst not love thy lord,
Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.
I am not made of so slight elements.
Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.
I hold that man the worst of public foes
Who either for his own or children's sake,
To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife
Whom he knows false, abide and rule the house:

For being thro' his cowardice allow'd
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
She like a new disease, unknown to men,
Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,
Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and saps
The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse
With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.
Worst of the worst were that man he that reigns!
Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart
Than thou reseated in thy place of light,
The mockery of my people, and their bane."

He paused, and in the pause she crept an inch
Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.
Far off a solitary trumpet blew,
Then waiting by the doors the warhorse neigh'd
As at a friend's voice, and he spake again:

"Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
The wrath which forced my thoughts on that fierce law,
The doom of treason and the flaming death,
(When first I learnt thee hidden here) is past.
The pang—which while I weigh'd thy heart with one
Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
Made my tears burn—is also past—in part.
And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives: do thou for thine own soul the rest.
But how to take last leave of all I loved?
O golden hair, with which I used to play,
Not knowing! O imperial-moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee—
I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,

But Lancelot's: nay, they never were the King's.
I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh.
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd; and mine own flesh,
Here looking down on thine polluted, cries
'I loathe thee:' yet not less, O Guinevere,
For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life
So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.
Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet blow:
They summon me their King to lead mine hosts
Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against my sister's son,
Leagued with the lords of the White Horse and knights
Once mine, and strike him dead, and meet myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.
And thou remaining here wilt learn the event;
But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side; see thee no more—
Farewell!"

And while she grovell'd at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
And in the darkness o'er her fallen head,
Perceived the waving of his hands that blest.

Then, listening till those armed steps were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish found
The casement: "Peradventure," so she thought,
"If I might see his face, and not be seen."

And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!
And near him the sad nuns with each a light
Stood, and he gave them charge about the Queen,
To guard and foster her for evermore.
And while he spake to these his helm was lower'd,
To which for crest the golden dragon clung
Of Britain; so she did not see the face,
Which then was as an angel's, but she saw,
Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.
And even then he turn'd; and more and more
The moony vapour rolling round the King,
Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray
And grayer, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Then she stretch'd out her arms and cried aloud,
"Oh Arthur!" there her voice brake suddenly,
Then—as a stream that spouting from a cliff
Fails in mid air, but gathering at the base
Re-makes itself, and flashes down the vale—
Went on in passionate utterance:
"Gone—my lord!
Gone thro' my sin to slay and to be slain!
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.
Farewell? I should have answer'd his farewell.
His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord the King,
My own true lord! how dare I call him mine?
The shadow of another cleaves to me,
And makes me one pollution: he, the King,
Call'd me polluted: shall I kill myself?
What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,
If soul be soul; nor can I kill my shame;
No, nor by living can I live it down.
The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months,
The months will add themselves and make the years,

The years will roll into the centuries,
And mine will ever be a name of scorn.
I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.
Let the world be; that is but of the world.
What else? what hope? I think there was a hope,
Except he mock'd me when he spake of hope;
His hope he call'd it; but he never mocks,
For mockery is the fume of little hearts.
And blessed be the King, who hath forgiven
My wickedness to him, and left me hope
That in mine own heart I can live down sin
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
Before high God. Ah, great and gentle lord,
Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint
Among his warring senses, to thy knights—
To whom my false voluptuous pride, that took
Full easily all impressions from below,
Would not look up, or half-despised the height
To which I would not or I could not climb—
I thought I could not breathe in that fine air
That pure severity of perfect light—
I wanted warmth and colour which I found
In Lancelot—now I see thee what thou art,
Thou art the highest and most human too,
Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none
Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?
Now—ere he goes to the great Battle? none:
Myself must tell him in that purer life,
But now it were too daring. Ah, my God,
What might I not have made of thy fair world,
Had I but loved thy highest creature here?
It was my duty to have loved the highest:
It surely was my profit had I known:
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
We needs must love the highest when we see it,
Not Lancelot, nor another."

The Idylls of the King.

MRS. GASKELL

1810–1865

16...A LOVE AFFAIR OF LONG AGO

AND *now* I come to the love affair.

It seems that Miss Pole had a cousin, once or twice removed, who had offered to Miss Matty long ago. Now this cousin lived four or five miles from Cranford on his own estate; but his property was not large enough to entitle him to rank higher than a yeoman; or rather, with something of the "pride which apes humility," he had refused to push himself on, as so many of his class had done, into the ranks of the squires. He would not allow himself to be called Thomas Holbrook, *Esq.*; he even sent back letters with this address, telling the postmistress at Cranford that his name was *Mr.* Thomas Holbrook, yeoman. He rejected all domestic innovations; he would have the house-door stand open in summer and shut in winter, without knocker or bell to summon a servant. The closed fist or the knob of the stick did this office for him if he found the door locked. He despised every refinement which had not its root deep down in humanity. If people were not ill, he saw no necessity for moderating his voice. He spoke the dialect of the country in perfection, and constantly used it in conversation; although Miss Pole (who gave me these particulars) added, that he read aloud more beautifully and with more feeling than any one she had ever heard, except the late rector.

"And how came Miss Matilda not to marry him?" asked I.

"Oh, I don't know. She was willing enough, I think; but you know cousin Thomas would not have been enough of a gentleman for the rector and Miss Jenkyns."

"Well! but they were not to marry him," said I impatiently.

"No; but they did not like Miss Matty to marry below her rank. You know she was the rector's daughter, and somehow they are related to Sir Peter Arley: Miss Jenkyns thought a deal of that."

"Poor Miss Matty!" said I.

"Nay, now, I don't know anything more than that he offered and was refused. Miss Matty might not like him—and Miss Jenkyns might never have said a word—it is only a guess of mine."

"Has she never seen him since?" I inquired.

"No, I think not. You see Woodley, cousin Thomas's house, lies half-way between Cranford and Misselton; and I know he made Misselton his market-town very soon after he had offered to Miss Matty; and I don't think he has been into Cranford above once or twice since—once, when I was walking with Miss Matty, in High Street, and suddenly she darted from me, and went up Shire Lane. A few minutes after I was startled by meeting cousin Thomas."

"How old is he?" I asked, after a pause of castle-building.

"He must be about seventy, I think, my dear," said Miss Pole, blowing up my castle, as if by gunpowder, into small fragments.

Very soon after—at least during my long visit to Miss Matilda—I had the opportunity of seeing Mr. Holbrook; seeing, too, his first encounter with his former love, after thirty or forty years' separation. I was helping to decide whether any of the new assortment of coloured silks which they had just received at the shop would do to match a grey and black mousseline-de-laine that wanted a new breadth, when a tall, thin, Don Quixote-looking old man came into the shop for some woollen gloves. I had never seen the person (who was rather striking) before, and I watched him rather attentively while Miss Matty listened to the shopman. The stranger wore a blue coat with brass buttons, drab breeches, and gaiters, and drummed with his fingers

on the counter until he was attended to. When he answered the shop-boy's question, "What can I have the pleasure of showing you to-day, sir?" I saw Miss Matilda start, and then suddenly sit down; and instantly I guessed who it was. She had made some inquiry which had to be carried round to the other shopman.

"Miss Jenkyns wants the black sarsenet two-and-twopence the yard"; and Mr. Holbrook had caught the name, and was across the shop in two strides.

"Matty—Miss Matilda—Miss Jenkyns! God bless my soul! I should not have known you. How are you? how are you?" He kept shaking her hand in a way which proved the warmth of his friendship; but he repeated so often, as if to himself, "I should not have known you!" that any sentimental romance which I might be inclined to build was quite done away with by his manner.

However, he kept talking to us all the time we were in the shop; and then waving the shopman with the unpurchased gloves on one side, with "Another time, sir! another time!" he walked home with us. I am happy to say my client, Miss Matilda, also left the shop in an equally bewildered state, not having purchased either green or red silk. Mr. Holbrook was evidently full with honest loud-spoken joy at meeting his old love again; he touched on the changes that had taken place; he even spoke of Miss Jenkyns as "Your poor sister! Well, well! we have all our faults"; and bade us good-bye with many a hope that he should soon see Miss Matty again. She went straight to her room, and never came back till our early tea-time, when I thought she looked as if she had been crying.

A few days after, a note came from Mr. Holbrook, asking us—impartially asking both of us—in a formal, old-fashioned style, to spend a day at his house—a long June day—for it was June now. He named that he had also invited his cousin, Miss Pole; so that we might join in a fly, which could be put up at his house.

I expected Miss Matty to jump at this invitation; but no! Miss Pole and I had the greatest difficulty in persuading her to go. She thought it was improper; and was even half-annoyed when we utterly ignored the idea of any impropriety in her going with two other ladies to see her old lover. Then came a more serious difficulty. She did not think Deborah would have liked her to go. This took us half a day's good hard talking to get over; but, at the first sentence of relenting, I seized the opportunity, and wrote and dispatched an acceptance in her name—fixing day and hour, that all might be decided and done with.

The next morning she asked me if I would go down to the shop with her; and there, after much hesitation, we chose out three caps to be sent home and tried on, that the most becoming might be selected to take with us on Thursday.

She was in a state of silent agitation all the way to Woodley. She had evidently never been there before; and, although she little dreamt that I knew anything of her early story, I could perceive she was in a tremor at the thought of seeing the place which might have been her home, and round which it is probable that many of her innocent girlish imaginations had clustered. It was a long drive there, through paved jolting lanes. Miss Matilda sat bolt upright, and looked wistfully out of the windows as we drew near the end of our journey. The aspect of the country was quiet and pastoral. Woodley stood among fields; and there was an old-fashioned garden where roses and currant-bushes touched each other, and where the feathery asparagus formed a pretty background to the pinks and gilly-flowers; there was no drive up to the door. We got out at a little gate, and walked up a straight box-edged path.

"My cousin might make a drive, I think," said Miss Pole, who was afraid of ear-ache, and had only her cap on.

"I think it is very pretty," said Miss Matty, with a soft plaintiveness in her voice, and almost in a whisper, for just then Mr. Holbrook appeared at the door, rubbing his hands in the very effervescence of hospitality. He looked more like my idea of Don Quixote than ever, and yet the

likeness was only external. His respectable housekeeper stood modestly at the door to bid us welcome; and, while she led the elder ladies upstairs to a bedroom, I begged to look about the garden. My request evidently pleased the old gentleman, who took me all round the place, and showed me his six-and-twenty cows, named after the different letters of the alphabet. As we went along, he surprised me occasionally by repeating apt and beautiful quotations from the poets, ranging easily from Shakespeare and George Herbert to those of our own day. He did this as naturally as if he were thinking aloud, and their true and beautiful words were the best expression he could find for what he was thinking or feeling. To be sure he called Byron, " my Lord Byrron," and pronounced the name of Goethe strictly in accordance with the English sound of the letters—"As Goethe says, ' Ye ever-verdant palaces,' " etc. Altogether, I never met with a man, before or since, who had spent so long a life in a secluded and not impressive country, with ever-increasing delight in the daily and yearly change of season and beauty.

When he and I went in, we found that dinner was nearly ready in the kitchen—for so I suppose the room ought to be called, as there were oak dressers and cupboards all round, all over by the side of the fireplace, and only a small Turkey carpet in the middle of the flag-floor. The room might have been easily made into a handsome dark oak dining-parlour by removing the oven and a few other appurtenances of a kitchen, which were evidently never used, the real cooking-place being at some distance. The room in which we were expected to sit was a stiffly-furnished, ugly apartment; but that in which we did sit was what Mr. Holbrook called the counting-house, when he paid his labourers their weekly wages at a great desk near the door. The rest of the pretty sitting-room—looking into the orchard, and all covered over with dancing tree-shadows—was filled with books. They lay on the ground, they covered the walls, they strewed the table. He was evidently half-ashamed and half-proud of his extravagance in this

respect. They were of all kinds—poetry and wild weird tales prevailing. He evidently chose his books in accordance with his own tastes, not because such and such were classical or established favourites.

" Ah ! " he said, " we farmers ought not to have much time for reading ; yet somehow one can't help it."

" What a pretty room ! " said Miss Matty, *sotto voce.*

" What a pleasant place ! " said I aloud, almost simultaneously.

" Nay ! if you like it," replied he ; " but can you sit on these great black-leather three-cornered chairs ? I like it better than the best parlour ; but I thought ladies would take that for the smarter place."

It was the smarter place, but, like most smart things, not at all pretty, or pleasant, or home-like ; so, while we were at dinner, the servant-girl dusted and scrubbed the counting-house chairs, and we sat there all the rest of the day.

We had pudding before meat ; and I thought Mr. Holbrook was going to make some apology for his old-fashioned ways, for he began—

" I don't know whether you like new-fangled ways."

" Oh, not at all ! " said Miss Matty.

" No more do I," said he. " My housekeeper *will* have these in her new fashion ; or else I tell her that, when I was a young man, we used to keep strictly to my father's rule, " No broth, no ball ; no ball, no beef ; " and always began dinner with broth. Then we had suet puddings, boiled in the broth with the beef ; and then the meat itself. If we did not sup our broth, we had no ball, which we liked a deal better ; and the beef came last of all, and only those had it who had done justice to the broth and the ball. Now folks begin with sweet things, and turn their dinners topsy-turvy."

When the ducks and green peas came, we looked at each other in dismay ; we had only two-pronged black-handled forks. It is true the steel was as bright as silver ; but what were we to do ? Miss Matty picked up her peas, one by one, on the point of the prongs, much as Aminé ate her

grains of rice after her previous feast with the Ghoul. Miss Pole sighed over her delicate young peas as she left them on one side of her plate untasted, for they *would* drop between the prongs. I looked at my host: the peas were going wholesale into his capacious mouth, shovelled up by his large round-ended knife. I saw, I imitated, I survived! My friends, in spite of my precedent, could not muster up courage enough to do an ungenteel thing; and, if Mr. Holbrook had not been so heartily hungry, he would probably have seen that the good peas went away almost untouched.

After dinner a clay pipe was brought in, and a spittoon; and, asking us to retire to another room, where he would soon join us, if we disliked tobacco-smoke, he presented his pipe to Miss Matty, and requested her to fill the bowl. This was a compliment to a lady in his youth; but it was rather inappropriate to propose it as an honour to Miss Matty, who had been trained by her sister to hold smoking of every kind in utter abhorrence. But if it was a shock to her refinement, it was also a gratification to her feelings to be thus selected; so she daintily stuffed the strong tobacco into the pipe, and then we withdrew.

"It is very pleasant dining with a bachelor," said Miss Matty softly, as we settled ourselves in the counting-house. "I only hope it is not improper; so many pleasant things are!"

"What a number of books he has!" said Miss Pole, looking round the room. "And how dusty they are!"

"I think it must be like one of the great Dr. Johnson's rooms," said Miss Matty. "What a superior man your cousin must be!"

"Yes!" said Miss Pole, "he's a great reader; but I am afraid he has got into very uncouth habits with living alone."

"Oh! uncouth is too hard a word. I should call him eccentric; very clever people always are!" replied Miss Matty.

When Mr. Holbrook returned, he proposed a walk in the fields; but the two elder ladies were afraid of damp and

dirt, and had only very unbecoming calashes to put on over their caps; so they declined, and I was again his companion in a turn which he said he was obliged to take to see after his men. He strode along, either wholly forgetting my existence, or soothed into silence by his pipe—and yet it was not silence exactly. He walked before me, with a stooping gait, his hands clasped behind him; and, as some tree or cloud, or glimpse of distant upland pastures, struck him, he quoted poetry to himself, saying it out loud in a grand sonorous voice, with just the emphasis that true feeling and appreciation give. We came upon an old cedar-tree, which stood at one end of the house:

"'The cedar spreads his dark-green layers of shade.'

"Capital term—'layers!' Wonderful man!" I did not know whether he was speaking to me or not; but I put in an assenting "wonderful," although I knew nothing about it, just because I was tired of being forgotten, and of being consequently silent.

He turned sharp round. "Ay! you may say 'wonderful.' Why, when I saw the review of his poems in *Blackwood*, I set off within an hour, and walked seven miles to Misselton (for the horses were not in the way) and ordered them. Now, what colour are ash-buds in March?"

Is the man going mad? thought I. He is very like Don Quixote.

"What colour are they, I say?" repeated he vehemently.

"I am sure I don't know, sir," said I, with the meekness of ignorance.

"I knew you didn't. No more did I—an old fool that I am!—till this young man comes and tells me. Black as ash-buds in March. And I've lived all my life in the country; more shame for me not to know. Black: they are jet-black, madam." And he went off again, swinging along to the music of some rhyme he had got hold of.

When we came back, nothing would serve him but he must read us the poems he had been speaking of; and Miss Pole encouraged him in his proposal, I thought, because

she wished me to hear his beautiful reading, of which she had boasted; but she afterwards said it was because she had got to a difficult part of her crochet, and wanted to count her stitches without having to talk. Whatever he had proposed would have been right to Miss Matty; although she did fall sound asleep within five minutes after he had begun a long poem called "Locksley Hall," and had a comfortable nap, unobserved, till he ended; when the cessation of his voice wakened her up, and she said, feeling that something was expected, and that Miss Pole was counting—

"What a pretty book!"

"Pretty, madam! it's beautiful! Pretty, indeed!"

"Oh yes! I meant beautiful!" said she, fluttered at his disapproval of her word. "It is so like that beautiful poem of Dr. Johnson's my sister used to read—I forget the name of it; what was it, my dear?" turning to me.

"Which do you mean, ma'am? What was it about?"

"I don't remember what it was about, and I've quite forgotten what the name of it was; but it was written by Dr. Johnson, and was very beautiful, and very like what Mr. Holbrook has just been reading."

"I don't remember it," said he reflectively. "But I don't know Dr. Johnson's poems well. I must read them."

As we were getting into the fly to return, I heard Mr. Holbrook say he should call on the ladies soon, and inquire how they got home; and this evidently pleased and fluttered Miss Matty at the time he said it; but after we had lost sight of the old house among the trees her sentiments towards the master of it were gradually absorbed into a distressing wonder as to whether Martha had broken her word, and seized on the opportunity of her mistress's absence to have a "follower." Martha looked good, and steady, and composed enough, as she came to help us out; she was always careful of Miss Matty, and to-night she made use of this unlucky speech—

"Eh! dear ma'am, to think of your going out in an

evening in such a thin shawl! It's no better than muslin. At your age, ma'am, you should be careful."

"My age!" said Miss Matty, almost speaking crossly, for her, for she was usually gentle—"my age! Why, how old do you think I am, that you talk about my age?"

"Well, ma'am, I should say you were not far short of sixty; but folks' looks is often against them—and I'm sure I meant no harm."

"Martha, I'm not yet fifty-two!" said Miss Matty, with grave emphasis; for probably the remembrance of her youth had come very vividly before her this day, and she was annoyed at finding that golden time so far away in the past.

But she never spoke of any former and more intimate acquaintance with Mr. Holbrook. She had probably met with so little sympathy in her early love that she had shut it up close in her heart; and it was only by a sort of watching, which I could hardly avoid since Miss Pole's confidence, that I saw how faithful her poor heart had been in its sorrow and its silence.

She gave me good reason for wearing her best cap every day, and sat near the window, in spite of her rheumatism, in order to see, without being seen, down into the street.

He came. He put his open palms upon his knees, which were far apart, as he sat with his head bent down, whistling, after we had replied to his inquiries about our safe return. Suddenly he jumped up—

"Well, madam! have you any commands for Paris? I am going there in a week or two."

"To Paris!" we both exclaimed.

"Yes, madam! I've never been there, and always had a wish to go; and I think if I don't go soon, I mayn't go at all; so as soon as the hay is got in I shall go, before harvest-time."

We were so much astonished that we had no commissions.

Just as he was going out of the room, he turned back with his favourite exclamation—

"God bless my soul, madam! but I nearly forgot half

my errand. Here are the poems for you you admired so much the other evening at my house." He tugged away at a parcel in his coat-pocket. " Good-bye, miss," said he ; " good-bye, Matty ! take care of yourself." And he was gone. But he had given her a book, and he had called her Matty, just as he used to do thirty years ago.

" I wish he would not go to Paris," said Miss Matilda anxiously. " I don't believe frogs will agree with him ; he used to have to be very careful what he ate, which was curious in so strong-looking a young man."

Soon after this I took my leave, giving many an injunction to Martha to look after her mistress, and to let me know if she thought that Miss Matilda was not so well ; in which case I would volunteer a visit to my old friend, without noticing Martha's intelligence to her.

Accordingly I received a line or two from Martha every now and then ; and, about November, I had a note to say her mistress was " very low and sadly off her food " ; and the account made me so uneasy that, although Martha did not decidedly summon me, I packed up my things and went.

I received a warm welcome, in spite of the little flurry produced by my impromptu visit, for I had only been able to give a day's notice. Miss Matilda looked miserably ill ; and I prepared to comfort and cosset her.

I went down to have a private talk with Martha.

" How long has your mistress been so poorly ? " I asked, as I stood by the kitchen fire.

" Well, I think it's better than a fortnight ; it is, I know ; it was one Tuesday, after Miss Pole had been, that she went into this moping way. I thought she was tired, and it would go off with a night's rest ; but no ! she has gone on and on ever since, till I thought it my duty to write to you, ma'am."

" You did quite right, Martha. It is a comfort to think she has so faithful a servant about her. And I hope you find your place comfortable ? "

" Well, ma'am, missus is very kind, and there's plenty to

eat and drink, and no more work but what I can do easily,—but—" Martha hesitated.

"But what, Martha?"

"Why, it seems so hard of missus not to let me have any followers; there's such lots of young fellows in the town; and many a one has as much as offered to keep company with me; and I may never be in such a likely place again, and it's like wasting an opportunity. Many a girl as I know would have 'em unbeknownst to missus; but I've given my word, and I'll stick to it; or else this is just the house for missus never to be the wiser if they did come: and it's such a capable kitchen—there's such good dark corners in it—I'd be bound to hide any one. I counted up last Sunday night—for I'll not deny I was crying because I had to shut the door in Jem Hearn's face, and he's a steady young man, fit for any girl; only I had given missus my word." Martha was all but crying again; and I had little comfort to give her, for I knew, from old experience, of the horror with which both the Miss Jenkynses looked upon "followers"; and in Miss Matty's present nervous state this dread was not likely to be lessened.

I went to see Miss Pole the next day, and took her completely by surprise, for she had not been to see Miss Matilda for two days.

"And now I must go back with you, my dear, for I promised to let her know how Thomas Holbrook went on; and, I'm sorry to say, his housekeeper has sent me word to-day that he hasn't long to live. Poor Thomas! that journey to Paris was quite too much for him. His housekeeper says he has hardly ever been round his fields since, but just sits with his hands on his knees in the counting-house, not reading or anything, but only saying what a wonderful city Paris was! Paris has much to answer for if it's killed my cousin Thomas, for a better man never lived."

"Does Miss Matilda know of his illness?" asked I—a new light as to the cause of her indisposition dawning upon me.

" Dear ! to be sure, yes ! Has not she told you ? I let her know a fortnight ago, or more, when first I heard of it. How odd she shouldn't have told you ! "

Not at all, I thought ; but I did not say anything. I felt almost guilty of having spied too curiously into that tender heart, and I was not going to speak of its secrets—hidden, Miss Matty believed, from all the world. I ushered Miss Pole into Miss Matilda's little drawing-room, and then left them alone. But I was not surprised when Martha came to my bedroom door, to ask me to go down to dinner alone, for that missus had one of her bad headaches. She came into the drawing-room at tea-time, but it was evidently an effort to her ; and, as if to make up for some reproachful feeling against her late sister, Miss Jenkyns, which had been troubling her all the afternoon, and for which she now felt penitent, she kept telling me how good and how clever Deborah was in her youth ; how she used to settle what gowns they were to wear at all the parties (faint, ghostly idea of grim parties, far away in the distance, when Miss Matty and Miss Pole were young !) ; and how Deborah and her mother had started the benefit society for the poor, and taught girls cooking and plain sewing ; and how Deborah had once danced with a lord ; and how she used to visit at Sir Peter Arley's, and try to remodel the quiet rectory establishment on the plans of Arley Hall, where they kept thirty servants ; and how she had nursed Miss Matty through a long, long illness, of which I had never heard before, but which I now dated in my own mind as following the dismissal of the suit of Mr. Holbrook. So we talked softly and quietly of old times through the long November evening.

The next day Miss Pole brought us word that Mr. Holbrook was dead. Miss Matty heard the news in silence ; in fact, from the account of the previous day, it was only what we had to expect. Miss Pole kept calling upon us for some expressi on of regret, by asking if it was not sad that he was gone, and saying—

" To think of that pleasant day last June, when he seemed

so well! And he might have lived this dozen years if he had not gone to that wicked Paris, where they are always having revolutions."

She paused for some demonstration on our part. I saw Miss Matty could not speak, she was trembling so nervously; so I said what I really felt: and after a call of some duration —all the time of which I have no doubt Miss Pole thought Miss Matty received the news very calmly—our visitor took her leave.

Miss Matty made a strong effort to conceal her feelings—a concealment she practised even with me, for she has never alluded to Mr. Holbrook again, although the book he gave her lies with her Bible on the little table by her bedside. She did not think I heard her when she asked the little milliner of Cranford to make her caps something like the Honourable Mrs. Jamieson's, or that I noticed the reply—

"But she wears widows' caps, ma'am?"

"Oh? I only meant something in that style; not widows', of course, but rather like Mrs. Jamieson's."

This effort at concealment was the beginning of the tremulous motion of the head and hands which I have seen ever since in Miss Matty.

The evening of the day on which we heard of Mr. Holbrook's death, Miss Matilda was very silent and thoughtful; after prayers she called Martha back, and then she stood, uncertain what to say.

"Martha!" she said at last, "you are young"—and then she made so long a pause that Martha, to remind her of her half-finished sentence, dropped a curtsey, and said—

"Yes, please, ma'am; two-and-twenty last third of October, please, ma'am."

"And perhaps, Martha, you may some time meet with a young man you like, and who likes you. I did say you were not to have followers; but if you meet with such a young man, and tell me, and I find he is respectable, I have no objection to his coming to see you once a week. God forbid!" said she in a low voice, "that I should grieve any young hearts." She spoke as if she were providing for

some distant contingency, and was rather startled when Martha made her ready eager answer.

" Please, ma'am, there's Jem Hearn, and he's a joiner making three-and-sixpence a day, and six foot one in his stocking feet, please, ma'am ; and if you'll ask about him to-morrow morning, every one will give him a character for steadiness ; and he'll be glad enough to come to-morrow night, I'll be bound."

Though Miss Matty was startled, she submitted to Fate and Love.

Cranford.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

1811–1863

17...THE RETURN OF HENRY ESMOND

[Henry Esmond, an orphan, who has been brought up and tenderly cared for from childhood by his kinsfolk, Lord and Lady Castlewood, has become estranged from Lady Castlewood because she holds him indirectly responsible for the death of her husband, who was killed by the notorious Lord Mohun in a duel. Esmond is thrown into prison for a year for his participation in the affair, and finding when he regains his freedom that Lady Castlewood has determined to see him no more, he accepts a commission in the army, and goes abroad to the wars. On his return to England, he learns that her chaplain, Tom Tusher, "the waiting-woman's son," has presumed to raise his eyes to Lady Castlewood, and thereupon hastens to her home at Walcote, where he is informed that his beloved mistress is at prayers in the cathedral at Winchester. Thither he makes his way.]

THERE was scarce a score of persons in the Cathedral besides the Dean and some of his clergy, and the choristers, young and old, that performed the beautiful evening prayer. But Mr. Tusher was one of the officiants, and read from the eagle in an authoritative voice, and a great black periwig; and in the stalls, still in her black widow's hood, sat Esmond's dear mistress, her son by her side, very much grown, and indeed a noble-looking youth, with his mother's eyes, and his father's curling brown hair, that fell over his *point de Venise*—a pretty picture such as Vandyke might have painted. Monsieur Rigaud's portrait of my Lord Viscount, done at Paris afterwards, gives but a French version of his manly, frank, English face. When he looked up there were two sapphire beams out of his eyes such as no painter's palette has the colour to match, I think. On this

day there was not much chance of seeing that particular beauty of my young lord's countenance; for the truth is, he kept his eyes shut for the most part, and, the anthem being rather long, was asleep.

But the music ceasing, my lord woke up, looking about him, and his eyes lighting on Mr. Esmond, who was sitting opposite him, gazing with no small tenderness and melancholy upon two persons who had had so much of his heart for so many years, Lord Castlewood, with a start, pulled at his mother's sleeve (her face had scarce been lifted from her book), and said, "Look, mother!" so loud that Esmond could hear on the other side of the church, and the old Dean on his throned stall. Lady Castlewood looked for an instant as her son bade her, and held up a warning finger to Frank. Esmond felt his whole face flush, and his heart throbbing, as that dear lady beheld him once more. The rest of the prayers were speedily over. Mr. Esmond did not hear them; nor did his mistress, very likely, whose hood went more closely over her face, and who never lifted her head again until the service was over, the blessing given, and Mr. Dean, and his procession of ecclesiastics, out of the inner chapel.

Young Castlewood came clambering over the stalls before the clergy were fairly gone, and running up to Esmond eagerly embraced him. "My dear, dearest old Harry!" he said, "are you come back? Have you been to the wars? You'll take me with you when you go again? Why didn't you write to us? Come to mother!"

Mr. Esmond could hardly say more than a "God bless you, my boy!" for his heart was very full and grateful at all this tenderness on the lad's part; and he was as much moved at seeing Frank as he was fearful about that other interview which was now to take place, for he knew not if the widow would reject him, as she had done so cruelly a year ago.

"It was kind of you to come back to us, Henry," Lady Castlewood said. "I thought you might come."

"We read of the fleet coming to Portsmouth. Why did

you not come from Portsmouth?" Frank asked, or my Lord Viscount, as he now must be called.

Esmond had thought of that too. He would have given one of his eyes so that he might see his dear friends again once more; but believing that his mistress had forbidden him her house, he had obeyed her, and remained at a distance.

"You had but to ask, and you knew I would be here," he said.

She gave him her hand, her little fair hand; there was only her marriage ring on it. The quarrel was all over. The year of grief and estrangement was past. They never had been separated. His mistress had never been out of his mind all that time. No, not once. No, not in the prison; nor in the camp; nor on shore before the enemy; nor at sea under the stars of solemn midnight; nor as he watched the glorious rising of the dawn; not even at the table where he sat carousing with friends, or at the theatre yonder where he tried to fancy that other eyes were brighter than hers. Brighter eyes there might be, and faces more beautiful, but none so dear; no voice so sweet as that of his beloved mistress, who had been sister, mother, goddess to him during his youth: goddess now no more, for he knew of her weaknesses, and by thought, by suffering and that experience it brings, was older now than she; but more fondly cherished as woman perhaps than ever she had been adored as divinity. What is it? Where lies it? the secret which makes one little hand the dearest of all? Whoever can unriddle that mystery? Here she was, her son by his side, his dear boy. Here she was, weeping and happy. She took his hand in both hers; he felt her tears. It was a rapture of reconciliation.

"Here comes Squaretoes," says Frank. "Here's Tusher."

Tusher, indeed, now appeared, creaking on his great heels. Mr. Tom had divested himself of his alb or surplice, and came forward habited in his cassock and great black periwig. How had Harry Esmond ever been for a moment jealous of this fellow?

"Give us thy hand, Tom Tusher," he said. The chaplain made him a very low and stately bow. "I am charmed to see Captain Esmond," says he. "My lord and I have read the *Reddas incolumem precor*, and applied it, I am sure, to you. You come back with Gaditanian laurels. When I heard you were bound thither, I wished, I am sure, I was another Septimius. My Lord Viscount, your lordship remembers *Septimi, Gades aditure mecum* ?"

"There's an angle of earth that I love better than Gades, Tusher," says Mr. Esmond. "'Tis that one where your reverence hath a parsonage, and where our youth was brought up."

"A house that has so many sacred recollections to me," says Mr. Tusher (and Harry remembered how Tom's father used to flog him there)—"a house near to that of my respected patron, my most honoured patroness, must ever be a dear abode to me. But, madam, the verger waits to close the gates on your ladyship."

"And Harry's coming home to supper. Huzzay! huzzay!" cries my lord. "Mother, shall I run home and bid Beatrix put her ribbons on? Beatrix is a maid of honour, Harry. Such a fine set-up minx!"

"Your heart was never in the church, Harry," the widow said, in her sweet, low tone, as they walked away together. (Now it seemed they had never been parted, and again, as if they had been ages asunder.) "I always thought you had no vocation that way, and that 'twas a pity to shut you out from the world. You would have pined and chafed at Castlewood; and 'tis better you should make a name for yourself. I often said so to my dear lord. How he loved you! 'Twas my lord that made you stay with us."

"I ask no better than to stay near you always," said Mr. Esmond.

"But to go was best, Harry. When the world cannot give peace, you will know where to find it; but one of your strong imagination and eager desires must try the world first before he tires of it. 'Twas not to be thought of—or if it once was, it was only by my selfishness—that you should

remain as chaplain to a country gentleman and tutor to a little boy. You are of the blood of the Esmonds, kinsman, and that was always wild in youth. Look at Francis. He is but fifteen, and I scarce can keep him in my nest. His talk is all of war and pleasure, and he longs to serve in the next campaign. Perhaps he and the young Lord Churchill shall go the next. Lord Marlborough has been good to us. You know how kind they were in my misfortune. And so was your—your father's widow. No one knows how good the world is, till grief comes to try us. 'Tis through my Lady Marlborough's goodness that Beatrix hath her place at Court; and Frank is under my Lord Chamberlain. And the dowager lady, your father's widow, has promised to provide for you, has she not?"

Esmond said, "Yes. As far as present favour went, Lady Castlewood was very good to him. And should her mind change," he added gaily, "as ladies' minds will, I am strong enough to bear my own burden, and make my way somehow. Not by the sword very likely—thousands have a better genius for that than I—but there are many ways in which a young man of good parts and education can get on in the world; and I am pretty sure, one way or other, of promotion!" Indeed, he had found patrons already in the army, and amongst persons very able to serve him, too; and told his mistress of the flattering aspect of fortune. They walked as though they had never been parted, slowly, with the grey twilight closing round them.

"And now we are drawing near to home," she continued, "I knew you would come, Harry, if—if it was but to forgive me for having spoken unjustly to you after that horrid—horrid misfortune. I was half frantic with grief then when I saw you. And I know now—they have told me—that wretch, whose name I can never mention, even has said it: how you tried to avert the quarrel, and would have taken it on yourself, my poor child. But it was God's will that I should be punished, and that my dear lord should fall."

"He gave me his blessing on his death-bed," Esmond said. "Thank God for that legacy!"

" Amen, amen ! dear Henry," says the lady, pressing his arm. " I knew it. Mr. Atterbury, of St. Bride's, who was called to him, told me so. And I thanked God, too, and in my prayers ever since remembered it."

" You had spared me many a bitter night had you told me sooner," Mr. Esmond said.

" I know it, I know it," she answered, in a tone of such sweet humility as made Esmond repent that he should ever have dared to reproach her. " I know how wicked my heart has been ; and I have suffered too, my dear. I confessed to Mr. Atterbury—I must not tell any more. He—I said I would not write to you or go to you—and it was better even that, having parted, we should part. But I knew you would come back ; I own that. That is no one's fault. And to-day, Henry, in the anthem, when they sang it, ' When the Lord turned the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream,' I thought, yes, like them that dream—them that dream. And then it went, ' They that sow in tears shall reap in joy ; and he that goeth forth and weepeth, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him ' ; I looked up from the book, and saw you. I was not surprised when I saw you. I knew you would come, my dear, and saw the gold sunshine round your head."

She smiled an almost wild smile as she looked up at him. The moon was up by this time, glittering keen in the frosty sky. He could see, for the first time now clearly, her sweet, careworn face.

" Do you know what day it is ? " she continued. " It is the 29th of December—it is your birthday ! But last year we did not drink it—no, no. My lord was cold, and my Harry was likely to die ; and my brain was in a fever ; and we had no wine. But now—now you are come again, bringing your sheaves with you, my dear." She burst into a wild flood of weeping as she spoke ; she laughed and sobbed on the young man's heart, crying out wildly, " Bringing your sheaves with you—your sheaves with you ! "

As he had sometimes felt, gazing up from the deck at midnight into the boundless starlit depths overhead, in a rapture of devout wonder at that endless brightness and beauty—in some such a way now, the depth of this pure devotion (which was, for the first time, revealed to him) quite smote upon him, and filled his heart with thanksgiving. Gracious God, who was he, weak and friendless creature, that such a love should be poured out upon him? Not in vain, not in vain has he lived—hard and thankless should he be to think so—that has such a treasure given him. What is ambition compared to that, but selfish vanity? To be rich, to be famous? What do these profit a year hence, when other names sound louder than yours, when you lie hidden away under ground, along with the idle titles engraven on your coffin? But only true love lives after you—follows your memory with secret blessing—or precedes you, and intercedes for you. *Non omnis moriar*—if dying, I yet live in a tender heart or two; nor am lost and hopeless living, if a sainted departed soul still loves and prays for me.

"If—if 'tis so, dear lady," Mr. Esmond said, "why should I ever leave you? If God hath given me this great boon—and near or far from me, as I know now, the heart of my dearest mistress follows me—let me have that blessing near me, nor ever part with it till death separate us. Come away—leave this Europe, this place which has so many sad recollections for you. Begin a new life in a new world. My good lord often talked of visiting that land in Virginia which King Charles gave us—gave his ancestor. Frank will give us that. No man there will ask if there is a blot on my name, or inquire in the woods what my title is."

"And my children—and my duty—and my good father, Henry?" she broke out. "He has none but me now; for soon my sister will leave him, and the old man will be alone. He has conformed since the new Queen's reign; and here in Winchester, where they love him, they have found a church for him. When the children leave me, I will stay with him.

I cannot follow them into the great world, where their way lies—it scares me. They will come and visit me; and you will sometimes, Henry—yes, sometimes, as now, in the Holy Advent season, when I have seen and blessed you once more."

"I would leave all to follow you," said Mr. Esmond; "and can you not be as generous for me, dear lady?"

"Hush, boy!" she said, and it was with a mother's sweet, plaintive tone and look that she spoke. "The world is beginning for you. For me, I have been so weak and sinful that I must leave it, and pray out an expiation, dear Henry. Had we houses of religion as there were once—and many divines of our church would have them again—I often think I would retire to one and pass my life in penance. But I would love you still—yes, there is no sin in such a love as mine now; and my dear lord in heaven may see my heart, and knows the tears that have washed my sin away. And now—now my duty is here, by my children whilst they need me, and by my poor old father, and——"

"And not by me?" Henry said.

"Hush!" she said again, and raised her hand up to his lip. "I have been your nurse. You could not see me, Harry, when you were in the smallpox, and I came and sat by you. Ah! I prayed that I might die; but it would have been in sin, Henry. Oh, it is horrid to look back to that time! It is over now and past, and it has been forgiven me. When you need me again, I will come ever so far. When your heart is wounded, then come to me, my dear. Be silent! let me say all. You never loved me, dear Henry—no, you do not now; and I thank Heaven for it! I used to watch you, and knew by a thousand signs that it was so. Do you remember how glad you were to go away to college? 'Twas I sent you. I told my papa that, and Mr. Atterbury, too, when I spoke to him in London. And they both gave me absolution—both—and they are godly men, having authority to bind and loose. And they forgave me, as my dear lord forgave me before he went to heaven."

"I think the angels are not all in heaven," Mr. Esmond

said. And as a brother folds a sister to his heart, and as a mother cleaves to her son's breast, so for a few moments Esmond's beloved mistress came to him and blessed him.

Esmond.

CHARLES DICKENS

1812–1870

18...LOVE IN THE TEMPLE

BRILLIANTLY the Temple Fountain sparkled in the sun, and laughingly its liquid music played, and merrily the idle drops of water danced and danced, and peeping out in sport among the trees, plunged lightly down to hide themselves as little Ruth and her companion came towards it.

And why they came towards the Fountain at all is a mystery, for they had no business there. It was not in their way; it was quite out of their way. They had no more to do with the Fountain, bless you, than they had with—with Love, or any out-of-the-way thing of that sort.

It was all very well for Tom and his sister to make appointments by the Fountain, but that was quite another affair. Because, of course, when she had to wait a minute or two, it would have been very awkward for her to have had to wait in any but a tolerably quiet spot; and that was as quiet a spot, everything considered, as they could choose. But when she had John Westlock to take care of her, and was going home with her arm in his (home being in a different direction altogether), their coming anywhere near that Fountain was quite extraordinary.

However, there they found themselves. And another extraordinary part of the matter was that they seemed to have come there by a silent understanding. Yet when they got there they were a little confused by being there, which was the strangest part of all, because there is nothing naturally confusing in a fountain. We all know that.

What a good old place it was, John said, with quite an earnest affection for it.

"A pleasant place indeed," said little Ruth—"so shady!"

O wicked little Ruth!

They came to a stop when John began to praise it. The day was exquisite; and stopping at all, it was quite natural—nothing could be more so—that they should glance down Garden Court, because Garden Court ends in the Garden, and the Garden ends in the River, and that glimpse is very bright and fresh and shining on a summer's day. Then, oh little Ruth, why not look boldly at it? Why fit that tiny, precious, blessed little foot into the cracked corner of an insensible old flagstone in the pavement, and be so very anxious to adjust it to a nicety?

They went away, but not through London streets! Through some enchanted city, where the pavements were of air; where all the rough sounds of a stirring town were softened into gentle music; where everything was happy; where there was no distance and no time. There were two good-tempered, burly draymen letting down big butts of beer into a cellar somewhere, and when John helped her, almost lifted her—the lightest, easiest, neatest thing you ever saw—across the rope, they said he owed them a good turn for giving him the chance. Celestial draymen!

Green pastures in the summer-tide, deep-littered straw-yards in the winter, no stint of corn and clover, ever to that noble horse who *would* dance on the pavement with a gig behind him, and who frightened her, and made her clasp his arm with both hands (both hands, meeting one upon the other so endearingly), and caused her to implore him to take refuge in the pastry-cook's; and afterwards to peep out at the door so shrinkingly; and then, looking at him with those eyes, to ask him was he sure—now was he sure—they might go safely on! Oh, for a string of rampant horses! for a lion, for a bear, a mad bull—anything to bring the little hands together on his arm again!

They talked, of course. They talked of Tom, and all these changes, and of the attachment Mr. Chuzzlewit had conceived for him, and the bright prospects he had in such a friend, and a great deal more to the same purpose. The

more they talked, the more afraid this fluttering little Ruth became of any pause; and sooner than have a pause, she would say the same things over again; and if she hadn't courage or presence of mind enough for that (to say the truth, she very seldom had), she was ten thousand times more charming and irresistible than she had been before.

"Martin will be married very soon, I suppose?" said John.

She supposed he would. Never did a bewitching little woman suppose anything in such a faint voice as Ruth supposed that.

But feeling that another of those alarming pauses was approaching, she remarked that he would have a beautiful wife. Didn't Mr. Westlock think so?

"Ye—yes," said John; "oh, yes."

She feared he was rather hard to please—he spoke so coldly.

"Rather say already pleased," said John. "I have scarcely seen her. I had no care to see her. I had no eyes for *her* this morning."

It was well they had reached their destination. She never could have gone any further. It would have been impossible to walk in such a tremble.

Tom had not come in. They entered the triangular parlour together, and alone.

She sat down on the little sofa, and untied her bonnet-strings. He sat down by her side, and very near her—very, very near her. Oh, rapid, swelling, bursting little heart, you knew that it would come to this, and hoped it would. Why beat so wildly, heart?

"Dear Ruth! sweet Ruth! if I had loved you less, I could have told you that I loved you long ago. I have loved you from the first. There never was a creature in the world more truly loved than you, dear Ruth, by me!"

She clasped her little hands before her face. The gushing tears of joy, and pride, and hope, and innocent affection would not be restrained. Fresh from her full young heart they came to answer him.

" My dear love ! if this is—I almost dare to hope it is now—not painful or distressing to you, you make me happier than I can tell or you imagine. Darling Ruth ! my own good gentle, winning Ruth ! I hope I know the value of your heart ; I hope I know the worth of your angel nature. Let me try and show you that I do, and you will make me happier, Ruth——"

" Not happier," she sobbed, " than you make me. No one can be happier, John, than you make me ! "

The little hands could meet each other now without a rampant horse to urge them. There was no occasion for lions, bears, or mad bulls. It could all be done, and infinitely better, without their assistance. No burly draymen or big butts of beer were wanted for apologies. No apology at all was wanted. The soft, light touch fell coyly, but quite naturally, upon the lover's shoulder ; the delicate waist, the drooping head, the blushing cheek, the beautiful eyes, the exquisite mouth itself, were all as natural as possible. If all the horses in Araby had run away at once, they couldn't have improved upon it.

Martin Chuzzlewit.

ROBERT BROWNING

1812–1889

19...IN A BALCONY

First Part

Constance *and* Norbert.

Norbert : Now.
Constance : Not now.
Norbert : Give me them again, those hands—
Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs !
Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through.
You cruellest, you dearest in the world,
Let me ! the Queen must grant whate'er I ask—
How can I gain you and not ask the Queen ?
There she stays waiting for me, here stand you.
Some time or other this was to be asked,
Now is the one time—what I ask, I gain—
Let me ask now, Love !
Constance : Do, and ruin us.
Norbert : Let it be now, Love ! All my soul breaks forth.
How I do love you ! give my love its way !
A man can have but one life and one death,
One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate—
Grant me my heaven now. Let me know you mine,
Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,
Hold you and have you, and then die away
If God please, with completion in my soul.
Constance : I am not yours then ? how content this man ?
I am not his, who change into himself,

Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,
Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair,
Give all that was of me away to him
So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,
Takes part with him against the woman here,
Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw
As caring that the world be cognisant
How he loves her and how she worships him.
You have this woman, not as yet that world.
Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me
By saving what I cease to care about,
The courtly name and pride of circumstance—
The name you'll pick up and be cumbered with
Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more;
Just that the world may slip from under you—
Just that the world may cry " So much for him—
The man predestined to the heap of crowns!
There goes his chance of winning one, at least."
Norbert : The world!
Constance : You love it. Love me quite as well,
And see if I shall pray for this in vain!
Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks?
Norbert : You pray for—what, in vain?
Constance : Oh my heart's heart,
How I do love you, Norbert!—that is right!
But listen, or I take my hands away.
You say, " let it be now "—you would go now
And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,
You love me—so you do, thank God!
Norbert : Thank God!
Constance : Yes, Norbert,—but you fain would tell your love,
And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her
My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,
Listening to me. You are the minister,
The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.
To-night completes your wonderful year's-work
(This palace-feast is held to celebrate)

Made memorable by her life's success,
That junction of two crowns on her sole head
Her house had only dreamed of anciently.
That this mere dream is grown a stable truth
To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise?
Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved
What turned the many heads and broke the hearts?
You are the fate—your minute's in the heaven.
Next comes the Queen's turn. Name your own reward!
With leave to clench the past, chain the to-come,
Put out an arm and touch and take the sun
And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,
Possess yourself supremely of her life,
You choose the single thing she will not grant—
The very declaration of which choice
Will turn the scale and neutralise your work.
At best she will forgive you, if she can.
You think I'll let you choose—her cousin's hand?
Norbert: Wait. First, do you retain your old belief
The Queen is generous,—nay, is just?
Constance: There, there!
So men make women love them, while they know
No more of women's hearts than . . . look you here,
You that are just and generous beside,
Make it your own case. For example now,
I'll say—I let you kiss me and hold my hands—
Why? do you know why? I'll instruct you, then—
The kiss, because you have a name at court,
This hand and this, that you may shut in each
A jewel, if you please to pick up such.
That's horrible! Apply it to the Queen—
Suppose I am the Queen to whom you speak.
"I was a nameless man: you needed me:
Why did I proffer you my aid? there stood
A certain pretty Cousin by your side.
Why did I make such common cause with you?
Access to her had not been easy else.
You give my labours here abundant praise:

'Faith, labour, while she overlooked, grew play.
How shall your gratitude discharge itself?
Give me her hand!"
Norbert: And still I urge the same.
Is the Queen just? just—generous or no!
Constance: Yes, just. You love a rose—no harm in that—
But was it for the rose's sake or mine
You put it in your bosom? mine, you said—
Then mine you still must say or else be false.
You told the Queen you served her for herself:
If so, to serve her was to serve yourself
She thinks, for all your unbelieving face!
I know her. In the hall, six steps from us,
One sees the twenty pictures—there's a life
Better than life—and yet no life at all;
Conceive her born in such a magic dome,
Pictures all round her! why, she sees the world,
Can recognise its given things and facts,
The fight of giants or the feast of gods,
Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,
Chaces and battles, the whole earth's display,
Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers and fruit—
And who shall question that she knows them all
In better semblance than the things outside?
Yet bring into the silent gallery
Some live thing to contrast in breath and blood,
Some lion, with the painted lion there—
You think she'll understand composedly?
—Say, "that's his fellow in the hunting-piece
Yonder, I've turned to praise a hundred times"?
Not so. Her knowledge of our actual earth,
Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies,
Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal.
The real exists for us outside, not her—
How should it, with that life in these four walls,
That father and that mother, first to last
No father and no mother—friends, a heap,

Lovers, no lack—a husband in due time,
And every one of them alike a lie!
Things painted by a Rubens out of nought
Into what kindness, friendship, love should be;
All better, all more grandiose than life,
Only no life; mere cloth and surface-paint
You feel while you admire. How should she feel?
And now that she has stood thus fifty years
The sole spectator in that gallery,
You think to bring this warm, real, struggling love
In to her of a sudden, and suppose
She'll keep her state untroubled? Here's the truth—
She'll apprehend its value at a glance,
Prefer it to the pictured loyalty!
You only have to say "so men are made,
For this they act, the thing has many names
But this the right one—and now, Queen, be just!"
And life slips back—you lose her at the word—
You do not even for amends gain me.
He will not understand! Oh, Norbert, Norbert,
Do you not understand?
Norbert: The Queen's the Queen,
I am myself—no picture, but alive
In every nerve and every muscle, here
At the palace-window or in the people's street,
As she in the gallery where the pictures glow.
The good of life is precious to us both.
She cannot love—what do I want with rule?
When first I saw your face a year ago
I knew my life's good—my soul heard one voice,
"The woman yonder, there's no use of life
But just to obtain her! heap earth's woes in one
And bear them—make a pile of all earth's joys
And spurn them, as they help or help not here;
Only, obtain her!"—How was it to be?
I found she was the cousin of the Queen;
I must then serve the Queen to get to her—
No other way. Suppose there had been one,

And I by saying prayers to some white star
With promise of my body and my soul
Might gain you,—should I pray the star or no?
Instead, there was the Queen to serve! I served,
And did what other servants failed to do.
Neither she sought nor I declared my end.
Her good is hers, my recompense be mine,
And let me name you as that recompense.
She dreamed that such a thing could never be?
Let her wake now. She thinks there was some cause—
The love of power, of fame, pure loyalty?
—Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives
Chasing such shades. Then I've a fancy too.
I worked because I want you with my soul—
I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now.
Constance: Had I not loved you from the very first,
Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus
So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,
You might be thus impatient. What's conceived
Of us without here, by the folks within?
Where are you now? immersed in cares of state—
Where am I now?—intent on festal robes—
We two, embracing under death's spread hand!
What was this thought for, what this scruple of yours
Which broke the council up, to bring about
One minute's meeting in the corridor?
And then the sudden sleights, long secresies,
The plots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,
Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a look,
"Does she know? does she not know? saved or lost?"
A year of this compression's ecstasy
All goes for nothing? You would give this up
For the old way, the open way, the world's,
His way who beats, and his who sells his wife
What tempts you? their notorious happiness,
That you're ashamed of ours? The best you'll get
Will be, the Queen grants all that you require,
Concedes the cousin, and gets rid of you

And her at once, and gives us ample leave
To live as our five hundred happy friends.
The world will show us with officious hand
Our chamber-entry and stand sentinel,
When we so oft have stolen across her traps !
Get the world's warrant, ring the falcon's foot,
And make it duty to be bold and swift,
When long ago 'twas nature. Have it so !
He never hawked by rights till flung from fist ?
Oh, the man's thought !—no woman's such a fool.

Norbert : Yes, the man's thought and my thought, which is more—
One made to love you, let the world take note.
Have I done worthy work ? be love's the praise,
Though hampered by restrictions, barred against
By set forms, blinded by forced secresies.
Set free my love, and see what love will do
Shown in my life—what work will spring from that !
The world is used to have its business done
On other grounds, find great effects produced
For power's sake, fame's sake, motives you have named.
So good. But let my low ground shame their high.
Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true !
And love's the truth of mine. Time prove the rest !
I choose to have you stamped all over me,
Your name upon my forehead and my breast,
You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's edge,
That men may see, all over, you in me—
That pale loves may die out of their pretence
In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall off—
Permit this, Constance ! Love has been so long
Subdued in me, eating me through and through,
That now it's all of me and must have way.
Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,
Those hopes and fears, surprises and delays,
That long endeavour, earnest, patient, slow,
Trembling at last to its assured result—
Then think of this revulsion. I resume

IN A BALCONY

Life, after death (it is no less than life
After such long unlovely labouring days)
And liberate to beauty life's great need
Of the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,
Suppressed itself erewhile. This eve's the time—
This eve intense with yon first trembling star
We seem to pant and reach; scarce ought between
The earth that rises and the heaven that bends—
All nature self-abandoned—every tree
Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts
And fixed so, every flower and every weed,
No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat!
All under God, each measured by itself!
These statues round us, each abrupt, distinct,
The strong in strength, the weak in weakness fixed,
The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre,
The Nymph to her fawn, the Silence to her rose,
And God's approval on his universe!
Let us do so—aspire to live as these
In harmony with truth, ourselves being true.
Take the first away, and let the second come,
My first is to possess myself of you;
The music sets the march-step—forward then!
And there's the Queen, I go to claim you of,
The world to witness, wonder, and applaud.
Our flower of life breaks open. No delay!

Men and Women.

CHARLES READE

1814–1884

20...GERARD AND THE PRINCESS CLÆLIA

[The beautiful Clælia, a young and tiger-like princess of the noble house of Cesarini, has commanded Gerard's attendance at her palace to help her write a letter to one of her many lovers. Finding, however, that he can sketch and tint, and that he is personally attractive, she at once commissions him to draw her portrait, with the design of being alone with him during the sittings.]

THE Princess Clælia ordered a full-length portrait of herself. Gerard advised her to employ his friend Pietro Vanucci.

But she declined.

" 'Twill be time to put a slight on the Gerardo, when his work discontents me."

Then Gerard, who knew he was an excellent draughtsman, but not so good a colourist, begged her to stand to him as a Roman statue. He showed her how closely he could mimic marble on paper. She consented at first; but demurred when this enthusiast explained to her that she must wear the tunic, toga, and sandals of the ancients.

" Why, I had as lieve be presented in my smock," said she, with mediæval frankness.

" Alack! signorina," said Gerard, " you have surely never noted the ancient habit; so free, so ample, so simple, yet so noble; and most becoming your highness, to whom Heaven hath given the Roman features, and eke a shapely arm and hand, hid in modern guise."

" What, can you flatter, like the rest, Gerardo? Well, give me time to think on't. Come o' Saturday, and then I will say ay or nay."

The respite thus gained was passed in making the tunic

and toga, etc., and trying them on in her chamber, to see whether they suited her style of beauty well enough to compensate their being a thousand years out of date.

Gerard hurried along to this interview. . . . He was ushered into an apartment new to him. It was not very large, but most luxurious ; a fountain played in the centre, and the floor was covered with the skins of panthers, dressed with the hair, so that no footfall could be heard. The room was an ante-chamber to the princess's boudoir, for on one side there was no door, but an ample curtain of gorgeous tapestry.

Here Gerard was left alone till he became quite uneasy, and doubted whether the maid had not shown him to the wrong place.

These doubts were agreeably dissipated.

A light step came swiftly behind the curtain ; it parted in the middle, and there stood a figure the heathens might have worshipped. It was not quite Venus, nor quite Minerva ; but between the two ; nobler than Venus, more womanly than Jupiter's daughter. Toga, tunic, sandals ; nothing was modern. And as for beauty, that is of all times.

Gerard started up, and all the artist in him flushed with pleasure.

" Oh ! " he cried innocently, and gazed in rapture.

This added the last charm to his model : a light blush tinted her cheeks, and her eyes brightened, and her mouth smiled with delicious complacency at this genuine tribute to her charms.

When they had looked at one another so some time, and she saw Gerard's eloquence was confined to ejaculating and gazing, she spoke.

" Well, Gerardo, thou seest I have made myself an antique monster for thee."

" A monster ? I doubt Fra Colonna would fall down and adore your highness, seeing you so habited."

" Nay, I care not to be adored by an old man. I would liever be loved by a young one : of my own choosing."

Gerard took out his pencils, arranged his canvas, which he had covered with stout paper, and set to work; and so absorbed was he that he had no mercy on his model. At last, after near an hour in one posture :

" Gerardo," said she faintly, " I can stand so no more, even for thee."

" Sit down and rest awhile, signora."

" I thank thee," said she ; and sinking into a chair turned pale and sighed.

Gerard was alarmed, and saw also he had been inconsiderate. He took water from the fountain and was about to throw it in her face ; but she put up a white hand deprecatingly.

" Nay, hold it to my brow with thine hand ; prithee, do not fling it at me ! "

Gerard timidly and hesitating applied his wet hand to her brow.

" Ah ! " she sighed, " that is reviving. Again."

He applied it again. She thanked him, and asked him to ring a little hand-bell on the table. He did so, and a maid came, and was sent to Floretta with orders to bring a large fan.

Floretta speedily came with the fan.

She no sooner came near the princess, than that lady's high-bred nostrils suddenly expanded like a bloodhorse's. " Wretch ! " said she ; and rising up with a sudden return to vigour, seized Floretta with her left hand, twisted it in her hair, and with the right hand boxed her ears severely three times.

Floretta screamed and blubbered ; but obtained no mercy.

The antique toga left quite disengaged a bare arm, that now seemed as powerful as it was beautiful : it rose and fell like the piston of a modern steam-engine, and heavy slaps resounded one after another on Floretta's shoulders ; the last one drove her sobbing and screaming through the curtain, and there she was heard crying bitterly for some time after.

" Saints of heaven ! " cried Gerard, " what is amiss ? what hath she done ? "

" She knows right well. 'Tis not the first time. The nasty toad ! I'll learn her to come to me stinking of the musk-cat."

" Alas ! signora, 'twas a small fault, methinks."

" A small fault ? Nay, 'twas a foul fault." She added with an amazing sudden descent to humility and sweetness, " Are you wroth with me for beating her, Gerar–do ? "

" Signora, it ill becomes me to school you ; but methinks such as Heaven appoints to govern others should govern themselves."

" That is true, Gerardo. How wise you are, to be so young." She then called the other maid, and gave her a little purse. " Take that to Floretta, and tell her ' the Gerardo ' hath interceded for her ; and so I must needs forgive her. There, Gerardo."

Gerard coloured all over at the compliment ; but not knowing how to turn a phrase equal to the occasion, asked her if he should resume her picture.

" Not yet ; beating that hussy hath somewhat breathed me. I'll sit awhile, and you shall talk to me. I know you can talk, an it pleases you, as rarely as you draw."

" That were easily done."

" Do it then, Gerardo."

Gerard was taken aback.

" But, signora, I know not what to say. This is sudden."

" Say your real mind. Say you wish you were anywhere but here."

" Nay, signora, that would not be sooth. I wish one thing, though."

" Ay, and what is that ? " said she gently.

" I wish I could have drawn you as you were beating that poor lass. You were awful, yet lovely. Oh, what a subject for a Pythoness ! "

" Alas ! he thinks but of his art. And why keep such a coil about my beauty, Gerardo ? You are far fairer than I am. You are more like Apollo than I to Venus. Also, you

have lovely hair and lovely eyes—but you know not what to do with them."

"Ay, do I. To draw you, signora."

"Ah, yes; you can see my features with them; but you cannot see what any Roman gallant had seen long ago in your place. Yet sure you must have noted how welcome you are to me, Gerardo?"

"I can see your highness is always passing kind to me; a poor stranger like me."

"No, I am not, Gerardo. I have often been cold to you; rude sometimes; and you are so simple you see not the cause. Alas! I feared for my own heart. I feared to be your slave. I who have hitherto made slaves. Ah! Gerardo, I am unhappy. Ever since you came here I have lived upon your visits. The day you are to come I am bright. The other days I am listless, and wish them fled. You are not like the Roman gallants. You make me hate them. You are ten times braver to my eye; and you are wise and scholarly, and never flatter and lie. I scorn a man that lies. Gerar-do, teach me thy magic; teach me to make thee as happy by my side as I am still by thine."

As she poured out these strange words, the princess's mellow voice sank almost to a whisper, and trembled with half-suppressed passion, and her white hand stole timidly yet earnestly down Gerard's arm, till it rested like a soft bird upon his wrist, and as ready to fly away at a word.

Destitute of vanity and experience, wrapped up in his Margaret and his art, Gerard had not seen this revelation coming, though it had come by regular and visible gradations.

He blushed all over. His innocent admiration of the regal beauty that besieged him, did not for a moment displace the absent Margaret's image. Yet it was regal beauty, and wooing with a grace and tenderness he had never even figured in imagination. How to check her without wounding her?

He blushed and trembled.

The siren saw, and encouraged him.

" Poor Gerardo," she murmured, " fear not; none shall ever harm thee under my wing. Wilt not speak to me, Gerar-do mio ? "

" Signora ! " muttered Gerard deprecatingly.

At this moment his eye, lowered in his confusion, fell on the shapely white arm and delicate hand that curled round his elbow like a tender vine, and it flashed across him how he had just seen that lovely limb employed on Floretta.

He trembled and blushed.

" Alas ! " said the princess, " I scare him. Am I then so very terrible ? Is it my Roman robe ? I'll doff it, and habit me as when thou first camest to me. Mindest thou ? 'Twas to write a letter to yon barren knight Ecole d'Orsini. Shall I tell thee ? 'Twas the sight of thee, and thy pretty ways, and thy wise words, made me hate him on the instant. I liked the fool well enough before; or wist I liked him. Tell me now how many times hast thou been here since then. Ah ! thou knowest not; lovest me not, I doubt, as I love thee. Eighteen times, Gerardo. And each time dearer to me. The day thou comest not 'tis night, not day, to Clælia. Alas ! I speak for both. Cruel boy, am I not worth a word ? Hast every day a princess at thy feet ? Nay, prithee, prithee, speak to me, Gerar-do."

" Signora," faltered Gerard, " what can I say, that were not better left unsaid ? Oh, evil day that ever I came here."

" Ah ! say not so. 'Twas the brightest day ever shone on me; or indeed on thee. I'll make thee confess so much ere long, ungrateful one."

" Your highness," began Gerard, in a low, pleading voice.

" Call me Clælia, Gerar-do."

" Signora, I am too young and too little wise to know how I ought to speak to you, so as not to seem blind nor yet ungrateful. But this I know, I were both naught and ungrateful, and the worst foe e'er you had, did I take advantage of this mad fancy. Sure some ill spirit hath had leave to afflict you withal. For 'tis all unnatural that a princess adorned with every grace should abase her affections on a churl."

The princess withdrew her hand slowly from Gerard's wrist.

Yet as it passed lightly over his arm it seemed to linger a moment at parting.

" You fear the daggers of my kinsmen," said she, half sadly, half contemptuously.

" No more than I fear the bodkins of your women," said Gerard haughtily. " But I fear God and the saints, and my own conscience."

" The truth, Gerardo, the truth ! Hypocrisy sits awkwardly on thee. Princesses, while they are young, are not despised for love of God, but of some other woman. Tell me whom thou lovest ; and if she is worthy thee, I will forgive thee."

" No she in Italy, upon my soul."

" Ah ! there is one somewhere then. Where ? where ? "

" In Holland, my native country."

" Ah ! Marie de Bourgoyne is fair, they say. Yet she is but a child."

" Princess, she I love is not noble. She is as I am. Nor is she so fair as thou. Yet is she fair ; and linked to my heart for ever by her virtues, and by all the dangers and griefs we have borne together, and for one another. Forgive me ; but I would not wrong my Margaret for all the highest dames in Italy."

The slighted beauty started to her feet, and stood opposite him, as beautiful, but far more terrible than when she slapped Floretta ; for then her cheeks were red, but now they were pale, and her eyes full of concentrated fury.

" This to my face, unmannered wretch," she cried. " Was I born to be insulted, as well as scorned, by such as thou ? Beware ! We nobles brook no rivals. Bethink thee whether is better, the love of a Cesarini, or her hate : for after all I have said and done to thee, it must be love or hate between us, and to the death. Choose now ! "

He looked up at her with wonder and awe, as she stood towering over him in her Roman toga, offering this strange alternative.

He seemed to have affronted a goddess of antiquity: he a poor puny mortal.

He sighed deeply, but spoke not.

Perhaps something in his deep and patient sigh touched a tender chord in that ungoverned creature; or perhaps the time had come for one passion to ebb and another to flow. The princess sank languidly into a seat, and the tears began to steal rapidly down her cheeks.

"Alas! alas!" said Gerard. "Weep not, sweet lady; your tears they do accuse me, and I am like to weep for company. My kind patron, be yourself; you will live to see how much better a friend I was to you than I seemed."

"I see it now, Gerardo," said the princess. "Friend is the word! the only word can ever pass between us twain. I was mad. Any other man had ta'en advantage of my folly. You must teach me to be your friend and nothing more."

Gerard hailed this proposition with joy; and told her out of Cicero how godlike a thing was friendship, and how much better and rarer and more lasting than love: to prove to her he was capable of it, he even told her about Denys and himself.

She listened with her eyes half shut, watching his words to fathom his character, and learn his weak point.

At last, she addressed him calmly thus: "Leave me now, Gerardo, and come as usual to-morrow. You will find your lesson well bestowed."

She held out her hand to him: he kissed it; and went away pondering deeply this strange interview, and wondering whether he had done prudently or not.

The next day he was received with marked distance, and the princess stood before him literally like a statue, and after a very short sitting, excused herself and dismissed him. Gerard felt the chilling difference; but said to himself, "She is wise." So she was in her way.

The next day he found the princess waiting for him surrounded by young nobles flattering her to the skies. She and they treated him like a dog that could do one little

trick they could not. The cavaliers in particular criticised his work with a mass of ignorance and insolence combined that made his cheeks burn.

The princess watched his face demurely with half-closed eyes, at each sting the insects gave him; and when they had fled, had her doors closed against every one of them for their pains.

The next day Gerard found her alone: cold and silent. After standing to him so some time, she said:

"You treated my company with less respect than became you."

"Did I, signora?"

"Did you? you fired up at the comments they did you the honour to make on your work."

"Nay, I said nought," observed Gerard.

"Oh, high looks speak as plain as high words. Your cheeks were red as blood."

"I was nettled a moment at seeing so much ignorance and ill-nature together."

"Now it is me, their hostess, you affront."

"Forgive me, signora, and acquit me of design. It would ill become me to affront the kindest patron and friend I have in Rome—but one."

"How humble we are all of a sudden. In sooth, Ser Gerardo, you are a capital feigner. You can insult or truckle at will."

"Truckle? to whom?"

"To me, for one; to one, whom you affronted for a base-born girl like yourself, but whose patronage you claim all the same."

Gerard rose, and put his hand to his heart.

"These are biting words, signora. Have I really deserved them?"

"Oh, what are words to an adventurer like you? cold steel is all you fear!"

"I am no swashbuckler, yet I have met steel with steel; and methinks I had rather face your kinsmen's swords than your cruel tongue, lady. Why do you use me so?"

" Gerar–do, for no good reason, but because I am wayward, and shrewish, and curst, and because everybody admires me but you."

" I admire you too, signora. Your friends may flatter you more, but believe me they have not the eye to see half your charms. Their babble yesterday showed me that. None admire you more truly, or wish you better, than the poor artist, who might not be your lover, but hoped to be your friend ; but no, I see that may not be between one so high as you, and one so low as I."

" Ay ! but it shall, Gerardo," said the princess eagerly. " I will not be so curst. Tell me now where abides thy Margaret ; and I will give thee a present for her ; and on that you and I will be friends."

" She is the daughter of a physician called Peter, and they bide at Sevenbergen ; ah me, shall I e'er see it again ? "

" 'Tis well. Now go." And she dismissed him somewhat abruptly.

Poor Gerard. He began to wade in deep waters when he encountered this Italian princess ; *callida et calida solis filia.* He resolved to go no more when once he had finished her likeness. Indeed he now regretted having undertaken so long and laborious a task.

This resolution was shaken for a moment by his next reception, which was all gentleness and kindness.

After standing to him some time in her toga, she said she was fatigued, and wanted his assistance in another way : would he teach her to draw a little ? He sat down beside her, and taught her to make easy lines. He found her wonderfully apt. He said so.

" I had a teacher before thee, Gerar–do. Ay, and one as handsome as thyself." She then went to a drawer, and brought out several heads drawn with a complete ignorance of the art, but with great patience and natural talent. They were all heads of Gerard, and full of spirit ; and really not unlike. One was his very image.

" There," said she. " Now thou seest who was my teacher."

" Not I, signora."

" What, know you not who teaches us women to do all things? 'Tis love, Gerar–do. Love made me draw because thou drawest, Gerar–do. Love prints thine image in my bosom. My fingers touch the pen, and love supplies the want of art, and lo! thy beloved features lie upon the paper."

Gerard opened his eyes with astonishment at this return to an interdicted topic.

" Oh, signora, you promised me to be friends and nothing more."

She laughed in his face.

" How simple you are: who believes a woman promising nonsense, impossibilities? Friendship, foolish boy, who ever built that temple on red ashes? Nay, Gerardo," she added gloomily, " between thee and me it must be love or hate."

" Which you will, signora," said Gerard firmly. " But for me I will neither love nor hate you; but with your permission I will leave you." And he rose abruptly.

She rose too, pale as death, and said—

" Ere thou leavest me so, know thy fate; outside that door are armed men who wait to slay thee at a word from me."

" But you will not speak that word, signora."

" That word I will speak. Nay, more, I shall noise it abroad it was for proffering brutal love to me thou wert slain; and I will send a special messenger to Sevenbergen—a cunning messenger, well taught his lesson. Thy Margaret shall know thee dead, and think thee faithless; now, go to thy grave; a dog's. For a man thou art not."

Gerard turned pale, and stood dumbstricken. " God have mercy on us both."

" Nay, have thou mercy on her, and on thyself. She will never know in Holland what thou dost in Rome; unless I be driven to tell her my tale. Come, yield thee, Gerar–do mio: what will it cost thee to say thou lovest me? I ask thee but to feign it handsomely. Thou art young: die

not for the poor pleasure of denying a lady what—the shadow of a heart. Who will shed a tear for thee? I tell thee men will laugh, not weep over thy tombstone—ah!"

She ended in a little scream, for Gerard threw himself in a moment at her feet, and poured out in one torrent of eloquence the story of his love and Margaret's. How he had been imprisoned, hunted with bloodhounds for her, driven to exile for her; how she had shed her blood for him, and now pined at home. How he had walked through Europe environed by perils, torn by savage brutes, attacked by furious men with sword and axe and trap, robbed, shipwrecked for her.

The princess trembled, and tried to get away from him; but he held her robe, he clung to her, he made her hear his pitiful story and Margaret's. He caught her hand, and clasped it between both his, and his tears fell fast on her hand, as he implored her to think on all the woes of the true lovers she would part; and what but remorse, swift and lasting, could come of so deep a love betrayed, and so false a love feigned, with mutual hatred lurking at the bottom.

In such moments none ever resisted Gerard.

The princess, after in vain trying to get away from him, for she felt his power over her, began to waver, and sigh, and her bosom to rise and fall tumultuously, and her fiery eyes to fill.

"You conquer me," she sobbed. "You or my better angel. Leave Rome!"

"I will, I will."

"If you breathe a word of my folly, it will be your last."

"Think not so poorly of me. You are my benefactress once more. Is it for me to slander you?"

"Go! I will send you the means. I know myself; if you cross my path again, I shall kill you. Addio; my heart is broken."

She touched the bell.

"Floretta," said she, in a choked voice, "take him safe out of the house, through my chamber, and by the side postern."

He turned at the door ; she was leaning with one hand on a chair, crying, with averted head. Then he thought only of her kindness, and ran back and kissed her robe. She never moved.

Once clear of the house he darted home, thanking Heaven for his escape, soul and body.

The Cloister and the Hearth.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

1816–1855

21...JANE EYRE AND MR. ROCHESTER

[Mr. Rochester, a brooding and self-tortured misanthrope at odds with the world, is deeply in love with Jane Eyre, and she with him. But he cannot marry her, as he is tied to a wife who has long been insane. He tries to persuade Jane to go abroad with him, and wildly promises that he will marry her—that he will do anything, if she will only say " I will be yours." In the latter part of the scene that follows Jane Eyre gives her reply.]

" Now, Jane, why don't you say ' Well, sir ? ' I have not done. You are looking grave. You disapprove of me still, I see. But let me come to the point. Last January, rid of all mistresses—in a harsh, bitter frame of mind, the result of a useless, roving, lonely life—corroded with disappointment, sourly disposed against all men, and especially against all *woman*kind (for I began to regard the notion of an intellectual, faithful, loving woman as a mere dream), recalled by business, I came back to England.

" On a frosty winter afternoon I rode in sight of Thornfield Hall. Abhorred spot! I expected no peace, no pleasure there. On a stile in Hay Lane I saw a quiet little figure sitting by itself. I passed it as negligently as I did the pollard willow opposite to it: I had no presentiment of what it would be to me; no inward warning that the arbitress of my life—my genius for good or evil—waited there in humble guise. I did not know it, even when, on the occasion of Mesrour's accident, it came up and gravely offered me help. Childish and slender creature! It seemed as if a linnet had hopped to my foot and proposed to bear me on its tiny wing. I was surly; but the thing would not go: it stood by me with strange perseverance,

and looked and spoke with a sort of authority. I must be aided, and by that hand: and aided I was.

"When once I had pressed the frail shoulder, something new—a fresh sap and sense—stole into my frame. It was well I had learnt that this elf must return to me—that it belonged to my house down below—or I could not have felt it pass away from under my hand, and seen it vanish behind the dim hedge, without singular regret. I heard you come home that night, Jane, though probably you were not aware that I thought of you, or watched for you. The next day I observed you—myself unseen—for half an hour, while you played with Adèle in the gallery. It was a snowy day, I recollect, and you could not go out of doors. I was in my room; the door was ajar: I could both listen and watch. Adèle claimed your outward attention for a while; yet I fancied your thoughts were elsewhere: but you were very patient with her, my little Jane; you talked to her and amused her a long time. When at last she left you, you lapsed at once into deep reverie: you betook yourself slowly to pace the gallery. Now and then, in passing a casement, you glanced out at the thick-falling snow; you listened to the sobbing wind, and again you paced gently on and dreamed. I think those day visions were not dark; there was a pleasurable illumination in your eye occasionally, a soft excitement in your aspect, which told of no bitter, bilious, hypochondriac brooding; your look revealed rather the sweet musings of youth, when its spirit follows on willing wings the flight of Hope, up and on to an ideal heaven. The voice of Mrs. Fairfax, speaking to a servant in the hall, wakened you; and how curiously you smiled to and at yourself, Jane! There was much sense in your smile; it was very shrewd, and seemed to make light of your own abstraction. It seemed to say, 'My fine visions are all very well, but I must not forget they are absolutely unreal. I have a rosy sky and a green flowery Eden in my brain; but without, I am perfectly aware, lies at my feet a rough tract to travel, and around me gather black tempests to encounter.' You ran downstairs and demanded of Mrs.

Fairfax some occupation: the weekly house accounts to make up, or something of that sort, I think it was. I was vexed with you for getting out of my sight.

" Impatiently I waited for evening, when I might summon you to my presence. An unusual—to me—a perfectly new character I suspected was yours: I desired to search it deeper, and know it better. You entered the room with a look and air at once shy and independent: you were quaintly dressed—much as you are now. I made you talk: ere long I found you full of strange contrasts. Your garb and manner were restricted by rule; your air was often diffident, and altogether that of one refined by nature, but absolutely unused to society, and a good deal afraid of making herself disadvantageously conspicuous by some solecism or blunder; yet when addressed, you lifted a keen, a daring, and a glowing eye to your interlocutor's face: there was penetration and power in each glance you gave; when plied by close questions, you found ready and round answers. Very soon you seemed to get used to me: I believe you felt the existence of sympathy between you and your grim and cross master, Jane; for it was astonishing to see how quickly a certain pleasant ease tranquillised your manner: snarl as I would, you showed no surprise, fear, annoyance, or displeasure at my moroseness; you watched me, and now and then smiled at me with a simple yet sagacious grace I cannot describe. I was at once content and stimulated with what I saw: I liked what I had seen, and wished to see more. Yet, for a long time, I treated you distantly, and sought your company rarely. I was an intellectual epicure, and wished to prolong the gratification of making this novel and piquant acquaintance; besides, I was for a while troubled with a haunting fear that if I handled the flower freely, its bloom would fade—the sweet charm of freshness would leave it. I did not then know that it was no transitory blossom; but rather the radiant resemblance of one, cut in an indestructible gem. Moreover, I wished to see whether you would seek me if I shunned you—but you did not; you kept in the schoolroom as still as your own desk and

easel; if by chance I met you, you passed me as soon, and with as little token of recognition, as was consistent with respect. Your habitual expression in those days, Jane, was a thoughtful look; not despondent, for you were not sickly; but not buoyant, for you had little hope, and no actual pleasure. I wondered what you thought of me—or if you ever thought of me; to find this out, I resumed my notice of you. There was something glad in your glance, and genial in your manner, when you conversed: I saw you had a social heart; it was the silent schoolroom—it was the tedium of your life—that made you mournful. I permitted myself the delight of being kind to you; kindness stirred emotion soon: your face became soft in expression, your tones gentle; I liked my name pronounced by your lips in a grateful happy accent. I used to enjoy a chance meeting with you, Jane, at this time: there was a curious hesitation in your manner: you glanced at me with a slight trouble—a hovering doubt: you did not know what my caprice might be—whether I was going to play the master and be stern, or the friend and be benignant. I was now too fond of you often to simulate the first whim; and when I stretched my hand out cordially, such bloom and light and bliss rose to your young, wistful features, I had much ado often to avoid straining you then and there to my heart."

"Don't talk any more of those days, sir," I interrupted, furtively dashing away some tears from my eyes: his language was torture to me; for I knew what I must do—and do soon—and all these reminiscences, and these revelations of his feelings, only made my work more difficult.

"No, Jane," he returned; "what necessity is there to dwell on the Past, when the Present is so much surer—the Future so much brighter?"

I shuddered to hear the infatuated assertion.

"You see now how the case stands—do you not?" he continued. "After a youth and manhood passed half in unutterable misery and half in dreary solitude, I have for the first time found what I can truly love—I have found

you. You are my sympathy—my better self—my good angel—I am bound to you with a strong attachment. I think you good, gifted, lovely: a fervent, a solemn passion is conceived in my heart; it leans to you, draws you to my centre and spring of life, wraps my existence about you—and, kindling in pure, powerful flame, fuses you and me in one.

"It was because I felt and knew this that I resolved to marry you. To tell me that I had already a wife is empty mockery: you know now that I had but a hideous demon. I was wrong to attempt to deceive you; but I feared a stubbornness that exists in your character. I feared early instilled prejudice: I wanted to have you safe before hazarding confidences. This was cowardly: I should have appealed to your nobleness and magnanimity at first, as I do now—opened to you plainly my life of agony—described to you my hunger and thirst after a higher and worthier existence—shown to you, not my *resolution* (that word is weak), but my resistless *bent* to love faithfully and well, where I am faithfully and well loved in return. Then I should have asked you to accept my pledge of fidelity, and to give me yours: Jane—give it me now."

A pause.

"Why are you silent, Jane?"

I was experiencing an ordeal: a hand of fiery iron grasped my vitals. Terrible moment: full of struggle, blackness, burning! Not a human being that ever lived could wish to be loved better than I was loved; and him who thus loved me I absolutely worshipped; and I must renounce love and idol. One drear word comprised my intolerable duty—"Depart!"

"Jane, you understand what I want of you? Just this promise—'I will be yours, Mr. Rochester.'"

"Mr. Rochester, I will *not* be yours."

Another long silence.

"Jane!" recommenced he, with a gentleness that broke me down with grief, and turned me stone-cold with ominous terror—for this still voice was the pant of a lion rising—

" Jane, do you mean to go one way in the world, and to let me go another ? "

" I do."

" Jane " (bending towards and embracing me), " do you mean it now ? "

" I do."

" And now ? " softly kissing my forehead and cheek.

" I do "—extricating myself from restraint rapidly and completely.

" Oh, Jane, this is bitter ! This—this is wicked ! It would not be wicked to love me."

" It would to obey you."

A wild look raised his brows—crossed his features : he rose ; but he forbore yet. I laid my hand on the back of a chair for support : I shook, I feared—but I resolved.

" One instant, Jane. Give one glance to my horrible life when you are gone. All happiness will be torn away with you. What then is left ? For a wife I have but the maniac upstairs ; as well might you refer me to some corpse in yonder churchyard. What shall I do, Jane ? Where turn for a companion and for some hope ? "

" Do as I do : trust in God and yourself. Believe in heaven. Hope to meet again there."

" Then you will not yield ? "

" No."

" Then you condemn me to live wretched, and to die accursed ? " His voice rose.

" I advise you to live sinless ; and I wish you to die tranquil."

" Then you snatch love and innocence from me ? You fling me back on lust for a passion—vice for an occupation ? "

" Mr. Rochester, I no more assign this fate to you than I grasp at it for myself. We were born to strive and endure—you as well as I : do so. You will forget me before I forget you."

" You make me a liar by such language : you sully my honour. I declared I could not change : you tell me to my face I shall change soon. And what a distortion in your

judgment, what a perversity in your ideas, is proved by your conduct! Is it better to drive a fellow-creature to despair than to transgress a mere human law, no man being injured by the breach?—for you have neither relatives nor acquaintances whom you need fear to offend by living with me."

This was true; and while he spoke my very conscience and reason turned traitors against me, and charged me with crime in resisting him. They spoke almost as loud as Feeling, and that clamoured wildly. "Oh, comply!" it said. "Think of his misery; think of his danger; look at his state when left alone; remember his headlong nature; consider the recklessness following on despair—soothe him; save him; love him; tell him you love him and will be his. Who in the world cares for *you*? or who will be injured by what you do?"

Still indomitable was the reply—"*I* care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself. I will keep the law given by God, sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad—as I am now. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigour; stringent are they; inviolate they shall be. If at my individual convenience I might break them, what would be their worth? They have a worth—so I have always believed; and if I cannot believe it now, it is because I am insane—quite insane: with my veins running fire, and my heart beating faster than I can count its throbs. Preconceived opinions, foregone determinations, are all I have at this hour to stand by: there I plant my foot."

I did. Mr. Rochester, reading my countenance, saw I had done so. His fury was wrought to the highest: he must yield to it for a moment, whatever followed; he crossed the floor and seized my arm, and grasped my waist. He seemed to devour me with his flaming glance: physically, I felt at the moment powerless as stubble exposed to the

draught and glow of a furnace—mentally, I still possessed my soul, and with it the certainty of ultimate safety. The soul, fortunately, has an interpreter—often an unconscious, but still a truthful interpreter—in the eye. My eye rose to his; and while I looked in his fierce face I gave an involuntary sigh; his grip was painful, and my overtaxed strength almost exhausted.

"Never," said he, as he ground his teeth, "never was anything at once so frail and so indomitable. A mere reed she feels in my hand!" (And he shook me with the force of his hold.) "I could bend her with my finger and thumb: and what good would it do if I bent, if I uptore, if I crushed her? Consider that eye: consider the resolute, wild, free thing looking out of it, defying me, with more than courage—with a stern triumph. Whatever I do with its cage, I cannot get at it—the savage, beautiful creature! If I tear, if I rend the slight prison, my outrage will only let the captive loose. Conqueror I might be of the house; but the inmate would escape to heaven before I could call myself possessor of its clay dwelling-place. And it is you, spirit—with will and energy, and virtue and purity—that I want: not alone your brittle frame. Of yourself, you could come with soft flight and nestle against my heart, if you would: seized against your will, you will elude the grasp like an essence—you will vanish ere I inhale your fragrance. Oh! come, Jane, come!"

As he said this he released me from his clutch, and only looked at me. The look was far worse to resist than the frantic strain: only an idiot, however, would have succumbed now. I had dared and baffled his fury; I must elude his sorrow: I retired to the door.

"You are going, Jane?"

"I am going, sir."

"You are leaving me?"

"Yes."

"You will not come? You will not be my comforter, my rescuer? My deep love, my wild woe, my frantic prayer, are all nothing to you?"

What unutterable pathos was in his voice! How hard it was to reiterate firmly, "I am going."

"Jane!"

"Mr. Rochester!"

"Withdraw, then—I consent; but remember, you leave me here in anguish. Go up to your own room; think over all I have said, and, Jane, cast a glance on my sufferings—think of me."

He turned away; he threw himself on his face on the sofa. "Oh, Jane! my hope—my love—my life!" broke in anguish from his lips. Then came a deep, strong sob.

I had already gained the door; but, reader, I walked back—walked back as determinedly as I had retreated. I knelt down by him; I turned his face from the cushion to me; I kissed his cheek; I smoothed his hair with my hand.

"God bless you, my dear master!" I said. "God keep you from harm and wrong—direct you, solace you—reward you well for your past kindness to me."

"Little Jane's love would have been my best reward," he answered; "without it, my heart is broken. But Jane will give me her love: yes—nobly, generously."

Up the blood rushed to his face; forth flashed the fire from his eyes; erect he sprang; he held his arms out; but I evaded the embrace, and at once quitted the room.

"Farewell!" was the cry of my heart as I left him. Despair added, "Farewell, for ever!"

Jane Eyre.

EMILY BRONTË

1818–1848

22...HEATHCLIFF AND CATHERINE LINTON

[Heathcliff, a man of ungovernable temper and fierce implacable hatreds, "a lost and fallen spirit," is in love with Catherine Linton. Catherine is married to Edgar Linton, but despite the fact that she is grievously ill, and expecting a child, Heathcliff forces his way into her presence and passionately declares his love.]

ANOTHER week over—and I am so many days nearer health, and spring! I have now heard all my neighbour's history, at different sittings, as the housekeeper could spare time from more important occupations. I'll continue it in her own words, only a little condensed. She is, on the whole, a very fair narrator, and I don't think I could improve her style.

In the evening, she said, the evening of my visit to the Heights, I knew, as well as if I saw him, that Mr. Heathcliff was about the place; and I shunned going out, because I still carried his letter in my pocket, and didn't want to be threatened or teased any more. I had made up my mind not to give it till my master went somewhere, as I could not guess how its receipt would affect Catherine. The consequence was, that it did not reach her before the lapse of three days. The fourth was Sunday, and I brought it into her room after the family were gone to church. There was a man-servant left to keep the house with me, and we generally made a practice of locking the doors during the hours of service; but on that occasion the weather was so warm and pleasant that I set them wide open, and, to fulfil my engagement, as I knew who would be coming, I told my companion that the mistress wished very much for some oranges, and he must run over to the village and get a few,

to be paid for on the morrow. He departed, and I went upstairs.

Mrs. Linton sat in a loose white dress, with a light shawl over her shoulders, in the recess of the open window, as usual. Her thick, long hair, had been partly removed at the beginning of her illness, and now she wore it simply combed in its natural tresses over her temples and neck. Her appearance was altered, as I had told Heathcliff; but when she was calm, there seemed unearthly beauty in the change. The flash of her eyes had been succeeded by a dreamy and melancholy softness; they no longer gave the impression of looking at the objects around her: they appeared always to gaze beyond, and far beyond—you would have said out of this world. Then, the paleness of her face—its haggard aspect having vanished as she recovered flesh—and the peculiar expression arising from her mental state, though painfully suggestive of their causes, added to the touching interest which she awakened; and—invariably to me, I know, and to any person who saw her, I should think—refuted more tangible proofs of convalescence, and stamped her as one doomed to decay.

A book lay spread on the sill before her, and the scarcely perceptible wind fluttered its leaves at intervals. I believe Linton had laid it there: for she never endeavoured to divert herself with reading, or occupation of any kind, and he would spend many an hour in trying to entice her attention to some subject which had formerly been her amusement. She was conscious of his aim, and in her better moods endured his efforts placidly, only showing their uselessness by now and then suppressing a wearied sigh, and checking him at last with the saddest of smiles and kisses. At other times, she would turn petulantly away, and hide her face in her hands, or even push him off angrily; and then he took care to let her alone, for he was certain of doing no good.

Gimmerton chapel bells were still ringing; and the full, mellow flow of the beck in the valley came soothingly on the ear. It was a sweet substitute for the yet absent murmur

of the summer foliage, which drowned that music about the Grange when the trees were in leaf. At Wuthering Heights it always sounded on quiet days following a great thaw or a season of steady rain. And of Wuthering Heights Catherine was thinking as she listened: that is, if she thought or listened at all; but she had the vague, distant look I mentioned before, which expressed no recognition of material things either by ear or eye.

"There's a letter for you, Mrs. Linton," I said, gently inserting it in one hand that rested on her knee. "You must read it immediately, because it wants an answer. Shall I break the seal?"—"Yes," she answered, without altering the direction of her eyes. I opened it—it was very short. "Now," I continued, "read it." She drew away her hand, and let it fall. I replaced it in her lap, and stood waiting till it should please her to glance down; but that movement was so long delayed that at last I resumed—

"Must I read it, ma'am? It is from Mr. Heathcliff."

There was a start and a troubled gleam of recollection, and a struggle to arrange her ideas. She lifted the letter, and seemed to peruse it; and when she came to the signature she sighed; yet still I found she had not gathered its import, for, upon my desiring to hear her reply, she merely pointed to the name, and gazed at me with mournful and questioning eagerness.

"Well, he wishes to see you," said I, guessing her need of an interpreter. "He's in the garden by this time, and impatient to know what answer I shall bring."

As I spoke, I observed a large dog lying on the sunny grass beneath raise its ears as if about to bark, and then smoothing them back, announce, by a wag of the tail, that some one approached whom it did not consider a stranger. Mrs. Linton bent forward, and listened breathlessly. The minute after a step traversed the hall; the open house was too tempting for Heathcliff to resist walking in: most likely he supposed that I was inclined to shirk my promise, and so resolved to trust to his own audacity. With straining eagerness Catherine gazed towards the entrance of her

chamber. He did not hit the right room directly; she motioned me to admit him, but he found it out ere I could reach the door, and in a stride or two was at her side, and had her grasped in his arms.

He neither spoke nor loosed his hold for some five minutes, during which period he bestowed more kisses than ever he gave in his life before, I dare say: but then my mistress had kissed him first, and I plainly saw that he could hardly bear, for downright agony, to look into her face! The same conviction had stricken him as me, from the instant he beheld her, that there was no prospect of ultimate recovery there—she was fated, sure to die.

"Oh, Cathy! Oh, my life! how can I bear it?" was the first sentence he uttered, in a tone that did not seek to disguise his despair. And now he stared at her so earnestly that I thought the very intensity of his gaze would bring tears into his eyes; but they burned with anguish: they did not melt.

"What now?" said Catherine, leaning back, and returning his look with a suddenly clouded brow: her humour was a mere vane for constantly varying caprices. "You and Edgar have broken my heart, Heathcliff! And you both come to bewail the deed to me, as if *you* were the people to be pitied! I shall not pity you, not I. You have killed me—and thriven on it, I think. How strong you are! How many years do you mean to live after I am gone?"

Heathcliff had knelt on one knee to embrace her; he attempted to rise, but she seized his hair, and kept him down.

"I wish I could hold you," she continued bitterly, "till we were both dead! I shouldn't care what you suffered. I care nothing for your sufferings. Why shouldn't *you* suffer? I do! Will you forget me? Will you be happy when I am in the earth? Will you say twenty years hence, 'That's the grave of Catherine Earnshaw. I loved her long ago, and was wretched to lose her; but it is past. I've loved many others since: my children are dearer to me than she was; and, at death, I shall not rejoice that I am going

to her : I shall be sorry that I must leave them ! ' Will you say so, Heathcliff ? "

" Don't torture me till I'm as mad as yourself," cried he, wrenching his head free, and grinding his teeth.

The two, to a cool spectator, made a strange and fearful picture. Well might Catherine deem that heaven would be a land of exile to her, unless with her mortal body she cast away her mortal character also. Her present countenance had a wild vindictiveness in its white cheek, and a bloodless lip and scintillating eye ; and she retained in her closed fingers a portion of the locks she had been grasping. As to her companion, while raising himself with one hand, he had taken her arm with the other ; and so inadequate was his stock of gentleness to the requirements of her condition, that on his letting go I saw four distinct impressions left blue in the colourless skin.

" Are you possessed with a devil," he pursued savagely, " to talk in that manner to me when you are dying ? Do you reflect that all those words will be branded in my memory, and eating deeper eternally after you have left me ? You know you lie to say I have killed you : and, Catherine, you know that I could as soon forget you as my existence ! Is it not sufficient for your infernal selfishness, that while you are at peace I shall writhe in the torments of hell ? "

" I shall not be at peace," moaned Catherine, recalled to a sense of physical weakness by the violent, unequal throbbing of her heart, which beat visibly and audibly under this excess of agitation. She said nothing further till the paroxysm was over ; then she continued, more kindly—

" I'm not wishing you greater torment than I have, Heathcliff. I only wish us never to be parted : and should a word of mine distress you hereafter, think I feel the same distress underground, and for my own sake, forgive me ! Come here and kneel down again ! You never harmed me in your life. Nay, if you nurse anger, that will be worse to remember than my harsh words ! Won't you come here again ? Do ! "

Heathcliff went to the back of her chair, and leant over, but not so far as to let her see his face, which was livid with emotion. She bent round to look at him; he would not permit it: turning abruptly, he walked to the fireplace, where he stood, silent, with his back towards us. Mrs. Linton's glance followed him suspiciously: every movement woke a new sentiment in her. After a pause and a prolonged gaze, she resumed; addressing me in accents of indignant disappointment:

"Oh, you see, Nelly, he would not relent a moment to keep me out of the grave. *That* is how I'm loved! Well, never mind. That is not *my* Heathcliff. I shall love mine yet; and take him with me: he's in my soul. And," added she musingly, "the thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all. I'm tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there: not seeing it dimly through tears, and yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart; but really with it, and in it. Nelly, you think you are better and more fortunate than I; in full health and strength: you are sorry for me—very soon that will be altered. I shall be sorry for *you*. I shall be incomparably beyond and above you all. I *wonder* he won't be near me!" She went on to herself. "I thought he wished it. Heathcliff, dear! you should not be sullen now. Do come to me, Heathcliff."

In her eagerness she rose and supported herself on the arm of the chair. At that earnest appeal he turned to her, looking absolutely desperate. His eyes, wide and wet, at last flashed fiercely on her; his breast heaved convulsively. An instant they held asunder, and then how they met I hardly saw, but Catherine made a spring, and he caught her, and they were locked in an embrace from which I thought my mistress would never be released alive: in fact, to my eyes, she seemed directly insensible. He flung himself into the nearest seat, and on my approaching hurriedly to ascertain if she had fainted, he gnashed at me, and foamed like a mad dog, and gathered her to him with greedy jealousy. I did not feel as if I were in the

company of a creature of my own species: it appeared that he would not understand, though I spoke to him; so I stood off, and held my tongue, in great perplexity.

A movement of Catherine's relieved me a little presently: she put up her hand to clasp his neck, and bring her cheek to his as he held her; while he, in return, covering her with frantic caresses, said wildly—

"You teach me now how cruel you've been—cruel and false. *Why* did you despise me? *Why* did you betray your own heart, Cathy? I have not one word of comfort. You deserve this. You have killed yourself. Yes, you may kiss me, and cry; and ring out my kisses and tears: they'll blight you—they'll damn you. You loved me—then what *right* had you to leave me? What right—answer me—for the poor fancy you felt for Linton? Because misery, and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, *you*, of your own will, did it. I have not broken your heart—*you* have broken it; and in breaking it, you have broken mine. So much the worse for me, that I am strong. Do I want to live? What kind of living will it be when you—oh, God! would *you* like to live with your soul in the grave?"

"Let me alone. Let me alone," sobbed Catherine. "If I've done wrong, I'm dying for it. It is enough! You left me too: but I won't upbraid you! I forgive you. Forgive me!"

"It is hard to forgive, and to look at those eyes, and feel those wasted hands," he answered. "Kiss me again; and don't let me see your eyes! I forgive what you have done to me. I love *my* murderer—but *yours*! How can I?"

They were silent—their faces hid against each other, and washed by each other's tears. At least, I suppose the weeping was on both sides; as it seemed Heathcliff *could* weep on a great occasion like this.

I grew very uncomfortable, meanwhile; for the afternoon wore fast away, the man whom I had sent off returned from his errand, and I could distinguish, by the shine of the

western sun up the valley, a concourse thickening outside Gimmerton chapel porch.

" Service is over," I announced. " My master will be here in half an hour."

Heathcliff groaned a curse, and strained Catherine closer : she never moved.

Ere long I perceived a group of the servants passing up the road towards the kitchen wing. Mr. Linton was not far behind ; he opened the gate himself and sauntered slowly up, probably enjoying the lovely afternoon that breathed as soft as summer.

" Now he is here," I exclaimed. " For Heaven's sake, hurry down ! You'll not meet any one on the front stairs. Do be quick ; and stay among the trees till he is fairly in."

" I must go, Cathy," said Heathcliff, seeking to extricate himself from his companion's arms. " But if I live, I'll see you again before you are asleep. I won't stray five yards from your window."

" You must not go ! " she answered, holding him as firmly as her strength allowed. " You *shall* not, I tell you."

" For one hour, " he pleaded earnestly.

" Not for one minute," she replied.

" I *must*—Linton will be up immediately," persisted the alarmed intruder.

He would have risen, and unfixed her fingers by the act —she clung fast, gasping : there was mad resolution in her face.

" No ! " she shrieked. " Oh, don't, don't go. It is the last time ! Edgar will not hurt us. Heathcliff, I shall die ! I shall die ! "

" Damn the fool ! There he is," cried Heathcliff, sinking back into his seat. " Hush, my darling ! Hush, hush, Catherine ! I'll stay. If he shot me so, I'd expire with a blessing on my lips."

And there they were fast again. I heard my master mounting the stairs—the cold sweat ran from my forehead : I was horrified.

" Are you going to listen to her ravings ? " I said

passionately. " She does not know what she says. Will you ruin her, because she has not wit to help herself? Get up! You could be free instantly. That is the most diabolical deed that ever you did. We are all done for—master, mistress, and servant."

I wrung my hands, and cried out; and Mr. Linton hastened his step at the noise. In the midst of my agitation, I was sincerely glad to observe that Catherine's arms had fallen relaxed, and her head hung down.

" She's fainted, or dead," I thought: " so much the better. Far better that she should be dead, than lingering a burden and a misery-maker to all about her."

Edgar sprang to his unbidden guest, blanched with astonishment and rage. What he meant to do, I cannot tell; however, the other stopped all demonstrations at once, by placing the lifeless-looking form in his arms.

" Look there! " he said. " Unless you be a fiend, help her first—then you shall speak to me! "

He walked into the parlour, and sat down. Mr. Linton summoned me, and with great difficulty, and after resorting to many means, we managed to restore her to sensation; but she was all bewildered; she sighed, and moaned, and knew nobody. Edgar, in his anxiety for her, forgot her hated friend. I did not. I went, at the earliest opportunity, and besought him to depart, affirming that Catherine was better, and he should hear from me in the morning how she passed the night.

" I shall not refuse to go out of doors," he answered; " but I shall stay in the garden: and, Nelly, mind you keep your word to-morrow. I shall be under those larch trees. Mind! or I pay another visit, whether Linton be in or not."

He sent a rapid glance through the half-open door of the chamber, and, ascertaining that what I stated was apparently true, delivered the house of his luckless presence.

Wuthering Heights.

GEORGE ELIOT

1819–1880

23...ARTHUR DONNITHORNE AND HETTY SORREL

[Arthur Donnithorne, the young squire of Hayslope, is greatly attracted by the pretty, but vain and shallow, Hetty Sorrel, dairymaid at the Hall Farm; and Hetty, who has foolish dreams of the future, and of one day seeing herself the young squire's wife, does not discourage his advances.]

WHEN Arthur went up to his dressing-room again after luncheon, it was inevitable that the debate he had had with himself there earlier in the day should flash across his mind; but it was impossible for him now to dwell on the remembrance—impossible to recall the feelings and reflections which had been decisive with him then, any more than to recall the peculiar scent of the air that had freshened him when he first opened his window. The desire to see Hetty had rushed back like an ill-stemmed current; he was amazed himself at the force with which this trivial fancy seemed to grasp him: he was even rather tremulous as he brushed his hair—pooh! it was riding in that break-neck way. It was because he had made a serious affair of an idle matter, by thinking of it as if it were of any consequence. He would amuse himself by seeing Hetty to-day, and get rid of the whole thing from his mind. It was all Irwine's fault. "If Irwine had said nothing, I shouldn't have thought half so much of Hetty as of Meg's lameness." However, it was just the sort of day for lolling in the Hermitage, and he would go and finish Dr. Moore's *Zeluco* there before dinner. The Hermitage stood in Fir-tree Grove—the way Hetty was sure to come in walking from the Hall Farm. So nothing could be simpler and more natural:

meeting Hetty was a mere circumstance of his walk, not its object.

Arthur's shadow flitted rather faster among the sturdy oaks of the Chase than might have been expected from the shadow of a tired man on a warm afternoon, and it was still scarcely four o'clock when he stood before the tall narrow gate leading into the delicious labyrinthine wood which skirted one side of the Chase, and which was called Fir-tree Grove, not because the firs were many, but because they were few. It was a wood of beeches and limes, with here and there a light, silver-stemmed birch—just the sort of wood most haunted by the nymphs : you see their white sunlit limbs gleaming athwart the boughs, or peeping from behind the smooth-sweeping outline of a tall lime ; you hear their soft liquid laughter—but if you look with a too curious sacrilegious eye, they vanish behind the silvery beeches, they make you believe that their voice was only a running brooklet, perhaps they metamorphose themselves into a tawny squirrel that scampers away and mocks you from the topmost bough. It was not a grove with measured grass or rolled gravel for you to tread upon, but with narrow, hollow-shaped, earthy paths, edged with faint dashes of delicate moss—paths which look as if they were made by the free-will of the trees and underwood, moving reverently aside to look at the tall queen of the white-footed nymphs.

It was along the broadest of these paths that Arthur Donnithorne passed, under an avenue of limes and beeches. It was a still afternoon—the golden light was lingering languidly among the upper boughs, only glancing down here and there on the purple pathway and its edge of faintly sprinkled moss : an afternoon in which destiny disguises her cold awful face behind a hazy radiant veil, encloses us in warm downy wings, and poisons us with violet-scented breath. Arthur strolled along carelessly, with a book under his arm, but not looking on the ground as meditative men are apt to do ; his eyes *would* fix themselves on the distant bend in the road, round which a little figure must surely appear before long. Ah ! there she comes : first

a bright patch of colour, like a tropic bird among the boughs, then a tripping figure, with a round hat on, and a small basket under her arm; then a deep-blushing, almost frightened, but bright-smiling girl, making her curtsy with a fluttered yet happy glance, as Arthur came up to her. If Arthur had had time to think at all, he would have thought it strange that he should feel fluttered too, be conscious of blushing too—in fact, look and feel as foolish as if he had been taken by surprise instead of meeting just what he expected. Poor things! It was a pity they were not in that golden age of childhood when they would have stood face to face, eyeing each other with timid liking, then given each other a little butterfly kiss, and toddled off to play together. Arthur would have gone home to his silk-curtained cot, and Hetty to her homespun pillow, and both would have slept without dreams, and to-morrow would have been a life hardly conscious of a yesterday.

Arthur turned round and walked by Hetty's side without giving a reason. They were alone together for the first time. What an overpowering presence that first privacy is! He actually dared not look at this little buttermaker for the first minute or two. As for Hetty, her feet rested on a cloud, and she was borne along by warm zephyrs; she had forgotten her rose-coloured ribbons; she was no more conscious of her limbs than if her childish soul had passed into a water-lily, resting on a liquid bed, and warmed by the midsummer sunbeams. It may seem a contradiction, but Arthur gathered a certain carelessness and confidence from his timidity: it was an entirely different state of mind from what he had expected in such a meeting with Hetty; and full as he was of vague feeling, there was room, in those moments of silence, for the thought that his previous debates and scruples were needless.

"You are quite right to choose this way of coming to the Chase," he said at last, looking down at Hetty, "it is so much prettier as well as shorter than coming by either of the lodges."

"Yes, sir," Hetty answered, with a tremulous, almost

whispering voice. She didn't know one bit how to speak to a gentleman like Mr. Arthur, and her very vanity made her more coy of speech.

" Do you come every week to see Mrs. Pomfret ? "

" Yes, sir, every Thursday, only when she's got to go out with Miss Donnithorne."

" And she's teaching you something, is she ? "

" Yes, sir, the lace-mending as she learnt abroad, and the stocking-mending—it looks just like the stocking, you can't tell it's been mended ; and she teaches me cutting-out too."

" What, are *you* going to be a lady's maid ? "

" I should like to be one very much indeed." Hetty spoke more audibly now, but still rather tremulously ; she thought, perhaps she seemed as stupid to Captain Donnithorne as Luke Britton did to her.

" I suppose Mrs. Pomfret always expects you at this time ? "

" She expects me at four o'clock. I'm rather late to-day, because my aunt couldn't spare me ; but the regular time is four, because that gives us time before Miss Donnithorne's bell rings."

" Ah, then, I must not keep you now, else I should like to show you the Hermitage. Did you ever see it ? "

" No, sir."

" This is the walk where we turn up to it. But we must not go now. I'll show it you some other time, if you'd like to see it ? "

" Yes, please, sir."

" Do you always come back this way in the evening, or are you afraid to come so lonely a road ? "

" Oh no, sir, it's never late ; I always set out by eight o'clock, and it's so light now in the evening. My aunt would be angry with me if I didn't get home before nine."

" Perhaps Craig, the gardener, comes to take care of you ? "

A deep blush overspread Hetty's face and neck. " I'm

sure he doesn't; I'm sure he never did; I wouldn't let him; I don't like him," she said hastily, and the tears of vexation had come so fast, that before she had done speaking a bright drop rolled down her hot cheek. Then she felt ashamed to death that she was crying, and for one long instant her happiness was all gone. But in the next she felt an arm steal round her, and a gentle voice said:

"Why, Hetty, what makes you cry? I didn't mean to vex you. I wouldn't vex you for the world, you little blossom. Come, don't cry; look at me, else I shall think you won't forgive me."

Arthur had laid his hand on the soft arm that was nearest to him, and was stooping towards Hetty with a look of coaxing entreaty. Hetty lifted her long dewy lashes, and met the eyes that were bent towards her with a sweet, timid, beseeching look. What a space of time those three moments were, while their eyes met and his arms touched her! Love is such a simple thing when we have only one-and-twenty summers and a sweet girl of seventeen trembles under our glance, as if she were a bud first opening her heart with wondering rapture to the morning. Such young unfurrowed souls roll to meet each other like two velvet peaches that touch softly and are at rest; they mingle as easily as two brooklets that ask for nothing but to entwine themselves and ripple with ever interlacing curves in the leafiest hiding-places. While Arthur gazed into Hetty's dark beseeching eyes, it made no difference to him what sort of English she spoke; and even if hoops and powder had been in fashion, he would very likely not have been sensible just then that Hetty wanted those signs of high breeding.

But they started asunder with beating hearts: something had fallen on the ground with a rattling noise; it was Hetty's basket; all her little work-woman's matters were scattered on the path, some of them showing a capability of rolling to great lengths. There was much to be done in picking up, and not a word was spoken; but when Arthur hung the basket over her arm again, the poor child

felt a strange difference in his look and manner. He just pressed her hand and said, with a look and tone that were almost chilling to her :

" I have been hindering you ; I must not keep you any longer now. You will be expected at the house. Good-bye."

Without waiting for her to speak, he turned away from her and hurried back towards the road that led to the Hermitage, leaving Hetty to pursue her way in a strange dream, that seemed to have begun in bewildering delight, and was now passing into contrarieties and sadness. Would he meet her again as she came home ? Why had he spoken almost as if he were displeased with her ? and then run away so suddenly ? She cried, hardly knowing why.

Arthur too was very uneasy, but his feelings were lit up for him by a more distinct consciousness. He hurried to the Hermitage, which stood in the heart of the wood, unlocked the door with a hasty wrench, slammed it after him, pitched *Zeluco* into the most distant corner, and, thrusting his right hand into his pocket, first walked four or five times up and down the scanty length of the little room, and then seated himself on the ottoman in an uncomfortable stiff way, as we often do when we wish not to abandon ourselves to feeling.

He was getting in love with Hetty—that was quite plain. He was ready to pitch everything else—no matter where—for the sake of surrendering himself to this delicious feeling which had just disclosed itself. It was no use blinking the fact now—they would get too fond of each other, if he went on taking notice of her—and what would come of it ? He should have to go away in a few weeks, and the poor little thing would be miserable. He *must not* see her alone again ; he must keep out of her way. What a fool he was for coming back from Gawaine's !

He got up and threw open the windows to let in the soft breath of the afternoon, and the healthy scent of the firs that made a belt round the Hermitage. The soft air did

not help his resolutions, as he leaned out and looked into the leafy distance. But he considered his resolution sufficiently fixed: there was no need to debate with himself any longer. He had made up his mind not to meet Hetty again; and now he might give himself up to thinking how immensely agreeable it would be if circumstances were different—how pleasant it would have been to meet her this evening as she came back, and put his arm round her again and look into her sweet face. He wondered if the dear little thing were thinking of him too—twenty to one she was. How beautiful her eyes were with the tear on their lashes! He would like to satisfy his soul for a day with looking at them, and he *must* see her again:—he must see her, simply to remove any false impression from her mind about his manner to her just now. He would behave in a quiet, kind way to her—just to prevent her from going home with her head full of wrong fancies. Yes, that would be the best thing to do after all.

It was a long while—more than an hour—before Arthur had brought his meditations to this point; but once arrived there, he could stay no longer at the Hermitage. The time must be filled up with movement until he should see Hetty again. And it was already late enough to go and dress for dinner, for his grandfather's dinner-hour was six.

It happened that Mrs. Pomfret had had a slight quarrel with Mrs. Best, the housekeeper, on this Thursday morning—a fact which had two consequences highly convenient to Hetty. It caused Mrs. Pomfret to have tea sent up to her own room, and it inspired that exemplary lady's-maid with so lively a recollection of former passages in Mrs. Best's conduct, and of dialogues in which Mrs. Best had decidedly the inferiority as an interlocutor with Mrs. Pomfret, that Hetty required no more presence of mind than was demanded for using her needle, and throwing in an occasional "yes" or "no." She would have wanted to put on her hat earlier than usual; only she had told Captain Donnithorne that she usually set out about eight o'clock, and if he *should*

go to the Grove again expecting to see her, and she should be gone! Would he come? Her little butterfly-soul fluttered incessantly between memory and dubious expectation. At last the minute-hand of the old-fashioned, brazen-faced timepiece was on the last quarter to eight, and there was every reason for its being time to get ready for departure. Even Mrs. Pomfret's preoccupied mind did not prevent her from noticing what looked like a new flush of beauty in the little thing as she tied on her hat before the looking-glass.

"That child gets prettier and prettier every day, I do believe," was her inward comment. "The more's the pity. She'll get neither a place nor a husband any the sooner for it. Sober well-to-do men don't like such pretty wives. When I was a girl, I was more admired than if I had been so very pretty. However, she's reason to be grateful to me for teaching her something to get her bread with, better than farmhouse work. They always told me I was good-natured—and that's the truth, and to my hurt, too, else there's them in this house that wouldn't be here now to lord it over me in the housekeeper's room."

Hetty walked hastily across the short space of pleasure-ground which she had to traverse, dreading to meet Mr. Craig, to whom she could hardly have spoken civilly. How relieved she was when she had got safely under the oaks and among the fern of the Chase! Even then she was as ready to be startled as the deer that leaped away at her approach. She thought nothing of the evening light that lay gently in the grassy alleys between the fern, and made the beauty of their living green more visible than it had been in the overpowering flood of noon: she thought of nothing that was present. She only saw something that was possible: Mr. Arthur Donnithorne coming to meet her again along the Fir-tree Grove. That was the foreground of Hetty's picture; behind it lay a bright hazy something—days that were not to be as the other days of her life had been. It was as if she had been wooed by a river-god,

who might any time take her to his wondrous halls below a watery heaven. There was no knowing what would come, since this strange entrancing delight had come. If a chest full of lace and satin and jewels had been sent her from some unknown source, how could she but have thought that her whole lot was going to change, and that to-morrow some still more bewildering joy would befall her? Hetty had never read a novel; if she had ever seen one, I think the words would have been too hard for her; how then could she find a shape for her expectations? They were as formless as the sweet languid odours of the garden at the Chase, which had floated past her as she walked by the gate.

She is at another gate now—that leading into Fir-tree Grove. She enters the wood, where it is already twilight, and at every step she takes, the fear at her heart becomes colder. If he should not come! Oh how dreary it was—the thought of going out at the other end of the wood, into the unsheltered road, without having seen him. She reaches the first turning towards the Hermitage, walking slowly—he is not there. She hates the leveret that runs across the path: she hates everything that is not what she longs for. She walks on, happy whenever she is coming to a bend in the road, for perhaps he is behind it. No. She is beginning to cry: her heart has swelled so, the tears stand in her eyes; she gives one great sob, while the corners of her mouth quiver, and the tears roll down.

She doesn't know that there is another turning to the Hermitage, that she is close against it, and that Arthur Donnithorne is only a few yards from her, full of one thought, and a thought of which she only is the object. He is going to see Hetty again: that is the longing which has been growing through the last three hours to a feverish thirst. Not, of course, to speak in the caressing way into which he had unguardedly fallen before dinner, but to set things right with her by a kindness which would have the air of friendly civility, and prevent her from running away with wrong notions about their mutual relation.

If Hetty had known he was there, she would not have cried; and it would have been better, for then Arthur would perhaps have behaved as wisely as he had intended. As it was, she started when he appeared at the end of the side-alley, and looked up at him with two great drops rolling down her cheeks. What else could he do but speak to her in a soft, soothing tone, as if she were a bright-eyed spaniel with a thorn in her foot?

"Has something frightened you, Hetty? Have you seen anything in the wood? Don't be frightened—I'll take care of you now."

Hetty was blushing so, she didn't know whether she was happy or miserable. To be crying again—what did gentlemen think of girls who cried in that way? She felt unable even to say "no," but could only look away from him, and wipe the tears from her cheek. Not before a great drop had fallen on her rose-coloured strings: she knew that quite well.

"Come, be cheerful again. Smile at me, and tell me what's the matter. Come, tell me."

Hetty turned her head towards him, whispered, "I thought you wouldn't come," and slowly got courage to lift her eyes to him. That look was too much: he must have had eyes of Egyptian granite not to look too lovingly in return.

"You little frightened bird! little tearful rose! silly pet! You won't cry again, now I'm with you, will you?"

Ah, he doesn't know in the least what he is saying. This is not what he meant to say. His arm is stealing round the waist again, it is tightening its clasp; he is bending his face nearer and nearer to the round cheek, his lips are meeting those pouting child-lips, and for a long moment time has vanished. He may be a shepherd in Arcadia for aught he knows, he may be the first youth kissing the first maiden, he may be Eros himself, sipping the lips of Psyche—it is all one.

There was no speaking for minutes after. They walked

along with beating hearts till they came within sight of the gate at the end of the wood. Then they looked at each other, not quite as they had looked before, for in their eyes there was the memory of a kiss.

Adam Bede.

RICHARD BLACKMORE

1825–1900

24...JOHN RIDD AND LORNA DOONE

[The Doones are a clan of savage outlaws, one of the clan, Carver Doone, having killed John Ridd's father. John has come to know and love the beautiful Lorna Doone. He met her for the first time by chance, in the Glen of the Doones, when she was a child of ten and he a boy of fourteen. And now, seven years later, he meets her in the Glen again. She tells him that she is in fear of the Doones, and they arrange that, in case of need, she shall cover a certain white stone with a cloth or mantle, as a sign that she wants him. He is then called away to London for two months, and on his return makes his way to the crest of the broken highland, whence he sees the signal.]

I FELT much inclined to tell dear mother all about Lorna, and how I loved her, yet had no hope of winning her. Often and often I had longed to do this, and have done with it. But the thought of my father's terrible death, at the hands of the Doones, prevented me. And it seemed to me foolish and mean to grieve mother, without any chance of my suit ever speeding. If once Lorna loved me, my mother should know it; and it would be the greatest happiness to me to have no concealment from her, though at first she was sure to grieve terribly. But I saw no more chance of Lorna loving me, than of the man in the moon coming down; or rather of the moon coming down to the man, as related in old mythology.

Now the merriment of the small birds, and the clear voice of the waters, and the lowing of cattle in meadows, and the view of no houses (except just our own and a neighbour's) and the knowledge of every body around, their kindness of heart, and simplicity, and love of their neighbour's doings—all these could not help or please me at all, and

many of them were much against me, in my secret depth of longing, and dark tumult of the mind. Many people may think me foolish, especially after coming from London, where many nice maids looked at me (on account of my bulk and stature) and I might have been fitted up with a sweetheart, in spite of my west-country twang, and the smallness of my purse; if only I had said the word. But nay; I have contempt for a man whose heart is like a shirt-stud (such as I saw in London cards), fitted into one to-day, sitting bravely on the breast; plucked out on the morrow morn, and the place that knew it, gone.

Now, what did I do but take my chance; reckless whether any one heeded me or not, only craving Lorna's heed, and time for ten words to her. Therefore I left the men of the farm as far away as might be, after making them work with me (which no man round our parts could do, to his own satisfaction) and then knowing them to be well weary, very unlike to follow me—and still more unlike to tell of me, for each had his London present—I strode right away, in good trust of my speed, without any more misgivings; but resolved to face the worst of it, and to try to be home for supper.

And first I went, I know not why, to the crest of the broken highland, whence I had agreed to watch for any mark or signal. And sure enough at last I saw (when it was too late to see) that the white stone had been covered over with a cloth or mantle—the sign that something had arisen to make Lorna want me. For a moment, I stood amazed at my evil fortune; that I should be too late, in the very thing of all things on which my heart was set! Then after eyeing sorrowfully every crick and cranny, to be sure that not a single flutter of my love was visible, off I set, with small respect either for my knees or neck, to make the round of the outer cliffs, and come up my old access.

Nothing could stop me; it was not long, although to me it seemed an age, before I stood in the niche of rock at the head of the slippery watercourse, and gazed into the quiet glen, where my foolish heart was dwelling. Notwithstand-

ing doubts of right, notwithstanding sense of duty, and despite all manly striving, and the great love of my home, there my heart was ever dwelling, knowing what a fool it was, and content to know it.

Many birds came twittering round me in the gold of August; many trees showed twinkling beauty, as the sun went lower; and the lines of water fell, from wrinkles into dimples. Little heeding, there I crouched; though with sense of every thing that afterwards should move me, like a picture or a dream; and every thing went by me softly, while my heart was gazing.

At last, a little figure came, not insignificant (I mean), but looking very light and slender in the moving shadows, gently here and softly there, as if vague of purpose, with a gloss of tender movement, in and out the wealth of trees, and liberty of the meadow. Who was I to crouch, or doubt, or look at her from a distance; what matter if they killed me now, an one tear came to bury me? Therefore I rushed out at once, as if shot-guns were unknown yet; not from any real courage, but from prisoned love burst forth.

I know not whether my own Lorna was afraid of what I looked, or what I might say to her, or of her own thoughts of me: all I know is that she looked frightened, when I hoped for gladness. Perhaps the power of my joy was more than maiden liked to own, or in any way to answer to; and to tell the truth, it seemed as if I might now forget myself; while she would take good care of it. This makes a man grow thoughtful; unless, as some low fellows do, he believe all women hypocrites.

Therefore I went slowly towards her, taken back in my impulse; and said all I could come to say, with some distress in doing it.

"Mistress Lorna, I had hope that you were in need of me."

"Oh, yes; but that was long ago; two months ago, or more, sir." And saying this she looked away, as if it all were over. But I was now so dazed and frightened, that it

took my breath away, and I could not answer, feeling sure that I was robbed, and some one else had won her. And I tried to turn away, without another word, and go.

But I could not help one stupid sob, though mad with myself for allowing it, but it came too sharp for pride to stay it, and it told a world of things. Lorna heard it, and ran to me, with her bright eyes full of wonder, pity, and great kindness, as if amazed that I had more than a simple liking for her. Then she held out both hands to me; and I took and looked at them.

"Master Ridd, I did not mean," she whispered, very softly, "I did not mean to vex you."

"If you would be loth to vex me, none else in this world can do it," I answered out of my great love, but fearing yet to look at her, mine eyes not being strong enough.

"Come away from this bright place," she answered, trembling in her turn; "I am watched and spied of late. Come beneath the shadows, John."

I would have leaped into the valley of the shadow of death (as described by the late John Bunyan), only to hear her call me "John," though Apollyon were lurking there, and Despair should lock me in.

She stole across the silent grass; but I strode hotly after her; fear was all beyond me now, except the fear of losing her. I could not but behold her manner, as she went before me, all her grace, and lovely sweetness, and her sense of what she was.

She led me to her own rich bower, which I told of once before; and if in spring it were a sight, what was it in summer glory? But although my mind had notice of its fairness and its wonder, not a heed my heart took of it, neither dwelt it in my presence more than flowing water. All that in my presence dwelt, all that in my heart was felt, was the maiden moving gently, and afraid to look at me.

For now the power of my love was abiding on her, new to her, unknown to her; not a thing to speak about, nor even to think clearly; only just to feel and wonder, with a pain of sweetness. She could look at me no more, neither could

she look away, with a studied manner—only to let fall her eyes, and blush, and be put out with me, and still more with herself.

I left her quite alone; though close, though tingling to have hold of her. Even her right hand was dropped, and lay among the mosses. Neither did I try to steal one glimpse below her eyelids. Life and death were hanging on the first glance I should win; yet I let it be so.

After long or short—I know not, yet ere I was weary, ere I yet began to think or wish for any answer—Lorna slowly raised her eyelids, with a gleam of dew below them, and looked at me doubtfully. Any look with so much in it never met my gaze before.

"Darling, do you love me?" was all that I could say to her.

"Yes, I like you very much," she answered, with her eyes gone from me, and her dark hair falling over, so as not to show me things.

"But do you love me, Lorna, Lorna; do you love me more than all the world?"

"No, to be sure not. Now why should I?"

"In truth, I know not why you should. Only I hoped that you did, Lorna. Either love me not at all, or as I love you, for ever."

"John, I love you very much; and I would not grieve you. You are the bravest, and the kindest, and the simplest of all men—I mean of all people—I like you very much, Master Ridd, and I think of you almost every day."

"That will not do for me, Lorna. Not almost every day I think, but every instant of my life, of you. For you I would give up my home, my love of all the world beside, my duty to my dearest ones; for you I would give up my life, and hope of life beyond it. Do you love me so?"

"Not by any means," said Lorna; "no; I like you very much, when you do not talk so wildly; and I like to see you come as if you would fill our valley up, and I like to think that even Carver would be nothing in your hands—but as to liking you like that, what should make it likely?

especially when I have made the signal, and for some two months or more, you have never even answered it! If you like me so ferociously, why do you leave me for other people to do just as they like with me?"

"To do as they like! Oh, Lorna, not to make you marry Carver?"

"No, Master Ridd, be not frightened so; it makes me fear to look at you."

"But you have not married Carver yet? Say quick! Why keep me waiting so?"

"Of course I have not, Master Ridd. Should I be here if I had, think you, and allowing you to like me so, and to hold my hand, and make me laugh, as I declare you almost do sometimes? And at other times you frighten me."

"Did they want you to marry Carver? Tell me all the truth of it."

"Not yet, not yet. They are not half so impetuous as you are, John. I am only just seventeen, you know, and who is to think of marrying? But they wanted me to give my word, and be formally betrothed to him in the presence of my grandfather. It seems that something frightened them. There is a youth named Charleworth Doone, every one calls him 'Charlie'; a headstrong and gay young man, very gallant in his looks and manner; and my uncle, the Counsellor, chose to fancy that Charlie looked at me too much, coming by my grandfather's cottage."

Here Lorna blushed so that I was frightened, and began to hate this Charlie more, a great deal more, than even Carver Doone.

"He had better not," said I; "I will fling him over it, if he dare. He shall see thee through the roof, Lorna, if at all he see thee."

"Master Ridd, you are worse than Carver! I thought you were so kind-hearted. Well, they wanted me to promise, and even to swear a solemn oath (a thing I have never done in my life) that I would wed my eldest cousin, this same Carver Doone, who is twice as old as I am, being thirty-five and upwards. That was why I gave the token that I

wished to see you, Master Ridd. They pointed out how much it was for the peace of all the family, and for mine own benefit; but I would not listen for a moment, though the Counsellor was most eloquent, and my grandfather begged me to consider, and Carver smiled his pleasantest, which is a truly frightful thing. Then both he and his crafty father were for using force with me; but Sir Ensor would not hear of it; and they have put off that extreme, until he shall be past its knowledge, or, at least, beyond preventing it. And now I am watched, and spied, and followed, and half my little liberty seems to be taken from me. I could not be here speaking with you even in my own nook and refuge, but for the aid, and skill, and courage of dear little Gwenny Carfax. She is now my chief reliance, and through her alone I hope to baffle all my enemies, since others have forsaken me."

Tears of sorrow and reproach were lurking in her soft dark eyes, until in fewest words I told her, that my seeming negligence was nothing but my bitter loss and wretched absence far away; of which I had so vainly striven to give any tidings without danger to her. When she heard all this, and saw what I had brought from London (which was nothing less than a ring of pearls with a sapphire in the midst of them, as pretty as could well be found), she let the gentle tears flow fast, and came and sat so close beside me, that I trembled like a folded sheep at the bleating of her lamb. But recovering comfort quickly, without more ado, I raised her left hand, and observed it with a nice regard, wondering at the small blue veins, and curves, and tapering whiteness, and the points it finished with. My wonder seemed to please her much, herself so well accustomed to it, and not fond of watching it. And then, before she could say a word, or guess what I was up to, as quick as ever I turned hand at a bout of wrestling, on her finger was my ring—sapphire for the veins of blue, and pearls to match white fingers.

"Oh, you crafty Master Ridd!" said Lorna, looking up at me, and blushing now a far brighter blush than when

she spoke of Charlie; "I thought that you were much too simple ever to do this sort of thing. No wonder you can catch the fish, as when first I saw you."

"Have I caught you, little fish? Or must all my life be spent in hopeless angling for you?"

"Neither one, nor the other, John! You have not caught me yet altogether, though I like you dearly, John; and if you will only keep away, I shall like you more and more. As for hopeless angling, John—that all others shall have until I tell you otherwise."

With the large tears in her eyes—tears which seemed to me to rise partly from her want to love me with the power of my love—she put her pure bright lips, half smiling, half prone to reply to tears, against my forehead lined with trouble, doubt, and eager longing. And then she drew my ring from off that snowy twig her finger, and held it out to me; and then, seeing how my face was falling, thrice she touched it with her lips, and sweetly gave it back to me. "John, I dare not take it now; else I should be cheating you. I will try to love you dearly, even as you deserve and wish. Keep it for me just till then. Something tells me I shall earn it, in a very little time. Perhaps you will be sorry then, sorry when it is all too late, to be loved by such as I am."

What could I do at her mournful tone, but kiss a thousand times the hand which she put up to warn me, and vow that I would rather die with one assurance of her love, than without it live for ever, with all beside that the world could give? Upon this she looked so lovely, with her dark eyelashes trembling, and her soft eyes full of light, and the colour of clear sunrise mounting on her cheeks and brow, that I was forced to turn away, being overcome with beauty.

"Dearest darling, love of my life," I whispered through her clouds of hair; "how long must I wait to know, how long must I linger doubting whether you can ever stoop from your birth and wondrous beauty to a poor coarse hind like me, an ignorant unlettered yeoman——"

"I will not have you revile yourself," said Lorna, very

tenderly—just as I had meant to make her. "You are not rude and unlettered, John. You know a great deal more than I do: you have learned both Greek and Latin, as you told me long ago, and you have been at the very best school in the West of England. None of us but my grandfather, and the Counsellor (who is a great scholar), can compare with you in this. And though I have laughed at your manner of speech, I only laughed in fun, John; I never meant to vex you by it, nor knew that I had done so."

"Nought you say can vex me, dear," I answered, as she leaned towards me, in her generous sorrow; "unless you say, 'Begone, John Ridd; I love another more than you.'"

"Then I shall never vex you, John. Never, I mean, by saying that. Now, John, if you please, be quiet——"

For I was carried away so much, by hearing her call me "John" so often, and the music of her voice, and the way she bent toward me, and the shadow of soft weeping in the sunlight of her eyes, that some of my great hand was creeping in a manner not to be imagined, and far less explained, toward the lithesome, wholesome curving underneath her mantle-fold, and out of sight and harm, as I thought; not being her front waist. However, I was dashed with that, and pretended not to mean it; only to pluck some lady-fern, whose elegance did me no good.

"Now, John," said Lorna, being so quick that not even a lover could cheat her, and observing my confusion more intently than she need have done. "Master John Ridd, it is high time for you to go home to your mother. I love your mother very much, from what you have told me about her, and I will not have her cheated."

"If you truly love my mother," said I, very craftily, "the only way to show it is by truly loving me."

Upon that, she laughed at me in the sweetest manner, and with such provoking ways, and such come-and-go of glances, and beginning of quick blushes, which she tried to laugh away; that I knew, as well as if she herself had told me, by some knowledge (void of reasoning, and the surer for it), I knew quite well, while all my heart was

burning hot within me, and mine eyes were shy of hers, and her eyes were shy of mine; for certain and for ever this I knew—as in a glory—that Lorna Doone had now begun, and would go on, to love me.

Lorna Doone.

GEORGE MEREDITH

1828–1909

25...RICHARD FEVEREL AND LUCY

HE had landed on an island of the still-vexed Bermoothes. The world lay wrecked behind him: Raynham hung in mists, remote, a phantom to the vivid reality of this white hand which had drawn him thither away thousands of leagues in an eye-twinkle. Hark, how Ariel sang overhead! What splendour in the heavens! What marvels of beauty about his enchanted head! And, O you wonder! Fair Flame! by whose light the glories of being are now first seen. . . . Radiant Miranda! Prince Ferdinand is at your feet.

Or is it Adam, his rib taken from his side in sleep, and thus transformed, to make him behold his Paradise, and lose it? . . .

The youth looked on her with as glowing an eye. It was the First Woman to him.

And she—mankind was all Caliban to her, saving this one princely youth.

So to each other said their changing eyes in the moment they stood together; he pale, and she blushing.

She was indeed sweetly fair, and would have been held fair among rival damsels. On a magic shore, and to a youth educated by a System, strung like an arrow drawn to the head, he, it might be guessed, could fly fast and far with her. The soft rose in her cheeks, the clearness of her eyes, bore witness to the body's virtue; and health and happy blood were in her bearing. Had she stood before Sir Austin among rival damsels, that Scientific Humanist, for the consummation of his System, would have thrown her the handkerchief for his son. The wide summer-hat,

nodding over her forehead to her brows, seemed to flow with the flowing heavy curls, and those fire-threaded mellow curls, only half-curls, waves of hair call them, rippling at the ends, went like a sunny red-veined torrent down her back almost to her waist: a glorious vision to the youth, who embraced it as a flower of beauty, and read not a feature. There were curious features of colour in her face for him to have read. Her brows, thick and brownish against a soft skin showing the action of the blood, met in the bend of a bow, extending to the temples long and level: you saw that she was fashioned to peruse the sights of earth, and by the pliability of her brows that the wonderful creature used her faculty, and was not going to be a statue to the gazer. Under the dark thick brows an arch of lashes shot out, giving a wealth of darkness to the full frank blue eyes, a mystery of meaning—more than brain was ever meant to fathom: richer, henceforth, than all mortal wisdom to Prince Ferdinand. For when nature turns artist, and produces contrasts of colour on a fair face, where is the Sage, or what the Oracle, shall match the depth of its lightest look?

Prince Ferdinand was also fair. In his slim boating-attire his figure looked heroic. His hair, rising from the parting to the right of his forehead, in what his admiring Lady Blandish called his plume, fell away slanting silkily to the temples across the nearly imperceptible upward curve of his brows there—felt more than seen, so slight it was—and gave to his profile a bold beauty, to which his bashful, breathless air was a flattering charm. An arrow drawn to the head, capable of flying fast and far with her! He leaned a little forward to her, drinking her in with all his eyes, and young Love has a thousand. Then truly the System triumphed, just ere it was to fall; and could Sir Austin have been content to draw the arrow to the head, and let it fly, when it would fly, he might have pointed to his son again, and said to the world, "Match him!" Such keen bliss as the youth had in the sight of her, an innocent youth alone has powers of soul in him to experience.

" O Women ! " says *The Pilgrim's Scrip*, in one of its solitary outbursts, " Women, who like, and will have for hero, a rake ! how soon are you not to learn that you have taken bankrupts to your bosoms, and that the putrescent gold that attracted you is the slime of the Lake of Sin ! "

If these two were Ferdinand and Miranda, Sir Austin was not Prospero, and was not present, or their fates might have been different.

So they stood a moment, changing eyes, and then Miranda spoke, and they came down to earth, feeling no less in heaven.

She spoke to thank him for his aid. She used quite common simple words ; and used them, no doubt, to express a common simple meaning : but to him she was uttering magic, casting spells, and the effect they had on him was manifested in the incoherence of his replies, which were too foolish to be chronicled.

The couple were again mute. Suddenly Miranda, with an exclamation of anguish, and innumerable lights and shadows playing over her lovely face, clapped her hands, crying aloud, " My book ! my book ! " and ran to the bank.

Prince Ferdinand was at her side. " What have you lost ? " he said.

" My book ! my book ! " she answered, her long delicious curls swinging across her shoulders to the stream. Then turning to him, divining his rash intention, " Oh, no, no ! let me entreat you not to," she said ; " I do not so very much mind losing it." And in her eagerness to restrain him she unconsciously laid her gentle hand upon his arm, and took the force of motion out of him.

" Indeed, I do not really care for the silly book," she continued, withdrawing her hand quickly, and reddening. " Pray do not ! "

The young gentleman had kicked off his shoes. No sooner was the spell of contact broken than he jumped in. The water was still troubled and discoloured by his introductory

adventure, and, though he ducked his head with the spirit of a dabchick, the book was missing. A scrap of paper floating from the bramble just above the water, and looking as if fire caught its edges and it had flown from one adverse element to the other, was all he could lay hold of; and he returned to land disconsolately, to hear Miranda's murmured mixing of thanks and pretty expostulations.

"Let me try again," he said.

"No, indeed!" she replied, and used the awful threat: "I will run away if you do," which effectually restrained him.

Her eye fell on the fire-stained scrap of paper, and brightened, as she cried, "There, there! you have what I want. It is that. I do not care for the book. No, please! You are not to look at it. Give it me."

Before her playfully imperative injunction was fairly spoken, Richard had glanced at the document and discovered a Griffin between Two Wheatsheaves: his crest in silver: and below—O wonderment immense! his own handwriting! remnant of his burnt-offering! a page of the sacrificed poems! one blossom preserved from the deadly universal blight.

He handed it to her in silence. She took it, and put it in her bosom.

Who would have said, have thought, that, where all else perished, Odes, fluttering bits of broad-winged Epic, Idyls, Lines, Stanzas, this one Sonnet to the stars should be miraculously reserved for such a starry fate! passing beatitude!

As they walked silently acrossly the meadow, Richard strove to remember the hour and the mood of mind in which he had composed the notable production. The stars were invoked, as seeing and foreseeing all, to tell him where then his love reclined, and so forth; Hesper was complacent enough to do so, and described her in a couplet:

"Through sunset's amber see me shining fair,
As her blue eyes shine through her golden hair."

And surely no words could be more prophetic. Here were two blue eyes and golden hair; and by some strange chance, that appeared like the working of a divine finger, she had become the possessor of the prophecy, she that was to fulfil it! The youth was too charged with emotion to speak. Doubtless the damsel had less to think of, or had some trifling burden on her conscience, for she seemed to grow embarrassed. At last she drew up her chin to look at her companion under the nodding brim of her hat (and the action gave her a charmingly freakish air), crying, "But where are you going to? You are wet through. Let me thank you again; and pray leave me, and go home and change instantly."

"Wet?" replied the magnetic muser, with a voice of tender interest; "not more than one foot, I hope? I will leave you while you dry your stockings in the sun."

At this she could not withhold a shy and lovely laugh.

"Not I, but you. You know you saved me, and would try to get that silly book for me, and you are dripping wet. Are you not very uncomfortable?"

In all sincerity he assured her that he was not.

"And you really do not feel that you are wet?"

He really did not: and it was a fact that he spoke truth.

She pursed her sweet dewberry mouth in the most comical way, and her blue eyes lightened laughter out of the half-closed lids.

"I cannot help it," she said, her mouth opening, and sounding harmonious bells of laughter in his ears. "Pardon me, won't you?"

His face took the same soft smiling curves in admiration of her.

"Not to feel that you have been in the water the very moment after!" she musically interjected, seeing she was excused.

"It's true," he said; and his own gravity then touched him to join a duet with her, which made them no longer feel strangers, and did the work of a month of intimacy. Better than sentiment, laughter opens the breast to love; opens

the whole breast to his full quiver, instead of a corner here and there for a solitary arrow. Hail the occasion propitious, O British young ! and laugh and treat love as an honest God, and dabble not with the sentimental rouge. These two laughed, and the souls of each cried out to other, " It is I. It is I."

They laughed and forgot the cause of their laughter, and the sun dried his light river-clothing, and they strolled toward the blackbird's copse, and stood near a stile in sight of the foam of the weir and the many-coloured rings of eddies streaming forth from it.

Richard's boat, meanwhile, had contrived to shoot the weir, and was swinging, bottom upward, broadside with the current down the rapid backwater.

" Will you let it go ? " said the damsel, eyeing it curiously.

" Yes," he replied, and low, as if he spoke in the core of his thought. " What do I care for it now ! "

His old life was whirled away with it, dead, drowned. His new life was with her, alive, divine.

She flapped low the brim of her hat. " You must really not come any farther," she softly said.

" And will you go, and not tell me who you are ? " he asked, growing bold as the fears of losing her came across him. " And will you not tell me before you go "—his face burned—" how you came by that—that paper ? "

She chose to select the easier question to reply to : " You ought to know me ; we have been introduced." Sweet was her winning off-hand affability.

" Then who, in Heaven's name, are you ? Tell me ! I never could have forgotten you."

" You have, I think," she said demurely.

" Impossible that we could ever have met, and I forget you ! "

She looked up to him quickly.

" Do you remember Belthorpe ? "

" Belthorpe ! Belthorpe ! " quoth Richard, as if he had to touch his brain to recollect there was such a place. " Do you mean old Blaize's farm ? "

" Then I am old Blaize's niece." She tripped him a soft curtsey.

The magnetised youth gazed at her. By what magic was it that this divine sweet creature could be allied with that old churl !

" Then what—what is your name ? " said his mouth, while his eyes added, " O wonderful creature ! How came you to enrich the earth ? "

" Have you forgot the Desboroughs of Dorset, too ? " She peered at him archly from a side-bend of the flapping brim.

" The Desboroughs of Dorset ? " A light broke in on him. " And have you grown to this ? That little girl I saw there ! "

He drew close to her to read the nearest features of the vision. She could no more laugh off the piercing fervour of his eyes. Her volubility fluttered under his deeply wistful look, and now neither voice was high, and they were mutually constrained.

" You see," she murmured, " we are old acquaintances."

Richard, with his eyes still intently fixed on her, returned, " You are very beautiful ! "

The words slipped out. Perfect simplicity is unconsciously audacious. Her overpowering beauty struck his heart, and, like an instrument that is touched and answers to the touch, he spoke.

Miss Desborough made an effort to trifle with this terrible directness ; but his eyes would not be gainsaid, and checked her lips. She turned away from them, her bosom a little rebellious. Praise so passionately spoken, and by one who has been a damsel's first dream, dreamed of nightly many long nights, and clothed in the virgin silver of her thoughts in bud, praise from him is coin the heart cannot reject, if it would. She quickened her steps to the stile.

" I have offended you ! " said a mortally wounded voice across her shoulder.

That he should think so were too dreadful.

" Oh, no, no ! you would never offend me." She gave him her whole sweet face.

" Then why—why do you leave me ? "

" Because," she hesitated, " I must go."

" No. You must not go. Why must you go ? Do not go."

" Indeed I must," she said, pulling at the obnoxious broad brim of her hat ; and, interpreting a pause he made for his assent to her rational resolve, shyly looking at him, she held her hand out, and said, " Good-bye," as if it were a natural thing to say.

The hand was pure white—white and fragrant as the frosted blossom of a May night. It was the hand whose shadow, cast before, he had last night bent his head reverentially above, and kissed—resigning himself thereupon over to execution for payment of the penalty of such daring—by such bliss well rewarded.

He took the hand, and held it, gazing between her eyes.

" Good-bye," she said again, as frankly as she could, and at the same time slightly compressing her fingers on his in token of adieu. It was a signal for his to close firmly upon hers.

" You will not go ? "

" Pray let me," she pleaded, her sweet brows suing in wrinkles.

" You will not go ? " Mechanically he drew the white hand nearer his thumping heart.

" I must," she faltered piteously.

" You will not go ? "

" Oh yes ! yes ! "

" Tell me. Do you wish to go ? "

The question was subtle. A moment or two she did not answer, and then forswore herself, and said " Yes."

" Do you—do you wish to go ? " He looked with quivering eyelids under hers.

A fainter " Yes " responded to his passionate repetition.

" You wish—wish to leave me ? " His breath went with the words.

" Indeed I must."

Her hand became a closer prisoner.

All at once an alarming delicious shudder went through her frame. From him to her it coursed, and back from her to him. Forward and back love's electric messenger rushed from heart to heart, knocking at each, till it surged tumultuously against the bars of its prison, crying out for its mate. They stood trembling in unison, a lovely couple under these fair heavens of the morning.

When he could get his voice it said, " Will you go ? "

But she had none to reply with, and could only mutely bend upward her gentle wrist.

" Then, farewell ! " he said, and, dropping his lips to the soft fair hand, kissed it, and hung his head, swinging away from her, ready for death.

Strange, that now she was released she should linger by him. Strange, that his audacity, instead of the executioner, brought blushes and timid tenderness to his side, and the sweet words, " You are not angry with me ? "

" With you, O Beloved ! " cried his soul. " And you forgive me, fair charity ! "

She repeated her words in deeper sweetness to his bewildered look ; and he, inexperienced, possessed by her, almost lifeless with the divine new emotions she had realised in him, could only sigh and gaze at her wonderingly.

" I think it was rude of me to go without thanking you again," she said, and again proffered her hand.

The sweet heaven-bird shivered out his song above him. The gracious glory of heaven fell upon his soul. He touched her hand, not moving his eyes from her, nor speaking, and she, with a soft word of farewell, passed across the stile, and up the pathway through the dewy shades of the copse, and out of the arch of the light, away from his eyes.

And away with her went the wild enchantment. He looked on barren air. But it was no more the world of yesterday. The marvellous splendours had sown seeds in him, ready to spring up and bloom at her gaze ; and in

his bosom now the vivid conjuration of her tones, her face, her shape, makes them leap and illumine him like fitful summer lightnings—ghosts of the vanished sun.

There was nothing to tell him that he had been making love and declaring it with extraordinary rapidity; nor did he know it. Soft flushed cheeks! sweet mouth! strange sweet brows! eyes of softest fire! how could his ripe eyes behold you, and not plead to keep you? Nay, how could he let you go? And he seriously asked himself that question.

To-morrow this place will have a memory—the river and the meadow, and the white falling weir: his heart will build a temple here; and the skylark will be its high-priest, and the old blackbird its glossy-gowned chorister, and there will be a sacred repast of dewberries. To-day the grass is grass: his heart is chased by phantoms and finds rest nowhere. Only when the most tender freshness of his flower comes across him does he taste a moment's calm; and no sooner does it come than it gives place to keen pangs of fear that she may not be his for ever.

Erelong he learns that her name is Lucy. Erelong he meets Ralph, and discovers that in a day he has distanced him by a sphere. Erelong he and Ralph and the curate of Lobourne join in their walks, and raise classical discussions on ladies' hair, fingering a thousand delicious locks, from those of Cleopatra to the Borgia's. "Fair! fair! all of them fair!" sighs the melancholy curate, "as are those women formed for our perdition! I think we have in this country what will match the Italian or the Greek." His mind flutters to Mrs. Doria, Richard blushes before the vision of Lucy, and Ralph, whose heroine's hair is a dark luxuriance, dissents, and claims a noble share in the slaughter of men for dark-haired Wonders. They have no mutual confidences, but they are singularly kind to each other, these three children of instinct. . . .

Away with Systems! Away with a corrupt World! Let us breathe the air of the Enchanted Island.

Golden lie the meadows: golden run the streams; red gold is on the pine-stems. The sun is coming down to earth, and walks the fields and the waters.

The sun is coming down to earth, and the fields and the waters shout to him golden shouts. He comes, and his heralds run before him, and touch the leaves of oaks and planes and beeches lucid green, and the pine-stems redder gold; leaving brightest footprints upon thickly-weeded banks, where the foxglove's last upper-bells incline, and bramble-shoots wander amid moist rich herbage. The plumes of the woodland are alight; and beyond them, over the open, 'tis a race with the long-thrown shadows; a race across the heaths and up the hills, till, at the farthest bourne of mounted eastern cloud, the heralds of the sun lay rosy fingers, and rest.

Sweet are the shy recesses of the woodland. The ray treads softly there. A film athwart the pathway quivers many-hued against purple shade fragrant with warm pines, deep moss-beds, feathery ferns. The little brown squirrel drops tail, and leaps; the inmost bird is startled to a chance tuneless note. From silence into silence things move.

Peeps of the revelling splendour above and around enliven the conscious full heart within. The flaming West, the crimson heights, shower their glories through voluminous leafage. But these are bowers where deep bliss dwells, imperial joy, that owes no fealty to yonder glories, in which the young lamb gambols and the spirits of men are glad. Descend, great Radiance! embrace creation with beneficent fire, and pass from us! You and the vice-regal light that succeeds to you, and all heavenly pageants, are the ministers and the slaves of the throbbing content within.

For this is the home of the enchantment. Here, secluded from vexed shores, the prince and princess of the island meet: here like darkling nightingales they sit, and into eyes and ears and hands pour endless ever-fresh treasures of their souls.

Roll on, grinding wheels of the world: cries of ships going down in a calm, groans of a System which will not

know its rightful hour of exultation, complain to the universe. You are not heard here.

He calls her by her name, Lucy: and she, blushing at her great boldness, has called him by his, Richard. Those two names are the keynotes of the wonderful harmonies the angels sing aloft.

"Lucy! my beloved!"

"O Richard!"

Out in the world there, on the skirts of the woodland, a sheep-boy pipes to meditative eve on a penny whistle.

Love's musical instrument is as old, and as poor: it has but two stops; and yet, you see, the cunning musician does thus much with it!

Other speech they have little; light foam playing upon waves of feeling, and of feeling compact, that bursts only when the sweeping volume is too wild, and is no more than their sigh of tenderness spoken.

Perhaps love played his tune so well because their natures had unblunted edges, and were keen for bliss, confiding in it as natural food. To gentlemen and ladies he fine-draws upon the viol, ravishingly; or blows into the mellow bassoon; or rouses the heroic ardours of the trumpet; or, it may be, commands the whole Orchestra for them. And they are pleased. He is still the cunning musician. They languish, and taste ecstasy: but it is, however sonorous, an earthly concert. For them the spheres move not to two notes. They have lost, or forfeited and never known, the first supersensual spring of the ripe senses into passion; when they carry the soul with them, and have the privileges of spirits to walk disembodied, boundlessly to feel. Or one has it, and the other is a dead body. Ambrosia let them eat, and drink the nectar: here sit a couple to whom Love's simple bread and water is a finer feast.

Pipe, happy sheep-boy, Love! Irradiated angels, unfold your wings and lift your voices!

They have outflown philosophy. Their instinct has shot beyond the ken of science. They were made for their Eden.

" And this divine gift was in store for me ! "

So runs the internal outcry of each, clasping each : it is their recurring refrain to the harmonies. How it illumined the years gone by and suffused the living Future ! "

" You for me : I for you ! "

" We are born for each other ! "

They believe that the angels have been busy about them from their cradles. The celestial hosts have worthily striven to bring them together. And, O victory ! O wonder ! after toil and pain, and difficulties exceeding, the celestial hosts have succeeded !

" Here we two sit who are written above as one ! "

Pipe, happy Love ! pipe on to these dear innocents !

The tide of colour has ebbed from the upper sky. In the West the sea of sunken fire draws back ; and the stars leap forth, and tremble, and retire before the advancing moon, who slips the silver train of cloud from her shoulders, and, with her foot upon the pine-tops, surveys heaven.

" Lucy, did you never dream of meeting me ? "

" O Richard ! yes ; for I remembered you."

" Lucy ! and did you pray that we might meet ? "

" I did ! "

Young as when she looked upon the lovers in Paradise, the fair Immortal journeys onward. Fronting her, it is not night but veiled day. Full half the sky is flushed. Not darkness : not day ; but the nuptials of the two.

" My own ! my own for ever ! You are pledged to me ? Whisper ! "

He hears the delicious music.

" And you are mine ? "

A soft beam travels to the fern-covert under the pine-wood where they sit, and for answer he has her eyes : turned to him an instant, timidly fluttering over the depths of his, and then downcast ; for through her eyes her soul is naked to him.

" Lucy ! my bride ! my life ! "

The night-jar spins his dark monotony on the branch of

the pine. The soft beam travels round them, and listens to their hearts. Their lips are locked.

Pipe no more, Love, for a time! Pipe as you will you cannot express their first kiss; nothing of its sweetness, and of the sacredness of it, nothing. St. Cecilia up aloft, before the silver organ-pipes of Paradise, pressing fingers upon all the notes of which Love is but one, from her you may hear it.

So Love is silent. Out in the world there, on the skirts of the woodland, the self-satisfied sheep-boy delivers a last complacent squint down the length of his penny whistle, and, with a flourish correspondingly awry, he also marches into silence, hailed by supper. The woods are still. There is heard but the night-jar spinning on the pine-branch, circled by moonlight.

The Ordeal of Richard Feverel.

THOMAS HARDY

1840–1927

26...JUDE AND ARABELLA

[Jude Fawley, a stone-mason's apprentice, nineteen years of age, but a youth of obscure and complex character, has " dreams about books, and degrees, and impossible scholarships," when all his plans are ruined by his becoming entangled with Arabella Donn, a vulgar but outwardly attractive young woman, who by means of a trick induces him to marry her.]

JUDE had to leave early next morning for his usual week of absence at lodgings ; and it was with a sense of futility that he threw into his basket upon his tools and other necessaries the unread book he had brought with him.

He kept his impassioned doings a secret almost from himself. Arabella, on the contrary, made them public among all her friends and acquaintance.

Retracing by the light of dawn the road he had followed a few hours earlier, under cover of darkness, with his sweetheart by his side, he reached the bottom of the hill, where he walked slowly, and stood still. He was on the spot where he had given her the first kiss. As the sun had only just risen it was possible that nobody had passed there since. Jude looked on the ground and sighed. He looked closely, and could just discern in the damp dust the imprints of their feet as they had stood locked in each other's arms. She was not there now, and " the embroidery of imagination upon the stuff of nature " so depicted her past presence that a void was in his heart which nothing could fill. A pollard willow stood close to the place, and that willow was different from all other willows in the world. Utter annihilation of the six days which must elapse before he could see her again as he had promised would have been his intensest wish if he had had only the week to live.

An hour and half later Arabella came along the same way with her two companions of the Saturday. She passed unheedingly the scene of the kiss, and the willow that marked it, though chattering freely on the subject to the other two.

" And what did he tell 'ee next ? "

" Then he said——" And she related almost word for word some of his tenderest speeches. If Jude had been behind the fence he would have felt not a little surprised at learning how very few of his sayings and doings on the previous evening were private.

" You've got him to care for 'ee a bit, 'nation if you ha'n't ! " murmured Anny judicially. " It's well to be you ! "

In a few moments Arabella replied in a curiously low, fierce tone of latent sensuousness : " I've got him to care for me : yes ! But I want him to more than care for me ; I want him to have me—to marry me ! I must have him. I can't do without him. He's the sort of man I long for. I shall go mad if I can't give myself to him altogether ! I felt I should when I first saw him ! "

" As he is a romancing, straightfor'ard, honest chap, he's to be had, and as a husband, if you set about catching him in the right way."

Arabella remained thinking awhile. " What med be the right way ? " she asked.

" O you don't know—you don't ! " said Sarah, the third girl.

" On my word I don't !—No further, that is, than by plain courting, and taking care he don't go too far ! "

The third girl looked at the second. " She *don't* know ! "

" 'Tis clear she don't ! " said Anny.

" And having lived in a town, too, as one may say ! Well, we can teach 'ee som'at then, as well as you us."

" Yes. And how do you mean—a sure way to gain a man ? Take me for an innocent, and have done wi' it ! "

" As a husband."

" As a husband."

" A countryman that's honourable and serious-minded such as he ; God forbid that I should say a sojer, or sailor, or commercial gent from the towns, or any of them that be slippery with poor women ! I'd do no friend that harm ! "

" Well, such as he, of course ! "

Arabella's companions looked at each other, and turning up their eyes in drollery began smirking. Then one went up close to Arabella, and, although nobody was near, imparted some information in a low tone, the other observing curiously the effect upon Arabella.

" Ah ! " said the last-named slowly. " I own I didn't think of that way ! . . . But suppose he *isn't* honourable ? A woman had better not have tried it ! "

" Nothing venture nothing have ! Besides, you make sure that he's honourable before you begin. You'd be safe enough with yours. I wish I had the chance ! Lots of girls do it ; or do you think they'd get married at all ? "

Arabella pursued her way in silent thought. " I'll try it ! " she whispered ; but not to them.

One week's end Jude was as usual walking out to his aunt's at Marygreen from his lodging in Alfredston, a walk which now had large attractions for him quite other than his desire to see his aged and morose relative. He diverged to the right before ascending the hill with the single purpose of gaining, on his way, a glimpse of Arabella that should not come into the reckoning of regular appointments. Before quite reaching the homestead his alert eye perceived the top of her head moving quickly hither and thither over the garden hedge. Entering the gate he found that three young unfattened pigs had escaped from their sty by leaping clean over the top, and that she was endeavouring unassisted to drive them in through the door which she had set open. The lines of her countenance changed from the rigidity of business to the softness of love when she saw Jude, and she bent her eyes languishingly upon him. The animals took advantage of the pause by doubling and bolting out of the way.

"They were only put in this morning!" she cried, stimulated to pursue in spite of her lover's presence. "They were drove from Spaddleholt Farm only yesterday, where father bought 'em at a stiff price enough. They are wanting to get home again, the stupid toads! Will you shut the garden gate, dear, and help me to get 'em in? There be no men-folk at home, only mother, and they'll be lost if we don't mind."

He set himself to assist, and dodged this way and that over the potato rows and cabbages. Every now and then they ran together, when he caught her for a moment and kissed her. The first pig was got back promptly; the second with some difficulty; the third, a long-legged creature, was more obstinate and agile. He plunged through a hole in the garden hedge, and into the lane.

"He'll be lost if I don't follow 'n!" said she. "Come along with me!"

She rushed in full pursuit out of the garden, Jude alongside her, barely contriving to keep the fugitive in sight. Occasionally they would shout to some boy to stop the animal, but he always wriggled past and ran on as before.

"Let me take your hand, darling," said Jude. "You are getting out of breath." She gave him her now hot hand with apparent willingness, and they trotted along together.

"This comes of driving 'em home," she remarked. "They always know the way back if you do that. They ought to have been carted over."

By this time the pig had reached an unfastened gate admitting to the open down, across which he sped with all the agility his little legs afforded. As soon as the pursuers had entered and ascended to the top of the high ground it became apparent that they would have to run all the way to the farmer's if they wished to get at him. From this summit he could be seen as a minute speck, following an unerring line towards the farm.

"It's no good!" cried Arabella. "He'll be there long before we get there. It don't matter now we know he's not

lost or stolen on the way. They'll see it is ours, and send un back. O dear, how hot I be ! "

Without relinquishing her hold of Jude's hand she swerved aside, and flung herself down on the sod under a stunted thorn, precipitately pulling Jude on to his knees at the same time.

" O, I ask pardon—I nearly threw you down, didn't I ! But I am so tired ! "

She lay supine, and straight as an arrow, on the sloping sod of this hill-top, gazing up into the blue miles of sky, and still retaining her warm hold of Jude's hand. He reclined on his elbow near her.

" We've run all this way for nothing," she went on, her form heaving and falling in quick pants, her face flushed, her full red lips parted, and a fine dew of perspiration on her skin. " Well—why don't you speak, deary ? "

" I'm blown too. It was all up hill."

They were in absolute solitude—the most apparent of all solitudes, that of empty surrounding space. Nobody could be nearer than a mile to them without their seeing him. They were, in fact, on one of the summits of the county, and the distant landscape around Christminster could be discerned from where they lay. But Jude did not think of that then.

" O, I can see such a pretty thing up this tree," said Arabella. " A sort of a—caterpillar, of the most loveliest green and yellow you ever came across ! "

" Where ? " said Jude, sitting up.

" You can't see him there—you must come here," said she.

He bent nearer and put his head by hers. " No—I can't see it," he said.

" Why, on the limb there where it branches off—close to the moving leaf—there ! " She gently pressed his face towards the position.

" I don't see it," he repeated, the back of his head against her cheek. " But I can, perhaps, standing up." He stood accordingly, placing himself in the direct line of her gaze.

" How stupid you are ! " she said crossly, turning away her face.

" I don't care to see it, dear : why should I ? " he replied, looking down upon her. " Get up, Abby."

" Why ? "

" I want you to let me kiss you. I've been waiting to ever so long ! "

She rolled round her face, remained a moment looking deedily aslant at him ; then with a slight curl of the lip sprang to her feet, and exclaiming abruptly " I must mizzel ! " walked off quickly homeward. Jude followed and rejoined her.

" Just one ! " he coaxed.

" Shan't ! " she said.

He, surprised : " What's the matter ? "

She kept her two lips resentfully together, and Jude followed her like a pet lamb till she slackened her pace and walked beside him, talking calmly on different subjects, and always checking him if he tried to take her hand or clasp her waist. Thus they descended to the precincts of her father's homestead, and Arabella went in, nodding good-bye to him with a supercilious, affronted air.

" I expect I took too much liberty with her, somehow," Jude said to himself, as he withdrew with a sigh and went on to Marygreen.

On Sunday morning the interior of Arabella's home was, as usual, the scene of a grand weekly cooking, the preparation of the special Sunday dinner. Her father was shaving before a little glass hung on the mullion of the window, and her mother and Arabella herself were shelling beans hard by. A neighbour passed on her way home from morning service at the nearest church, and seeing Donn engaged at the window with the razor, nodded and came in.

She at once spoke playfully to Arabella : " I zeed 'ee running with 'un—hee-hee ! I hope 'tis coming to something ? "

Arabella merely threw a look of consciousness into her face without raising her eyes.

" He's for Christminster, I hear, as soon as he can get there."

" Have you heard that lately—quite lately ? " asked Arabella with a jealous, tigerish indrawing of breath.

" O no ! But it has been known a long time that it is his plan. He's on'y waiting here for an opening. Ah well : he must walk about with somebody I s'pose. Young men don't mean much nowadays. 'Tis a sip here and a sip there with 'em. 'Twas different in my time."

When the gossip had departed Arabella said suddenly to her mother : " I want you and father to go and inquire how the Edlins be, this evening after tea. Or no—there's evening service at Fensworth—you can walk to that."

" Oh ? What's up to-night, then ? "

" Nothing. Only I want the house to myself. He's shy ; and I can't get un to come in when you are here. I shall let him slip through my fingers if I don't mind, much as I care for'n ! "

" If it is fine we med as well go, since you wish."

In the afternoon Arabella met and walked with Jude, who had now for weeks ceased to look into a book of Greek, Latin, or any other tongue. They wandered up the slopes till they reached the green track along the ridge, which they followed to the circular British earthbank adjoining, Jude thinking of the great age of the trackway, and of the drovers who had frequented it, probably before the Romans knew the country. Up from the level lands below them floated the chime of church bells. Presently they were reduced to one note, which quickened, and stopped.

" Now we'll go back," said Arabella, who had attended to the sounds.

Jude assented. So long as he was near her he minded little where he was. When they arrived at her house he said lingeringly : " I won't come in. Why are you in such a hurry to go in to-night ? It is not near dark."

" Wait a moment," said she. She tried the handle of the door and found it locked.

" Ah—they are gone to church," she added. And

searching behind the scraper she found the key and unlocked the door. " Now, you'll come in a moment ? " she asked lightly. " We shall be all alone."

" Certainly," said Jude with alacrity, the case being unexpectedly altered.

Indoors they went. Did he want any tea ? No, it was too late : he would rather sit and talk to her. She took off her jacket and hat, and they sat down—naturally enough close together.

" Don't touch me, please," she said softly. " I am part egg-shell. Or perhaps I had better put it in a safe place." She began unfastening the collar of her gown.

" What is it ? " said her lover.

" An egg—a bantam's egg. I am hatching a very rare sort. I carry it about everywhere with me, and it will get hatched in less than three weeks."

" Where do you carry it ? "

" Just here." She put her hand into her bosom and drew out the egg, which was wrapped in wool, outside it being a piece of pig's bladder, in case of accidents. Having exhibited it to him she put it back, " Now mind you don't come near me. I don't want to get it broke, and have to begin another."

" Why do you do such a strange thing ? "

" It's an old custom. I suppose it is natural for a woman to want to bring live things into the world."

" It is very awkward for me just now," he said, laughing.

" It serves you right. There—that's all you can have of me."

She had turned round her chair, and, reaching over the back of it, presented her cheek to him gingerly.

" That's very shabby of you ! "

" You should have catched me a minute ago when I put the egg down ! There ! " she said defiantly, " I am without it now ! " She had quickly withdrawn the egg a second time ; but before he could quite reach her she had put it back as quickly, laughing with the excitement of her strategy. Then there was a little struggle, Jude making a plunge for

it and capturing it triumphantly. Her face flushed; and becoming suddenly conscious he flushed also.

They looked at each other, panting; till he rose and said: "One kiss, now I can do it without damage to property, and I'll go!"

But she jumped up too. "You must find me first!" she cried.

Her lover followed her as she withdrew. It was now dark inside the room, and the window being small, he could not discover for a long time what had become of her, till a laugh revealed her to have rushed up the stairs, whither Jude rushed at her heels.

It was some two months later in the year, and the pair had met constantly during the interval. Arabella seemed dissatisfied; she was always imagining, and waiting, and wondering.

One day she met the itinerant Vilbert. She, like all the cottagers thereabout, knew the quack well, and they began talking about her experiences. Arabella had been gloomy, but before he left her she had grown brighter. That evening she kept an appointment with Jude, who seemed sad.

"I am going away," he said to her. "I think I ought to go. I think it will be better both for you and for me. I wish some things had never begun! I was much to blame, I know. But it is never too late to mend."

Arabella began to cry. "How do you know it is not too late?" she said. "That's all very well to say! I haven't told you yet!" and she looked into his face with streaming eyes.

"What?" he asked, turning pale. "Not . . .?"

"Yes! And what shall I do if you desert me!"

"O Arabella—how can you say that, my dear! You *know* I wouldn't desert you!"

"Well then——"

"I have next to no wages as yet, you know; or perhaps I should have thought of this before. . . . But, of course, if

that's the case, we must marry! What other thing do you think I could dream of doing?"

"I thought—I thought, deary, perhaps you would go away all the more for that, and leave me to face it alone!"

"You knew better! Of course I never dreamt six months ago, or even three, of marrying. It is a complete smashing up of my plans—I mean my plans before I knew you, my dear. But what are they, after all! Dreams about books, and degrees, and impossible scholarships, and all that. Certainly we'll marry: we must!"

That night he went out alone, and walked in the dark, self-communing. He knew well, too well, in the secret centre of his brain, that Arabella was not worth a great deal as a specimen of womankind. Yet, such being the custom of the rural districts, among honourable young men who had drifted so far into intimacy with a woman as he unfortunately had done, he was ready to abide by what he had said, and take the consequences. For his own soothing he kept up a factitious belief in her. His idea of her was the thing of most consequence, not Arabella herself, he sometimes said laconically.

The banns were put in and published the very next Sunday. The people of the parish all said what a simple fool young Fawley was. All his reading had only come to this, that he would have to sell his books to buy saucepans. Those who guessed the probable state of affairs, Arabella's parents being among them, declared that it was the sort of conduct they would have expected of such an honest young man as Jude in reparation of the wrong he had done his innocent sweetheart. The parson who married them seemed to think it satisfactory too.

And so, standing before the aforesaid officiator, the two swore that at every other time of their lives they would assuredly believe, feel, and desire precisely as they had believed, felt, and desired during the few preceding weeks. What was as remarkable as the undertaking itself was the fact that nobody seemed at all surprised at what they swore.

Fawley's aunt being a baker she made him a bride-cake,

saying bitterly that it was the last thing she could do for him, poor silly fellow; and that it would have been far better if, instead of his living to trouble her, he had gone underground years before with his father and mother. Of this cake Arabella took some slices, wrapped them up in white note-paper, and sent them to her companions in the pork-dressing business, Anny and Sarah, labelling each packet "*In remembrance of good advice.*"

The prospects of the newly married couple were certainly not very brilliant even to the most sanguine mind. He, a stone-mason's apprentice, nineteen years of age, was working for half wages till he should be out of his time. His wife was absolutely useless in a town-lodging, where he at first had considered it would be necessary for them to live. But the urgent need of adding to income in ever so little a degree caused him to take a lonely roadside cottage between the Brown House and Marygreen, that he might have the profits of a vegetable garden, and utilise her past experiences by letting her keep a pig. But it was not the sort of life he had bargained for, and it was a long way to walk to and from Alfredston every day. Arabella, however, felt that all these makeshifts were temporary; she had gained a husband; that was the thing—a husband with a lot of earning power in him for buying her frocks and hats when he should begin to get frightened a bit, and stick to his trade, and throw aside those stupid books for practical undertakings.

So to the cottage he took her on the evening of the marriage, giving up his old room at his aunt's—where so much of the hard labour at Greek and Latin had been carried on.

A little chill overspread him at her first unrobing. A long tail of hair, which Arabella wore twisted up in an enormous knob at the back of her head, was deliberately unfastened, stroked out, and hung upon the looking-glass which he had bought her.

"What—it wasn't your own?" he said, with a sudden distaste for her.

" O no—it never is nowadays with the better class."

" Nonsense ! Perhaps not in towns. But in the country it is supposed to be different. Besides, you've enough of your own, surely ? Why, it's a lot ! "

" Yes, enough as country notions go. But in towns the men expect more, and when I was barmaid at Aldbrickham——"

" Barmaid at Aldbrickham ? "

" Well, not exactly barmaid—I used to draw the drink at a public-house there—just for a little time ; that was all. Some people put me up to getting this, and I bought it just for a fancy. The more you have the better in Aldbrickham, which is a finer town than all your Christminsters. Every lady of position wears false hair—the barber's assistant told me so."

Jude thought with a feeling of sickness that though this might be true to some extent, for all that he knew, many unsophisticated girls would and did go to towns and remain there for years without losing their simplicity of life and embellishments. Others, alas, had an instinct towards artificiality in their very blood, and became adepts in counterfeiting at the first glimpse of it. However, perhaps there was no great sin in a woman adding to her hair, and he resolved to think no more of it.

A new-made wife can usually manage to look interesting for a few weeks, even though the prospects of the household ways and means are cloudy. There is a certain piquancy about her situation, and her manner to her acquaintance at the sense of it, which carries off the gloom of facts, and renders even the humblest bride independent awhile of the real. Mrs. Jude Fawley was walking in the streets of Alfredston one market-day with this quality in her carriage when she met Anny, her former friend, whom she had not seen since the wedding.

As usual they laughed before talking ; the world seemed funny to them without saying it.

" So it turned out a good plan, you see ! " remarked the girl to the wife. " I knew it would with such as him.

He's a dear good fellow, and you ought to be proud of un."

"I am," said Mrs. Fawley quietly.

"And when do you expect——?"

"Ssh! Not at all."

"What!"

"I was mistaken."

"O Arabella, Arabella; you be a deep one! Mistaken! well, that's clever—it's a rale stroke of genius! It is a thing I never thought o', wi' all my experience! I never thought beyond the rale thing—not that one could sham it!"

"Don't you be too quick to cry sham! 'Twasn't sham. I didn't know."

"My word—won't he be in a taking! He'll give it to 'ee o' Saturday nights! Whatever it was, he'll say it was a trick—a double one, by the Lord!"

"I'll own to the first, but not to the second. . . . Pooh—he won't care! He'll be glad I was wrong in what I said. He'll shake down, bless 'ee—men always do. What can 'em do otherwise? Married is married."

Nevertheless it was with a little uneasiness that Arabella approached the time when in the natural course of things she would have to reveal that the alarm she had raised had been without foundation. The occasion was one evening at bed-time, and they were in their chamber in the lonely cottage by the wayside, to which Jude walked home from his work every day. He had worked hard the whole twelve hours, and had retired to rest before his wife. When she came into the room he was between sleeping and waking, and was barely conscious of her undressing before the little looking-glass as he lay.

One action of hers, however, brought him to full cognition. Her face being reflected toward him as she sat, he could perceive that she was amusing herself by artificially producing in each cheek the dimple before alluded to, a curious accomplishment of which she was mistress, effecting it by a momentary suction. It seemed to him for the first time

that the dimples were far oftener absent from her face during his intercourse with her nowadays than they had been in the earlier weeks of their acquaintance.

" Don't do that, Arabella ! " he said suddenly. " There is no harm in it, but—I don't like to see you."

She turned and laughed. " Lord, I didn't know you was awake ! " she said. " How countrified you are ! That's nothing."

" Where did you learn it ? "

" Nowhere that I know of. They used to stay without any trouble when I was at the public-house ; but now they won't. My face was fatter then."

" I don't care about dimples. I don't think they improve a woman—particularly a married woman, and of full-sized figure like you."

" Most men think otherwise."

" I don't care what most men think, if they do. How do you know ? "

" I used to be told so when I was serving in the tap-room."

" Ah—that public-house experience accounts for your knowing about the adulteration of the ale when we went and had some that Sunday evening. I thought when I married you that you had always lived in your father's house."

" You ought to have known better than that, and seen I was a little more finished than I could have been by staying where I was born. There was not much to do at home, and I was eating my head off, so I went away for three months."

" You'll soon have plenty to do now, dear, won't you ? "

" How do you mean ? "

" Why, of course—little things to make."

" Oh."

" When will it be ? Can't you tell me exactly, instead of in such general terms as you have used ? "

" Tell you ? "

" Yes—the date."

" There's nothing to tell. I made a mistake."

" What ? "

" It was a mistake."

He sat bolt upright in bed and looked at her. " How can that be ? "

" People fancy wrong things sometimes."

" But—— ! Why, of course, so unprepared as I was, without a stick of furniture, and hardly a shilling, I shouldn't have hurried on our affair, and brought you to a half-furnished hut before I was ready, if it had not been for the news you gave me, which made it necessary to save you, ready or no. . . . Good God ! "

" Don't take on, dear. What's done can't be undone."

" I have no more to say ! "

He gave the answer simply, and lay down ; and there was silence between them.

When Jude awoke next morning he seemed to see the world with a different eye. As to the point in question he was compelled to accept her word ; in the circumstances he could not have acted otherwise while ordinary notions prevailed. But how came they to prevail ?

There seemed to him, vaguely and simply, something wrong in a social ritual which made necessary a cancelling of well-formed schemes involving years of thought and labour, of foregoing a man's one opportunity of showing himself superior to the lower animals, and of contributing his units of work to the general progress of his generation, because of a momentary surprise by a new and transitory instinct which had nothing in it of the nature of vice, and could be only at the most called weakness. He was inclined to inquire what he had done, or she lost, for that matter, that he deserved to be caught in a gin which would cripple him, if not her also, for the rest of a lifetime ? There was perhaps something fortunate in the fact that the immediate reason of his marriage had proved to be non-existent. But the marriage remained.

Jude the Obscure.

OSCAR WILDE

1856–1900

27...SALOMÉ AND JOKANAAN

A great terrace in the Palace of Herod, set above the banqueting-hall. Some soldiers are leaning over the balcony. To the right there is a gigantic staircase, to the left, at the back, an old cistern surrounded by a wall of green bronze. Moonlight.

The Young Syrian : The Princess rises ! She is leaving the table ! She looks very troubled. Ah, she is coming this way. Yes, she is coming towards us. How pale she is ! Never have I seen her so pale.

The Page of Herodias : Do not look at her. I pray you not to look at her.

The Young Syrian : She is like a dove that has strayed. . . . She is like a narcissus trembling in the wind. . . . She is like a silver flower.

Enter Salomé

Salomé : I will not stay. I cannot stay. Why does the Tetrarch look at me all the while with his mole's eyes under his shaking eyelids ? It is strange that the husband of my mother looks at me like that. I know not what it means. In truth, yes I know it.

The Young Syrian : You have just left the feast, Princess ?

Salomé : How sweet the air is here ! I can breathe here ! Within there are Jews from Jerusalem who are tearing each other in pieces over their foolish ceremonies, and barbarians who drink and drink, and spill their wine on the pavement, and Greeks from Smyrna with painted eyes and painted cheeks, and frizzed hair curled in twisted coils, and silent, subtle Egyptians, with long nails of jade and russett cloaks, and Romans brutal and coarse, with their uncouth jargon.

Ah! how I loathe the Romans! They are rough and common, and they give themselves the airs of noble lords.

The Young Syrian : Will you be seated, Princess?

The Page of Herodias : Why do you speak to her? Why do you look at her? Oh! something terrible will happen.

Salomé : How good to see the moon! She is like a little piece of money, you would think she was a little silver flower. The moon is cold and chaste. I am sure she is a virgin, she has a virgin's beauty. Yes, she is a virgin. She has never defiled herself. She has never abandoned herself to men, like the other goddesses.

The Voice of Jokanaan : The Lord hath come. The Son of Man hath come. The centaurs have hidden themselves in the rivers, and the sirens have left the rivers, and are lying beneath the leaves of the forest.

Salomé : Who was that who cried out?

Second Soldier : The prophet, Princess.

Salomé : Ah, the prophet! He of whom the Tetrarch is afraid?

Second Soldier : We know nothing of that, Princess. It was the prophet Jokanaan who cried out.

The Young Syrian : Is it your pleasure that I bid them bring your litter, Princess? The night is fair in the garden.

Salomé : He says terrible things about my mother, does he not?

Second Soldier : We never understand what he says, Princess.

Salomé : Yes; he says terrible things about her.

Enter a Slave

The Slave : Princess, the Tetrarch prays you to return to the feast.

Salomé : I will not go back.

The Young Syrian : Pardon me, Princess, but if you do not return some misfortune may happen.

Salomé : Is he an old man, this prophet?

The Young Syrian : Princess, it were better to return. Suffer me to lead you in.

Salomé : This prophet . . . is he an old man ?

First Soldier : No, Princess, he is quite a young man.

Second Soldier : You cannot be sure. There are those who say he is Elias.

Salomé : Who is Elias ?

Second Soldier : A very ancient prophet of this country, Princess.

The Slave : What answer may I give the Tetrarch from the Princess ?

The Voice of Jokanaan : Rejoice not thou, land of Palestine, because the rod of him who smote thee is broken. For from the seed of the serpent shall come forth a basilisk, and that which is born of it shall devour the birds.

Salomé : What a strange voice ! I would speak with him.

First Soldier : I fear it is impossible, Princess. The Tetrarch does not wish any one to speak with him. He has even forbidden the high priest to speak with him.

Salomé : I desire to speak with him.

First Soldier : It is impossible, Princess.

Salomé : I will speak with him.

The Young Syrian : Would it not be better to return to the banquet ?

Salomé : Bring forth this prophet. [*Exit the slave.*

First Soldier : We dare not, Princess.

Salomé (*approaching the cistern and looking down into it*) *:* How black it is, down there ! It must be terrible to be in so black a pit ! It is like a tomb. . . . (*To the soldier*) : Did you not hear me ? Bring out the prophet. I wish to see him.

Second Soldier : Princess, I beg you do not require this of us.

Salomé : You keep me waiting !

First Soldier : Princess, our lives belong to you, but we cannot do what you have asked of us. And indeed, it is not of us that you should ask this thing.

Salomé (*looking at the young Syrian*) *:* Ah !

The Page of Herodias : Oh ! what is going to happen ? I am sure that some misfortune will happen.

Salomé (going up to the young Syrian) : You will do this thing for me, will you not, Narraboth ? You will do this thing for me ? I have always been kind to you. You will do it for me. I would but look at this strange prophet. Men have talked so much of him. Often have I heard the Tetrarch talk of him. I think the Tetrarch is afraid of him. Are you, even you, also afraid of him, Narraboth ?

The Young Syrian : I fear him not, Princess ; there is no man I fear. But the Tetrarch has formally forbidden that any man should raise the cover of this well.

Salomé : You will do this thing for me, Narraboth, and to-morrow when I pass in my litter beneath the gateway of the idol-sellers I will let fall for you a little flower, a little green flower.

The Young Syrian : Princess, I cannot, I cannot.

Salomé (smiling) : You will do this thing for me, Narraboth. You know that you will do this thing for me. And to-morrow when I pass in my litter by the bridge of the idol-buyers, I will look at you through the muslin veils, I will look at you, Narraboth, it may be I will smile at you. Look at me, Narraboth, look at me. Ah ! you know that you will do what I ask of you. You know it well. . . . I know that you will do this thing.

The Young Syrian (signing to the third soldier) : Let the prophet come forth. . . . The Princess Salomé desires to see him.

Salomé : Ah !

The Page of Herodias : Oh ! How strange the moon looks. You would think it was the hand of a dead woman who is seeking to cover herself with a shroud.

The Young Syrian : She has a strange look ! She is like a little princess, whose eyes are eyes of amber. Through the clouds of muslin she is smiling like a little princess.

[*The prophet comes out of the cistern. Salomé looks at him and steps slowly back.*

Jokanaan : Where is he whose cup of abominations is now

full? Where is he, who in a robe of silver shall one day die in the face of all the people? Bid him come forth, that he may hear the voice of him who hath cried in the waste places and in the houses of kings.

Salomé : Of whom is he speaking?

The Young Syrian : You can never tell, Princess.

Jokanaan : Where is she who having seen the images of men painted on the walls, the images of the Chaldeans limned in colours, gave herself up unto the lust of her eyes, and sent ambassadors into Chaldea?

Salomé : It is of my mother that he speaks.

The Young Syrian : Oh, no, Princess.

Salomé : Yes; it is of my mother that he speaks.

Jokanaan : Where is she who gave herself unto the Captains of Assyria, who have baldricks on their loins, and tiaras of divers colours on their heads? Where is she who hath given herself to the young men of Egypt, who are clothed in fine linen and purple, whose shields are of gold, whose helmets are of silver, whose bodies are mighty? Bid her rise up from the bed of her abominations, from the bed of her incestuousness, that she may hear the words of him who prepareth the way of the Lord, that she may repent her of her iniquities. Though she will never repent, but will stick fast in her abominations; bid her come, for the fan of the Lord is in His hand.

Salomé : But he is terrible, he is terrible!

The Young Syrian : Do not stay here, Princess, I beseech you.

Salomé : It is his eyes above all that are terrible. They are like black holes burned by torches in a Tyrian tapestry. They are like black caverns where dragons dwell. They are like the black caverns of Egypt in which the dragons make their lairs. They are like black lakes troubled by fantastic moons. . . . Do you think he will speak again?

The Young Syrian : Do not stay here, Princess. I pray you do not stay here.

Salomé : How wasted he is! He is like a thin ivory statue. He is like an image of silver. I am sure he is

chaste as the moon is. He is like a moonbeam, like a shaft of silver. His flesh must be cool like ivory. I would look closer at him.

The Young Syrian : No, no, Princess.

Salomé : I must look at him closer.

The Young Syrian : Princess ! Princess !

Jokanaan : Who is this woman who is looking at me ? I will not have her look at me. Wherefore doth she look at me with her golden eyes, under her gilded eyelids ? I know not who she is. I do not wish to know who she is. Bid her begone. It is not to her that I would speak.

Salomé : I am Salomé, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judæa.

Jokanaan : Back ! daughter of Babylon ! Come not near the chosen of the Lord. Thy mother hath filled the earth with the wine of her iniquities, and the cry of her sins hath come up to the ears of God.

Salomé : Speak again, Jokanaan. Thy voice is wine to me.

The Young Syrian : Princess ! Princess ! Princess !

Salomé : Speak again ! Speak again, Jokanaan, and tell me what I must do.

Jokanaan : Daughter of Sodom, come not near me ! But cover thy face with a veil, and scatter ashes upon thine head, and get thee to the desert and seek out the Son of Man.

Salomé : Who is he, the Son of Man ? Is he as beautiful as thou art, Jokanaan ?

Jokanaan : Get thee behind me ! I hear in the palace the beating of the wings of the angel of death.

The Young Syrian : Princess, I beseech thee to go within.

Jokanaan : Angel of the Lord God, what dost thou here with thy sword ? Whom seekest thou in this foul palace ? The day of him who shall die in a robe of silver has not yet come.

Salomé : Jokanaan !

Jokanaan : Who speaketh ?

Salomé : Jokanaan, I am amorous of thy body ! Thy

body is white like the lilies of a field that the mower hath never mowed. Thy body is white like the snows that lie on the mountains, like the snows that lie on the mountains of Judæa, and come down into the valleys. The roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia are not so white as thy body. Neither the roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia, the perfumed garden of spices of the Queen of Arabia, nor the feet of the dawn when they light on the leaves, nor the breast of the moon when she lies on the breast of the sea. . . . There is nothing in the world so white as thy body. Let me touch thy body.

Jokanaan : Back ! daughter of Babylon ! By woman came evil into the world. Speak not to me. I will not listen to thee. I listen but to the voice of the Lord God.

Salomé : Thy body is hideous. It is like the body of a leper. It is like a plastered wall where vipers have crawled ; like a plastered wall where the scorpions have made their nest. It is like a whitened sepulchre full of loathsome things. It is horrible, thy body is horrible. It is of thy hair that I am enamoured, Jokanaan. Thy hair is like clusters of grapes, like the clusters of black grapes that hang from the vine-trees of Edom in the land of the Edomites. Thy hair is like the cedars of Lebanon, like the great cedars of Lebanon that give their shade to the lions and to the robbers who would hide themselves by day. The long black nights, when the moon hides her face, when the stars are afraid, are not so black. The silence that dwells in the forest is not so black. There is nothing in the world so black as thy hair. . . . Let me touch thy hair.

Jokanaan : Back, daughter of Sodom ! Touch me not. Profane not the temple of the Lord God.

Salomé : Thy hair is horrible. It is covered with mire and dust. It is like a crown of thorns which they have placed on thy forehead. It is like a knot of black serpents writhing round thy neck. I love not thy hair. . . . It is thy mouth that I desire, Jokanaan. Thy mouth is like a band of scarlet on a tower of ivory. It is like a pomegranate cut with a knife of ivory. The pomegranate-flowers that

blossom in the gardens of Tyre, and are redder than roses, are not so red. The red blasts of trumpets that herald the approach of kings, and make afraid the enemy, are not so red. Thy mouth is redder than the feet of those who tread the wine in the wine-press. Thy mouth is redder than the feet of the doves who haunt the temples and are fed by the priests. It is redder than the feet of him who cometh from a forest where he hath slain a lion, and seen gilded tigers. Thy mouth is like a branch of coral that fishers have found in the twilight of the sea, the coral that they keep for the kings! . . . It is like the vermilion that the Moabites find in the mines of Moab, the vermilion that the kings take from them. It is like the bow of the King of the Persians, that is painted with vermilion, and is tipped with coral. There is nothing in the world so red as thy mouth. . . . Let me kiss thy mouth.

Jokanaan: Never! daughter of Babylon! Daughter of Sodom! Never.

Salomé: I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan. I will kiss thy mouth.

The Young Syrian: Princess, Princess, thou who art like a garden of myrrh, thou who art the dove of all doves, look not at this man, look not at him! Do not speak such words to him. I cannot suffer them. . . . Princess, Princess, do not speak these things.

Salomé: I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan.

The Young Syrian: Ah! (*He kills himself and falls between Salomé and Jokanaan.*)

The Page of Herodias: The young Syrian has slain himself! The young captain has slain himself! He has slain himself who was my friend! I gave him a little box of perfumes and ear-rings wrought in silver, and now he has killed himself! Ah, did he not foretell that some misfortune would happen? I, too, foretold it, and it has happened. Well I knew that the moon was seeking a dead thing, but I knew not that it was he whom she sought. Ah! why did I not hide him from the moon? If I had hidden him in a cavern she would not have seen him.

First Soldier : Princess, the young captain has just killed himself.

Salomé : Let me kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan.

Jokanaan : Art thou not afraid, daughter of Herodias ? Did I not tell thee that I had heard in the palace the beatings of the wings of the angel of death, and hath he not come, the angel of death ?

Salomé : Let me kiss thy mouth.

Jokanaan : Daughter of adultery, there is but one who can save thee, it is He of whom I spake. Go seek Him. He is in a boat on the Sea of Galilee, and He talketh with His disciples. Kneel down on the shore of the sea, and call unto Him by His name. When He cometh to thee (and to all who call on Him He cometh), bow thyself at His feet and ask of Him the remission of thy sins.

Salomé : Let me kiss thy mouth.

Jokanaan : Cursed be thou ! daughter of an incestuous mother, be thou accursed !

Salomé : I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan.

Jokanaan : I do not wish to look at thee. I will not look at thee, thou art accursed, Salomé, thou art accursed. (*He goes down into the cistern.*)

Salomé : I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan ; I will kiss thy mouth.

Salomé.

ROBERT HICHENS

1864-

28...BELLA DONNA AND BAROUDI

[Mrs. Chepstow, otherwise Bella Donna, a great beauty and adventuress in decline, who exercises an evil influence over all those men with whom she comes into intimate contact, has recently married Nigel Armine, but is irresistibly attracted by the strange Oriental glamour of the inscrutable Turco-Egyptian, Mahmoud Baroudi.]

THAT night they camped in an amazing desolation.

The great Lake of Kurûn, which looks like an inland sea, and which is salt almost as the sea, is embraced at its northern end by another sea of sand. The vast slopes of the Desert of Libya reach down to its waveless waters. The desolation of the desert is linked with the desolation of this unmurmuring sea, the deep silence of the wastes with the deep silence of the waters.

Never before had Mrs. Armine known such a desolation, never had she imagined such a silence as that which lay around their camp, which brooded over this desert, which brooded over the greenish-grey waters of this vast lake which was like a sea.

She spoke, and her voice seemed to be taken at once as its prey by the silence. Even her thought seemed to be seized by it, and to be conveyed away from her, like a living thing whose destiny it was to be slain. She felt paltry, helpless, unmeaning, in the midst of this arid breast of Nature, which was pale as the leper is pale. She felt chilled, even almost sexless, as if all her powers, all her passions and her desires, had been grasped by the silence, as if they were soon to be taken for ever from her. Never before had anything that was neither human nor connected

in any way with humanity's efforts and wishes made such a terrific impression upon her.

She hid this impression from Nigel.

The long camel-ride had slightly fatigued her, despite the great strength of body which she had been given by Egypt. She busied herself in the usual way of a woman arrived from a journey, changed her gown, bathed in a collapsible bath made of india-rubber, put eau de Cologne on her forehead, arranged her hair before a mirror pinned to the sloping canvas. But all the time that she did these things she was listening to the enormous silence, was feeling it like a weight, was shrinking, or trying to shrink away from its outstretched, determined arms. From without came sometimes sounds of voices, that presented themselves to her ears as shadows, skeletons, spectres present themselves to the eyes. Was that really Ibrahim? Was that Nigel speaking, laughing? And that long stream of words, did it flow from Hamza's throat? Or were those shadows outside, with voices of shadows trying to hold intercourse with shadows? Presently tea was ready, and she came out into the waste.

They were at a considerable distance from the lake, looking down on it from the slight elevation of a gigantic slope of sand, which rose gradually behind them till in the distance it seemed to touch the stooping grey of the low horizon. Everywhere white and yellowish-white melted into grey and greenish-grey. The only vegetation was a great maze of tamarisk bushes, which stretched from the flat sand-plain on their left to the verge of the lake, and far out into the water, making a refuge and a shelter for the thousands upon thousands of wild-duck that peopled the watery waste. Now, unafraid, they were floating in the open, casting great clouds of velvety black upon the still surface of the lake, which, owing to some atmospheric effect, looked as if it sloped upward like the sands till it met the stooping sky. Very far off, almost visionary, like blacknesses held partly by the water and partly by the vapours that muffled the sky, were two or three of the

clumsy boats of the wild, almost savage natives who live on the fish of the lake. Almost imperceptibly they moved about their eerie business.

" Just look at the duck, Ruby ! " said Nigel, as she came out. " What a place for sport ! "

For once their usual rôles were reversed ; he was practical whilst she was imaginative, or, at least, strongly affected by her imagination. He had been looking to his guns, making arrangements with a huge and nearly black dweller of the tents to show him the best sport possible for a fixed sum of money.

" But it's the devil to get within range of them," he added. " I shall have to do as the natives do, I expect."

" What's that ? " she asked, with an effort.

" Strip, and wade in up to my neck, carrying my gun over my head, and then keep perfectly still till some of them come within range."

He laughed with joyous anticipation.

" I've told Ibrahim he must have a roaring big fire for me when I get back."

" Are you going to-day ? "

" Yes ; I think I'll have just an hour. D'you feel up to riding the donkey to the water's edge, and coming out on the lake with me ? "

She hesitated. In this waste and in this silence she felt almost incapable of a decision. Then she said :

" No ; I think I've had enough for to-day. You must bring me back a duck for dinner."

" I swear I will."

He gripped her hands when he went. He was full of the irrepressible joy of the sportsman starting out for his pleasure.

" What will you do till I come back ? "

" Rest. Perhaps I shall read, and I'll talk to Ibrahim. He always amuses me."

" Good. I'm going to ride the donkey and take Hamza."

Just as he was mounting he turned round and said :

" Ruby, I'm having my time now. You shall have yours.

You shall have the best dahabeeyah to be got on the Nile—the *Loulia*, if Baroudi will hire it out to us."

" Oh, the *Loulia* would cost us too much," she said, " even if it could be hired."

" We'll get a good one, anyhow, and you shall see every temple—go up to Halfa, if you want to. And now pray for duck with all your might."

He rode away down the sand slope towards the lake, and presently, with Hamza and the native guide, was but a moving speck in the pallid distance.

Mrs. Armine watched them from a folding-chair, which she made Ibrahim carry out into the sand some hundreds of yards from the camp.

" Leave me here for a little while, Ibrahim," she said.

He obeyed her, and strolled quietly away, then presently squatted down to keep guard.

At first Mrs. Armine scarcely thought at all. She stared at the sand-slopes, at the sand-plains, at the sand-banks, at the wilderness of tamarisk, at the grey waters spotted with duck, at the little moving black things that, like insects, crept towards them. And she felt like—what? Like a nothing. For what seemed a very long time she felt like that. And then, gradually, very gradually, her self began to wake, began to release itself from the spell of place, and to struggle forward, as it were, out of the shattering grip of the silence. And she burned with indignation in the chill air of the desert.

Why had she let herself be brought, even to spend only three or four days, to such a place as this? Had she ever had even a momentary desire to see more solitary places than the place from which they had come? Where was Baroudi at this moment? What was he feeling, doing, thinking? She fastened her mind fiercely upon the thought of him, and she saw herself in exile. Always, until now, she had felt the conviction that Baroudi had some plan in connection with her, and that quiescence on her part was necessary to its ultimate fulfilment. She had felt that she was in the web of his plan, that she had to wait, that some-

thing devised by him would presently happen—she did not know what—and that their intercourse would be resumed.

Now, influenced by the desolation towards utter doubt and almost frantic depression, as she came back to her full life, which had surely been for a while in suspense, she asked herself whether she had not been grossly mistaken. Baroudi had never told her anything about the future, had never given her any hint as to what his meaning was. Was that because he had had no meaning? Had she been the victim of her own desires? Had Baroudi had enough of her and done with her? Something, that was compounded of something else as well as of vanity, seemed still to be telling her that it was not so. But to-day, in this terrible greyness, this melancholy, this chilly pallor, she could not trust it. She turned.

"Ibrahim! Ibrahim!" she cried out.

He rose from the sands and sauntered towards her. He came and stood silently beside her.

"Ibrahim," she began.

She looked at him, and was silent. Then she called on her resolute self, on the self that had been hardened, coarsened, by the life which she had led.

"Ibrahim, do you know where Baroudi is—what he has been doing all this time?" she asked.

"What he has bin doin' I dunno, my lady. Baroudi he doos very many things."

"I want to know what he has been doing. I must, I will know."

The spell of the place, the spell of the great and frigid silence was suddenly and completely broken. Mrs. Armine stood up in the sand. She was losing her self-control. She looked at the dreary prospect before her, growing sadder as evening drew on; she thought of Nigel perfectly happy; she even saw him down there, a black speck in the immensity, creeping onward towards his pleasure, and a fury that was vindictive possessed her. It seemed to her absolutely monstrous that such a woman as she was should be in such a place, in such a situation, waiting in the sand alone,

deserted, with nothing to do, no one to speak to, no prospect of pleasure, no prospect of anything. A loud voice within her seemed suddenly to cry, to shriek, " I won't stand this ! I won't stand it ! "

" I'm sick of the Fayyūm," she said fiercely—" utterly sick of it. I want to go back to the Nile. Do you know where Baroudi is ? Is he on the Nile ? I hate, I loathe this place."

" My lady," said Ibrahim very gently, " there is good jackal-shootin' here."

" Jackal-shooting, duck-shooting—so you think of nothing but your master's pleasure ! " she said indignantly. " Do you suppose I'm going to sit still here in the sands for days, and do nothing, and see nobody, while—while——"

She stopped. She could not go on. The fierceness of her anger almost choked her. If Nigel had been beside her at that moment, she would have been capable of showing even to him something of her truth. Ibrahim's voice again broke gently in upon her passion.

" My lady, for jackal-shootin' you have to go out at night. You have to go down there when it is dark, and stay there for a long while, till the jackal him come. You tie a goat ; the jackal him smell the goat, and presently him comin'."

She stared at him almost blankly. What had all this rhodomontade to do with her ? Ibrahim met her eyes.

" All this very interestin' for my Lord Arminigel," said Ibrahim softly.

Mrs. Armine said nothing, but she went on staring at Ibrahim.

" P'r'aps my gentleman go out to-night. If he go, you take a little walk with Ibrahim."

He turned and pointed behind her, to the distance where the rising sand-hill seemed to touch the stooping sky.

" You take a little walk up there."

Still she said nothing. She asked nothing. She had no need to ask. All the desolation about her seemed suddenly to blossom like the rose. Instead of the end of the

world, this place seemed to be the core, the warm heart of the world.

When at last she spoke she said quietly :

" Your master will go jackal-shooting to-night."

Ibrahim nodded his head.

" I dessay," he pensively replied.

The soft crack of a duck-gun came to their ears from far off among the tamarisk-bushes beside the green-grey waters.

" I dessay my Lord Arminigel him goin' after the jackal to-night."

The dinner in camp that night was quite a joyous festival. Nigel brought back two duck, Ibrahim made a fine fire of brushwood to warm the eager sportsman, and Ruby was in amazing spirits. She played to perfection the part of ardent housewife. She came and went in the sand, presiding over everything. She even penetrated into the cook's tent with Ibrahim to give Mohammed some hints as to the preparation of the duck.

" This is your holiday," she said to Nigel. " I want it to be a happy one. You must make the most of it, and go out shooting all the time. They say there's any amount of jackals down there in the tamarisk-bushes. Are you going to have a shot at them to-night ? "

Nigel stretched out his legs with a long sigh of satisfaction.

" I don't know, Ruby. I should like to, but it's so jolly and cosy here."

He looked towards the fire, then back at her.

" I'm not sure that I'll go out again," he said.

" I dare say you're tired."

" No, that's not it. The truth is that I'm tremendously happy in camp with you. And I love to think of the desolation all round us, and that there isn't a soul about, except a few gipsies down there, and a few wild, half-naked fishermen. We've brought our own oasis with us into the Libyan Desert, and I think to-night I'll be a wise man and stick to the oasis."

She smiled at him.

" Then do ! "

In the midst of her smile she yawned.

" I shall go to bed directly," she said.

She seemed to suppress another yawn.

" You mean to go to bed early ? " he asked.

" Almost directly. Do you mind ? I'm dog tired with the long camel ride, and I shall sleep like twenty tops."

She put her hand on his shoulder. Her whole face was looking sleepy.

" You old wretch ! " she said. " What do you mean by looking so horribly wide awake ? "

He put his hand over hers and laughed.

" I seem to be made of iron in this glorious country. I'm not a bit sleepy."

She stifled another yawn.

" Then I'll "—she put up her hand to her mouth—" I'll sit up a little to keep you company."

" Indeed you shan't. You shall go straight to bed, and when you're safely tucked up, I think perhaps I will just go down and have a look for the jackals. If you're going to sleep, I might as well——"

He drew down her face to his and gave her a long kiss.

" I'll put you to bed first, and when you're quite safe, and warm and cosy, I'll make a start."

She returned his kiss.

" No ; I'll see you off."

" But why ? "

" Because I love to see you starting off in the night to the thing that gives you pleasure. That's my pleasure. Not always, because I'm too selfish. On the Nile you'll have to attend to me, to do everything I want. But just for these few days I'm going to be like an Eastern woman, at the beck of my lord and master. So I must see you start, and then—oh, how I shall sleep ! "

He got up.

" P'r'aps I'll be out till morning. I wonder if Hamdi's got a goat."

He went away for his gun. In a very few minutes he left

the camp, gaily calling to her, " Sleep well, Ruby ! You look like a sorceress, standing there all lit up by the fire. The flames are flickering over you. Good-night—good-night ! "

His steps died away in the sand, his voice died away in the darkness.

She waited, standing perfectly still by the fire, for a long time. Her soul seemed running, rushing over the sands towards the ridge that met the sky, but her will kept her body standing beside the flames, until at last the sportsmen were surely far enough away.

" Ibrahim ! "

" My lady ? "

" How are we going ? "

She was whispering to him beside the fire.

" Does it matter the camel-men knowing ? Are they to know ? Am I to ride or walk ? "

" You leave everythin' to Ibrahim. You go in your tent, and presently I come."

She went at once into the tent, and sat down on a folding chair. A little round iron table stood before it. She leaned her arms on the table and laid her face against the back of her hand. Her cheek was burning. She sprang up, went to her dressing-case, unlocked it, drew out the *boîte de beauté* which Baroudi had given her in the orange-garden, and quickly made her face up, standing before the glass that was pinned to the canvas. Then she put on a short fur coat. The wind would be cold in the sands. She wondered how far they had to go.

And if Nigel should unexpectedly return, as nearly all husbands did on such occasions ?

She could not bother about that. She felt too desperate to care ; she felt in the grasp of fate. If the fate was to be untoward, so much the worse for her—and for Nigel. She meant to go beyond that ridge of the sand. That was all she knew. Quickly she buttoned the fur coat and put on a hat and gloves.

" Now we goin' to start."

Ibrahim put his muffled head in at the door of the tent.

" Walking ? " she asked.

" We goin' to start walkin'."

When she came out she found that the brushwood fire had been pulled to pieces.

" Down there they not see nothin'," said Ibrahim, pointing towards the darkness before them.

" And the men ? Does it matter about the men ? " she asked perfunctorily. She did not feel that she really cared.

" All the men sleepin', except Hamza. Him watchin'."

The tents of the men were at some distance. She looked, and saw no movement, no figures except the faint and grotesque silhouettes of the hobbled camels.

" I say that I follow my Lord Arminigel."

They started into the desert. As they left the camp, Mrs. Armine saw Hamza behind her tent, patrolling with a matchlock over his shoulder.

The night was dark and starless ; the breeze, though slight and wavering over the sands, was penetrating and cold. The feet of Mrs. Armine sank down at each step into the deep and yielding sands as she went on into the blackness of the immeasurable desert. And as she gazed before her at the hollow blackness, and felt the immensity of the unpeopled spaces, it seemed to her that Ibrahim was leading her into some crazy adventure, that they were going only towards the winds, the desolate sands, and the darkness that might be felt. He did not speak to her, nor she to him, till she heard, apparently near them, the angry snarl of a camel. Then she stopped.

" Did you hear that ? There's some one near us," she said.

" My lady, come on ! That is a very good dromedary for us."

" Ah ! " she said.

She hastened forward again. In two or three seconds the camel snarled furiously again.

" The Bedouin, he make him do that to tell us where he is," said Ibrahim.

He cried out some words in Arabic. A violent guttural

voice replied out of the darkness. In a moment, under the lee of a sand-dune, they came upon two muffled figures, holding two camels which were lying down. Upon one there was a sort of palanquin, in which Mrs. Armine took her seat, with a Bedouin sitting in front. A stick was plied. The beast protested, filling the hollow of the night with a complaint that at last became almost leonine; then suddenly rose up, was silent, and started off at a striding trot.

Mrs. Armine could not measure either the time that elapsed or the space that was covered during that journey. She was filled with a sense of excitement and adventure that she had never experienced before, and that made her feel oddly young. The dark desert, swept by the chilling breeze, became to her suddenly a place of strong hopes, and of desires leaping towards fulfilment. She was warmed through and through by expectation, as she had not been warmed by the great camp fire that had been kindled to greet Nigel. And when at last in the distance there shone out a light, like an earth-bound star, to her all the desert seemed glowing with an almost exultant radiance.

But the light was surely far away, for though the dromedary swung on over the desert, it did not seem to her to grow clearer or brighter, but, like a distant eye, it regarded her with an almost cruel steadiness, as if it calmly read her soul.

And she thought of Baroudi's eyes, and, looking again at the yellow light, she felt as if he were watching her calmly from some fastness of the sands to which she could not draw near.

In the desert it is difficult to measure distances. Just as Mrs. Armine was thinking that she could never gain that light, it broadened, broke up into forms, the forms of leaping flames blown this way and that by the stealthy wind of the waste, became abruptly a fire revealing vague silhouettes of camels, of crouching men, of tents, of guard dogs, of hobbled horses. She was in the midst of a camp pitched far out in a lonely place of the sands within sight of no oasis.

The dromedary knelt. She was on her feet with Ibrahim standing beside her.

For a moment she felt dazed. She stood still, consciously pressing her feet down against the sand which glowed in the light from the flames. She saw eyes—the marvellous, bird-like eyes of Bedouins—steadily regarding her beneath the darkness of peaked hoods. She heard the crackle of flames in the windy silence, a soft grating sound that came from the jaws of feeding camels. Dogs snuffed about her ankles.

" My lady, you comin' with me ! "

Mechanically she followed Ibrahim away from the fire, across a strip of sand to a large tent that stood apart. As she drew near to it her heart began to beat violently and irregularly, and she felt almost like a girl. For years she had not felt so young as she felt to-night. In this dark desert, among these men of Africa, all her worldly knowledge, all her experience of men in civilised countries, seemed of no use to her. It was as if she shed it, cast it as a snake casts its skin, and stood there in a new ignorance that was akin to the wondering ignorance of youth. The canvas flap that was the door of the tent was fastened down. Ibrahim went up to it, and called out something. For a moment there was no answer. During that moment Mrs. Armine had time to notice a second smaller tent standing, with Baroudi's, apart from all the others. And she fancied, but was not certain, that as for an instant the breeze died down she heard within it a thin sound like the plucked strings of some instrument of music. Then the canvas of the big tent was lifted, light shone out from within, and she saw the strong outline of a man. He looked into the night, drew back, and she entered quickly and stood before Baroudi. Then the canvas fell down behind her, shutting out the night and the desert.

Baroudi was dressed in Arab costume. His head was covered with a white turban spangled with gold, his face was framed in snowy white, and his great neck was hidden by drapery. He wore a kuftán of striped and flowered silk

with long sleeves, fastened round his waist with lengths of muslin. Over this was a robe of scarlet cloth. His legs were bare of socks, and on his feet were native slippers of scarlet morocco leather. In his left hand he held an immensely long pipe with an ivory mouthpiece.

Mrs. Armine looked from him to his tent, to the thick, bright-coloured silks which entirely concealed the canvas walls, to the magnificent carpets which blotted out the desert sands, to the great hanging lamp of silver, which was fastened by a silver chain to the peaked roof, to the masses of silk cushions of various hues that were strewn about the floor. Once again her nostrils drew in the faint, but heavy, perfume which she always associated with Baroudi, and now with the whole of the East, and with all Eastern things.

That racing dromedary had surely carried her through the night from one world to another. Suddenly she felt tired; she felt that she longed to lie down upon those great silk cushions, between those coloured walls of silk that shut out the windy darkness and the sad spaces of the sands, and to stay there for a long time. The courtesan's lazy, luxurious instinct drowsed within her soul, and her whole body responded to this perfumed warmth, to this atmosphere of riches created by the man before her in the core of desolation.

She sighed, and looked at his eyes.

"And how is Mr. Armeen?" he said, with a faintly ironic inflection which she had noticed in their first interview alone. "Has he gone out after the jackal?"

What his intention was she did not know, but he could not have said anything to her at that moment that would have struck more rudely upon her sensuous pleasure in the change one step had brought her. His words instantly put before her the necessity for going presently, very soon, back to the camp and Nigel, and they woke up in her the secret woman, the woman who still retained the instincts of a lady. This lady realised, almost as Eve realised her nakedness, the humiliation of that rush through the night from one camp to another, the humiliation that lay in the

fact that it was she who sought the man, that he had her brought to him, did not trouble to come to her. She reddened beneath the paint on her face, turned swiftly round, bent down, and tried to undo the canvas flap of the tent. Her intention was to go out, to call Ibrahim, to leave the camp at once. But her hands trembled, and she could not undo the canvas. Still bending, she struggled with it. She heard no movement behind her. Was Baroudi calmly waiting for her to go? Some one must have pegged the flap down after she had come in. She would have to kneel down on the carpet to get at the fastenings. It seemed to her, in her nervous anger and excitement, that to kneel in that tent would be a physical sign of humiliation; nevertheless, after an instant of hesitation, she sank to the ground, and pushed her hands forcibly under the canvas, feeling almost frantically for the ropes. She grasped something, a rope, a peg—she did not know what—and pulled and tore at it with all her force.

Just then the night wind, which blew waywardly over the sands, now rising in a gust that was almost fierce, now dying away into a calm that was almost complete, failed suddenly, and she heard a frail sound which, by its very frailty, engaged all her attention. It was a reiteration of the sound which she thought she had heard as she waited outside the tent, and this time she was no longer in doubt. It was the cry of an instrument of music, a stringed instrument of some kind, plucked by demure fingers. The cry was repeated. A whimsical Eastern melody, very delicate and pathetic, crept to her from without.

It suggested to her—women.

Her hands became inert, and her fingers dropped from the tent-pegs. She thought of the other tent, of the smaller tent she had seen, standing apart near Baroudi's. Who was living in that tent?

The melody went on, running a wayward course. It might almost be a bird's song softly trilled in some desolate place of the sands, but——

It died away into the night, and the night wind rose again.

Mrs. Armine got up from her knees. Her hands were trembling no longer. She no longer wished to go.

" Arrange some of those cushions for me, Baroudi," she said. " I am tired after my ride."

He had not moved from where he had been standing when she came in, but she noticed that his long pipe had dropped from his hand, and was lying on the carpet.

" Where shall I put them ? " he asked gravely.

She pointed to the side of the tent which was nearest to the smaller tent.

" Against the silk, two or three cushions. Then I can lean back. That will do."

She unbuttoned her fur jacket.

" Help me ! " she said.

He drew it gently off. She sat down and pulled off her gloves. She arranged the cushions with care behind her back.

Her manner was that of a woman who meant to stay where she was for a long time. She was listening intently to hear the music again, but her face did not show that she was making any effort. Her self was restored to her, and her self was a woman who in a certain world, a world where women crudely, and sometimes quite openly, battle with other women for men, had for a long time resolutely, successfully, even cruelly, held her own.

Baroudi watched her with serious eyes. He picked up his pipe, and let himself down on his haunches close to where she was leaning against her cushions. The night wind blew more strongly. There was no sound from the other tent. When Mrs. Armine knew that the wind must drown that strange, frail music, even if the hidden player still carelessly made it, she said, with a sort of brutality :

" And if my husband comes back to camp before my return there ? "

" He will not."

" We can't know."

" The dromedary will take you there in fifteen minutes."

" He may be there now. If he is there ? "

" Do you wish him to be there ? "

He had penetrated her thought, gone down to her desire. That sound of music, that little cry of some desert lute plucked by demure fingers, perhaps stained with the henna, the colour of joy, had rendered her reckless. At that moment she longed for a crisis. And yet at his question something within her recoiled. Could she be afraid of Nigel ? Could she cower before his goodness when it realised her evil ? Marriage had surely subtly changed her, giving back to her desires, prejudices, even pruderies of feeling that she had thought she had got rid of for ever long ago. Some spectral instincts of the " straight " woman still feebly strove, it seemed, to lift their bowed heads within her.

" Things can't go on like this," she said. " I don't know what I wish. But I am not going to allow myself to be treated as you think you can treat me. Do you know that in Europe men have ruined themselves for me—ruined themselves ? "

" You liked that ! " he intercepted, with a smile of understanding. " You liked that very much. But I should never do that."

He shook his head.

" I would give you many things, but I am not one of those what the Englishman calls ' dam fools.' "

The practical side of his character, thus suddenly displayed, was like a cool hand laid upon her. It was like a medicine to her fever. It seemed for a moment to dominate a raging disease—the disease of her desire for him—which created, to be its perpetual companion, a furious jealousy involving her whole body, her whole spirit.

" Because you don't care for me," she said, after a moment of hesitation, and again running, almost in despite of herself, to meet her humiliation. " Every man who cares for a woman can be a fool for her, even an Eastern man."

" Why do I come here ? " he said. " Two days through the desert from the Sphinx ? "

" It amuses you to pursue an Englishwoman. You are cruel, and it amuses you."

Her cruelty to Nigel understood Baroudi's cruelty to her quite clearly at that moment, and she came very near to a knowledge of the law of compensation.

His eyes narrowed.

" Would you rather I did not pursue you ? "

She was silent.

" Would you rather be left quietly to your life with Mr. Armeen ? "

" Oh, I'm sick of my life with him ! " she cried out desperately. " It would be better if he were in camp to-night when I got back there ; it would be much better ! "

" And if he were in camp—would you tell him ? "

Contempt crawled in his voice.

" You are not like one of our women," he said. " They know how to do what they want even behind the shutters of their husbands' houses. They are clever women when they walk in the ways of love."

He had made her feel like a child. He had struck hard upon her pride of a successful demi-mondaine.

" Of course I shouldn't tell him ! " she said. " But perhaps it would be better if I did, for I'm tired of my life."

Again the horrible melancholy, which so often comes to women of her type and age, and of which she was so almost angrily afraid, flowed over her. She must live as she wished to live in these few remaining years. She must break out of prison quickly, or, when she did break out, there would be no freedom that she could enjoy. She had so little time to lose. She could tell nothing to Baroudi of all this, but perhaps she could make him feel the force of her desire in such a way that an equal force of answering desire would wake in him. Perhaps she had never really exerted herself enough to put forth, when with him, all the powers of her fascination, long tempered and tried in the blazing furnaces of life.

The gusty wind died down across the sands, and again

she heard the frail sound of the desert lute. It wavered into her ears, like something supple, yielding, insinuating.

There was a woman in that tent.

And she, Bella Donna, must go back to camp almost directly, and leave Baroudi with that woman! She was being chastised with scorpions to-night.

"Why did you come to this place?" she said.

"To be with you for an hour."

The irony, the gravity, that seemed almost cold in its calm, died out of his eyes, and was replaced by a shining that changed his whole aspect.

There was the divine madness in him, too, then. Or was it only the madness that is not divine? She did not ask or care to know.

The night wind rose again, drowning the little notes of the desert lute.

. . . . . .

That night, without being aware of it, Mrs. Armine crossed a Rubicon. She crossed it when she came out of the big tent into the sands to go back to the camp by the lake. While she had been with Baroudi the sky had partially cleared. Above the tents and the blazing fire some stars shone out benignly. A stillness and a pellucid clearness that were full of remote romance were making the vast desert their sacred possession. The aspect of the camp had changed. It was no longer a lurid and mysterious assemblage of men, animals, and tents, half revealed in the light of blown flames, half concealed by the black mantle of night, but a tranquil and restful picture of comfort and of repose, full of the quiet detail of feeding beasts and men smoking, sleeping, or huddling together to tell the everlasting stories and play the games of draughts that the Arabs love so well.

But blackness and gusty storm were within her, and made the vision of this desert place, governed by the huge calm of the immersing night in this deep hour of rest, almost stupefying by its contrast with herself.

Baroudi had gone out first to speak with Ibrahim. She saw him, made unusually large and imposing by the ample

robes he wore, the innumerable folds of muslin round his head, stride slowly across the sand, and mingle with his attendants, who all rose up as he joined them. For a moment she stood quite still just beyond the shadow of the tent.

The exquisitely cool air touched her, to make her know that she was on fire. The exquisite clearness fell around her, to make her realise the misty confusion of her soul. She trembled as she stood there. Not only her body, but her whole nature was quivering.

And then she heard again the player upon the lute, and she saw a faint ray of light upon the sand by the tent she had not entered. She buttoned her fur jacket, twisted her gloves in her hands, and looked towards the ray. There was a hard throbbing in her temples, and just beneath her shoulders there came a sudden shock of cold, that was like the cold of menthol. She looked again at the camp fire; then she stole over the sand, set her feet on the ray, and waited.

For the first time she realised that she was afraid of Baroudi, that she would shrink from offending him almost as a dog shrinks from offending its master. But would it anger him if she saw the lute-player? He had not taken the trouble to silence that music. He treated women *de haut en bas.* That was part of his fascination for them—at any rate, for her. What would he care if she knew he had a woman with him in the camp, if she saw the woman?

And even if he were angry? She thought of his anger, and knew that at this moment she would risk it—she would risk anything—to see the woman in that tent. Thinking with great rapidity in her nervous excitement and bitter jealousy, become tenfold more bitter now that the moment had arrived for her departure, she imagined what the woman must be: probably some exquisite, fair Circassian, young, very young, fifteen or sixteen years old; or perhaps a maiden from the Fayyūm, the region of lovely dark maidens, with broad brows, oval faces, and long and melting black eyes. Her fancy drew and painted marvellous girls in the

night. Then, as a louder note, almost like a sigh, came from the tent, she moved forward, lifted the canvas, and looked in.

The interior was unlike the interior of Baroudi's tent. Here nothing was beautiful, though nearly everything was gaudy. The canvas was covered with coarse striped stuff, bright red and yellow, with alternate red and yellow rosettes all round the edge near the sand, which was strewn with bits of carpet, on which enormous flowers seemed to be writhing in a wilderness of crude green and yellow leaves. Fastened to the walls, in tarnished frames, were many little pictures; oleographs of the most blatant type; chalk drawings of personages such as might people an ugly dream; men in uniforms, with red noses and bulbous cheeks; dogs, cats, and sand-lizards; and coloured plates cut out of picture-papers. Mingled with these were several objects that Mrs. Armine guessed to be charms—a mus-haf, or copy of the Koran, enclosed in a silver case which hung from a string of yellow silk; one or two small scrolls and bits of paper covered with Arab writing; two tooth-sticks in a wooden tube, open at one end; a child's shoe, tied with string, to which were attached bits of coral and withered flowers; several tassels of shells, mingled with bright blue and white beads; a glass bottle of blessed storax; and a quantity of Fatma hands, some very large and made of silver gilt, set with stones and lumps of a red material that looked like sealing-wax, others of silver and brass, small and practically worthless. There was also the foot of some small animal set in a battered silver holder. On a deal table stood a smoking oil-lamp of mean design and cheap material. Underneath it was a large wooden chest or coffer, studded with huge brass nails, clamped with brass, and painted a brilliant green. Near it, touching the canvas wall, was a mattress covered with gaudy rugs, that served as a bed.

In the tent there were two people. Although the thin sound of the music had suggested a woman to Mrs. Armine, the player was not a woman, but a tall and large young man, dressed in a bright yellow jacket, cut like a " Zouave," wide drawers of white linen, yellow slippers, and the tarbush.

Round his waist there was a girdle, made of a long and narrow red and yellow shawl with fringes and tassels. He was squatting cross-legged on the hideous carpet, holding in his large, pale hands, artificially marked with blue spots, and tinted at the nails with the henna, a strange little instrument of sand-tortoise, goat-skin, wood, and catgut, with four strings from which he was drawing the plaintive and wavering tune. He wore a moustache and a small, blue-black beard. His eyes were half shut, his head drooped to one side, his mouth was partly open, and the expression upon his face was one of weak and sickly contentment. Now and then he sang a few notes in a withdrawn and unnatural voice, slightly shook his large and flaccid body, and allowed his head to tremble almost as if he were seized with palsy. Despite his breadth, his large limbs, and his beard, there was about his whole person an indescribable effeminacy, which seemed increased, rather than diminished, by his bulk and his virile contours. A little way from him on the mattress a girl was sitting straight up, like an idol, with her legs and feet tucked away and completely concealed by her draperies.

Mrs. Armine looked from the man to her with the almost ferocious eagerness of the bitterly jealous woman. For she guessed at once that the man was no lover of this girl, but merely an attendant, perhaps a eunuch, who ministered to her pleasure. This was Baroudi's woman, who would stay here in the tent beside him, while she, the fettered European woman, would ride back in the night to Kurūn. Yet could this be Baroudi's woman, this painted, jewelled, bedizened creature, almost macawlike in her bright-coloured finery, who remained quite still upon her rugs—like the macaw upon its perch—indifferent, somnolent surely, or perhaps steadily, enigmatically watchful, with a cigarette between her painted lips, above the chin on which was tattooed a pattern resembling a little indigo-coloured beard, or "imperial"? Could he be attracted by this face which, though it seemed young under its thick vesture of paint and collyrium, would surely not be thought pretty by any man

who was familiar with the beauties of Europe and America, this face with its heavy features, its sultry, sullen eyes, its plump cheeks, and sensual lips ?

Yes, he could. As she looked, with the horrible intuition of a feverishly strung up and excited woman, Mrs. Armine felt the fascination such a creature held to tug at a man like Baroudi. Here was surely no mind, but only a body containing the will, inherited from how many Ghawázee ancestors, to be the plaything of man ; a well-made body, yes, even beautifully made, with no heaviness such as showed in the face ; a body that could move lightly, take supple attitudes, dance, posture, bend, or sit up straight, as now, with the perfect rigidity of an idol ; a body that could wear rightly cascades of wonderfully tinted draperies, and spangled, vaporous tissues, and barbaric jewels, that do not shine brightly as if reflecting the modern, restless spirit, but that are somnolent and heavy and deep, like the eyes of the Eastern women of pleasure.

The player upon the desert lute had not seen that some one stood in the tent-door. With half-shut eyes he continued playing and singing, lost in a sickly ecstasy. The woman on the gaudy rug sat quite still, and stared at Mrs. Armine. She showed no surprise, no anger, no curiosity. Her expression did not change. Her motionless, painted mouth was set like a mouth carved in some hard material. Only her bosom stirred with a regular movement beneath her coloured tissues, her jewels, and strings of coins.

Mrs. Armine stepped into the tent, and dropped the flap behind her. She did not know what she was going to do, but she was filled with a bitter curiosity that she could not resist, with an intense desire to force her way into this woman's life, a life so strangely different from her own, yet linked with it by Baroudi. She hated this woman, yet with her hatred was mingled a subtle admiration, a desire to touch this painted toy that gave him pleasure, a longing to probe its attraction, to plumb the depth of its fascination, to learn from it a lesson in the strange lore of the East. She came close up to the woman, and stood beside her.

Instantly one of the painted hands went up to her jacket, and gently, very delicately, touched its fur. Then the other hand followed, and the jacket was felt with wondering fingers, was stroked softly, first downwards, then upwards, while the dark and heavy eyes solemnly noted the thin shine of the shifting skin. The curiosity of Mrs. Armine was met by another, but childlike, curiosity, and suddenly, out of the cloud of mystery broke a ray of light that was naïve.

This naïveté confused Mrs. Armine. For a moment it seemed to be pushing away her anger, to be drawing the sting from her curiosity. But then the childishness of this strange rival stirred up in her a more acrid bitterness than she had known till now. And the wondering touch became intolerable to her. Why should such a creature be perfectly happy, while she, with her knowledge, her experience, her tempered and perfected powers, lived in a turmoil of misery? She looked down into the Ghawázee's eyes, and suddenly the painted hands dropped from the fur, and she was confronted by a woman who was no longer naïve, who understood her, and whom she could understand.

The voice of the lute-player died away, the thin cry of the strings failed. He had seen. He rose to his feet, and said something in a language Mrs. Armine could not understand. The girl replied in a voice that sounded ironic, and suddenly began to laugh. At the same moment Baroudi came into the tent. The girl called out to him, pointed at Mrs. Armine, and went on laughing. He smiled at her, and answered.

"What are you saying to her?" said Mrs. Armine fiercely. "How dare you speak to her about me? How dare you discuss me with her?"

"P'f! She is a child. She knows nothing. The camel is ready."

The girl spoke to him again with great rapidity, and an air of half-impudent familiarity that sickened Mrs. Armine. Something seemed to have roused within her a sense of boisterous humour. She gesticulated with her painted hands, and rocked on her mattress with an abandon almost

negroid. Holding his lute in one pale hand, and stroking his blue-black beard with the other, her huge and flaccid attendant looked calmly on without smiling.

Mrs. Armine turned and went quickly out of the tent. Baroudi spoke again to the girl, joined in her merriment, then followed Mrs. Armine. She turned upon him, and took hold of his cloak with both her hands, and her hands were trembling violently.

"How dared you bring me here?" she said. "How dared you?"

"I wanted you. You know it."

"That's not true."

"It is true."

"It is not true. How could you want me when you had that dancing-girl with you?"

He shrugged his shoulders, almost like one of the Frenchmen whom he had met ever since he was a child.

"You do not understand the men of the East, or you forget that I am an Oriental," he said.

A sudden idea struck her.

"Perhaps you are married?" she exclaimed.

"Of course I am married!"

His eyes narrowed, and his face began to look hard and repellent.

"It is not in our habits to discuss these things," he said.

She felt afraid of his anger.

"I didn't mean——"

She dropped her hands from his cloak.

"But haven't I a right——?" she began.

She stopped. What was the use of making any claim upon such a man? What was the use of wasting upon him any feeling either of desire or of anger? What was the use? And yet she could not go without some understanding. She could not ride back into the camp by the lake, and settle down to virtue, to domesticity with Nigel. Her whole nature cried out for this man imperiously. His strangeness lured her. His splendid physique appealed to her with a power she could not resist. He dominated her by his

indifference as well as by his passion. He fascinated her by his wealth, and by his almost Jewish faculty of acquiring. His irony whipped her, his contempt of morality answered to her contempt. His complete knowledge of what she was warmed, soothed, reposed her.

But the thought of his infidelity to her as soon as she was away from him roused in her a sort of madness.

" How am I to see you again ? " she said.

And all that she felt for him went naked in her voice.

" How am I to see you again ? "

He stood and looked at her.

" And what is to happen to me if he has found out that I have been away from the camp ? "

" Hamza will make an explanation."

" And if he doesn't believe the explanation ? "

" You will make one. You will never tell him the truth."

It was a cold command laid like a yoke upon her.

" He can never know I have been here. To-night, directly you are gone, I strike my tents, and go back to Cairo. I do not choose to have any bad affairs with the English so long as the English rule in Egypt. I am well looked upon by the English, and so it must continue. Otherwise my affairs might suffer. And that I will not have. Do you understand ? "

She looked at him, and said nothing.

" We have to do what we want in the world without losing anything by it. Thus it has always been with me in my life."

She thought of all she had lost long ago by doing the thing she desired, and again she felt herself inferior to him.

" And this, too, we shall do without losing anything by it," he said.

" This ? What ? "

" Go back to Kurūn. Tell me—will you not presently need to have a dahabeeyah ? "

" And if we do ? "

" You shall have the *Loulia*."

" You mean to come with us ? "

" Are you a child ? I shall let it to your husband at a

price that will suit his purse, so that you may be housed as you ought to be. I shall let it with my crew, my servants, my cook. Then you must take your husband away with you quietly up the Nile."

Mrs. Armine was conscious of a shock of cold.

" Quietly up the Nile ? " she repeated.

" Yes."

" What is the use of that ? "

" Perhaps he will like the Nile so much that he will not come back."

He looked into her eyes.

She heard the snarl of a camel.

" Your camel is ready," he said.

They walked towards the fire where Ibrahim was awaiting them. Before Mrs. Armine had settled herself in the palanquin, Baroudi moved away without another word, and as the camel rose, complaining in the night, she saw him lift the canvas of the Ghawázee's tent and disappear within it.

When she reached the camp by the lake, Nigel had not returned. She undressed quickly, got into bed, and lay there shivering, though heavy blankets covered her.

Just at dawn Nigel came back.

Then she shut her eyes, and pretended to sleep.

Always she was shivering.

Bella Donna.

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

1866–1915

29...PAOLO AND FRANCESCA

[Paolo Malatesta falls in love with Francesca da Rimini, his brother Giovanni's wife. One night, Giovanni surprises them together, and slays both his wife and her lover.]

An Arbour in the Castle Garden. Dawn beginning to break.

Enter Francesca *with a book*, Nita *following with lamp.*

Francesca : I cannot sleep, Nita ; I will read here.
Is it yet dawn ? [Nita *sets lamp down.*
Nita : No, lady : yet I see
A blushing in the East.
Francesca : How still it is !
Nita : This is the stillest time of night or day.
Francesca : Know you why, Nita ?
Nita : No, my lady.
Francesca : Now
Day in a breathless passion kisses night,
And neither speaks.
Nita : Shall I stay here ?
Francesca : Ah, no !
Perhaps in the dawn silence I shall drowse.
If not, I'll read this legend to myself.
Nita : Is it a pretty tale ?
Francesca : Pretty, ah no !
Nita ; but beautiful and passing sad.
Nita : I love sad tales : though I am gay, I love
Sometimes to weep. But is it of our time ?
Francesca : It is an ancient tale of two long dead.
Nita : O, 'tis a tale of love !

Francesca : Of love, indeed.
But, Nita, leave me to myself: I think
I would have no one stirring near me now. [*Exit Nita.*
The light begins, but he is far away. [*She walks to and fro.*
Better than tossing in that vacant room
Is this cold air and fragrance ere the dawn.
Where is the page which I had reached? Ah, here!
Now let me melt into an ancient woe.
[*Begins to read. Enter* Paolo, *softly.*
Paolo : Francesca!
Francesca : Paolo! I thought you now
Gone into battle dim, far, far away.
Paolo : And seems it strange that I should come then?
Francesca : No,
It seems that it could not be otherwise.
Paolo : I went indeed; but some few miles from hence
Turned, and could go no further. All this night
About the garden have I roamed and burned.
And now at last, sleepless and without rest,
I steal to you.
Francesca : Sleepless and without rest!
Paolo : It seemed that I must see your face again,
Then nevermore; that I must hear your voice,
And then no more; that I must touch your hand,
Once. No one stirs within the house; no one
In all this world but you and I, Francesca.
We two have to each other moved all night.
Francesca : I moved not to you, Paolo.
Paolo : But night
Guided you on, and onward beckoned me.
What is that book you read? Now fades the last
Star in the East: a mystic breathing comes:
And all the leaves once quivered and were still.
Francesca : It is the first, the faint stir of the dawn.
Paolo : So still it is that we might almost hear
The sigh of all the sleepers in the world.
Francesca : And all the rivers running to the sea.
Paolo : What is't you read?

Francesca : It is an ancient tale.
Paolo : Show it to me. Is it some drowsy page
That reading low I might persuade your eyes
At last to sleep ?
Francesca : It is the history
Of two who fell in love long years ago ;
And wrongly fell.
Paolo : How wrongly ?
Francesca : Because she
Already was a wife, and he who loved
Was her own husband's dear familiar friend.
Paolo : Was it so long ago ?
Francesca : So long ago.
Paolo : What were their famous and unlucky names ?
Francesca : Men called him Launcelot, her Guenevere.
There is the page where I had ceased to read.
Paolo (taking book) : Their history is blotted with new tears.
Francesca : The tears are mine : I know not why I wept.
But these two were so glad in their wrong love :
It was their joy ; it was their helpless joy.
Paolo : Shall I read on to you where you have paused ?
Francesca : Here is the place : but read it low and sweet.
Put out the lamp ! [*Paolo puts out the lamp.*
Paolo : The glimmering page is clear.
(*Reading.*) " Now on that day it chanced that Launcelot,
Thinking to find the King, found Guenevere
Alone ; and when he saw her whom he loved,
Whom he had met too late, yet loved the more ;
Such was the tumult at his heart that he
Could speak not, for her husband was his friend,
His dear familiar friend : and they two held
No secret from each other until now ;
But were like brothers born "—my voice breaks off.
Read you a little on.
Francesca (reading) : " And Guenevere,
Turning, beheld him suddenly whom she
Loved in her thought, and even from that hour

When first she saw him: for by day, by night,
Though lying by her husband's side, did she
Weary for Launcelot, and knew full well
How ill that love, and yet that love how deep!"
I cannot see—the page is dim: read you.

Paolo (*reading*): "Now they two were alone, yet could not speak;
But heard the beating of each other's hearts.
He knew himself a traitor but to stay,
Yet could not stir: she pale and yet more pale
Grew till she could no more, but smiled on him.
Then when he saw that wishèd smile, he came
Near to her and still near, and trembled; then
Her lips all trembling kissed."

Francesca (*drooping towards him*): Ah, Launcelot!

[*He kisses her on the lips.*

Paolo and Francesca.

JOHN GALSWORTHY

1867–

30...SOAMES AND IRENE

[Irene is married to Soames Forsyte, " the Man of Property," whom she hates. For she is secretly in love with Bosinney, an architect, who is building a house for Soames. Soames is beginning to suspect that there may be something between the two.]

NOTHING in this world is more sure to upset a Forsyte than the discovery that something on which he has stipulated to spend a certain sum has cost more. And this is reasonable, for upon the accuracy of his estimates the whole policy of his life is ordered. If he cannot rely on definite values of property, his compass is amiss; he is adrift upon bitter waters without a helm.

After writing to Bosinney in the terms that have already been chronicled, Soames had dismissed the cost of the house from his mind. He believed that he had made the matter of the final cost so very plain that the possibility of its being again exceeded had really never entered his head. On hearing from Bosinney that his limit of twelve thousand pounds would be exceeded by something like four hundred, he had grown white with anger. His original estimate of the cost of the house completed had been ten thousand pounds, and he had often blamed himself severely for allowing himself to be led into repeated excesses. Over this last expenditure, however, Bosinney had put himself completely in the wrong. How on earth a fellow could make such an ass of himself Soames could not conceive; but he had done so, and all the rancour and hidden jealousy that had been burning against him for so long was now focussed in rage at this crowning piece of extravagance. The attitude

of the confident and friendly husband was gone. To preserve property—his wife—he had assumed it, to preserve property of another kind he lost it now.

" Ah ! " he had said to Bosinney when he could speak, " and I suppose you're perfectly contented with yourself. But I may as well tell you that you've altogether mistaken your man ! "

What he meant by those words he did not quite know at the time, but after dinner he looked up the correspondence between himself and Bosinney to make quite sure. There could be no two opinions about it—the fellow had made himself liable for that extra four hundred, or, at all events, for three hundred and fifty of it, and he would have to make it good.

He was looking at his wife's face when he came to this conclusion. Seated in her usual seat on the sofa, she was altering the lace on a collar. She had not once spoken to him all the evening.

He went up to the mantelpiece, and contemplating his face in the mirror said : " Your friend the Buccaneer has made a fool of himself ; he will have to pay for it ! "

She looked at him scornfully, and answered : " I don't know what you are talking about ! "

" You soon will. A mere trifle, quite beneath your contempt—four hundred pounds."

" Do you mean that you are going to make him pay that towards this hateful house ? "

" I do."

" And you know he's got nothing ? "

" Yes."

" Then you are meaner than I thought you."

Soames turned from the mirror, and unconsciously taking a china cup from the mantelpiece, clasped his hands around it, as though praying. He saw her bosom rise and fall, her eyes darkening with anger, and taking no notice of the taunt, he asked quietly :

" Are you carrying on a flirtation with Bosinney ? "

" No, I am not ! "

Her eyes met his, and he looked away. He neither believed nor disbelieved her, but he knew that he had made a mistake in asking; he never had known, never would know, what she was thinking. The sight of her inscrutable face, the thought of all the hundreds of evenings he had seen her sitting there like that, soft and passive, but so unreadable, unknown, enraged him beyond measure.

"I believe you are made of stone," he said, clenching his fingers so hard that he broke the fragile cup. The pieces fell into the grate. And Irene smiled.

"You seem to forget," she said, "that cup is not!"

Soames gripped her arm. "A good beating," he said, "is the only thing that would bring you to your senses," but turning on his heel, he left the room.

Soames went upstairs that night with the feeling that he had gone too far. He was prepared to offer excuses for his words.

He turned out the gas still burning in the passage outside their room. Pausing, with his hand on the knob of the door, he tried to shape his apology, for he had no intention of letting her see that he was nervous.

But the door did not open, nor when he pulled it and turned the handle firmly. She must have locked it for some reason, and forgotten.

Entering his dressing-room, where the gas was also alight and burning low, he went quickly to the other door. That too was locked. Then he noticed that the camp bed which he occasionally used was prepared, and his sleeping-suit laid out upon it. He put his hand up to his forehead, and brought it away wet. It dawned on him that he was barred out.

He went back to the door, and rattling the handle stealthily, called: "Unlock the door; do you hear? Unlock the door!"

There was a faint rustling, but no answer.

"Do you hear? Let me in at once—I insist on being let in!"

He could catch the sound of her breathing close to the door, like the breathing of a creature threatened by danger.

There was something terrifying in this inexorable silence, in the impossibility of getting at her. He went back to the other door, and putting his whole weight against it, tried to burst it open. The door was a new one—he had had them renewed himself, in readiness for their coming in after the honeymoon. In a rage he lifted his foot to kick in the panel; the thought of the servants restrained him, and he felt suddenly that he was beaten.

Flinging himself down in the dressing-room, he took up a book.

But instead of the print he seemed to see his wife—with her yellow hair flowing over her bare shoulders, and her great dark eyes—standing like an animal at bay. And the whole meaning of her act of revolt came to him. She meant it to be for good.

He could not sit still, and went to the door again. He could still hear her, and he called: "Irene! Irene!"

He did not mean to make his voice pathetic. In ominous answer, the faint sounds ceased. He stood with clenched hands, thinking.

Presently he stole round on tiptoe, and running suddenly at the other door, made a supreme effort to break it open. It creaked, but did not yield. He sat down on the stairs and buried his face in his hands.

For a long time he sat there in the dark, the moon through the skylight above laying a pale smear that lengthened slowly towards him down the stairway. He tried to be philosophical.

Since she had locked her doors she had no further claim as a wife, and he would console himself with other women!

It was but a spectral journey he made among such delights—he had no appetite for these exploits. He had never had much, and he had lost the habit. He felt that he could never recover it. His hunger could only be appeased by his wife, inexorable and frightened, behind these shut doors. No other woman could help him.

This conviction came to him with terrible force out there in the dark.

His philosophy left him; and surly anger took its place. Her conduct was immoral, inexcusable, worthy of any punishment within his power. He desired no one but her, and she refused him!

She must really hate him, then! He had never believed it yet. He did not believe it now. It seemed to him incredible. He felt as though he had lost for ever his power of judgment. If she, so soft and yielding as he had always judged her, could take this decided step—what could not happen?

Then he asked himself again if she were carrying on an intrigue with Bosinney. He did not believe that she was; he could not afford to believe such a reason for her conduct —the thought was not to be faced.

It would be unbearable to contemplate the necessity of making his marital relations public property. Short of the most convincing proofs he must still refuse to believe, for he did not wish to punish himself. And all the time at heart—he *did* believe.

The moonlight cast a grayish tinge over his figure, hunched against the staircase wall.

Bosinney was in love with her! He hated the fellow, and would not spare him now. He could and would refuse to pay a penny piece over twelve thousand and fifty pounds— the extreme limit fixed in the correspondence; or rather he would pay, he would pay and sue him for damages. He would go to Jobling and Boulter and put the matter in their hands. He would ruin the impecunious beggar! And suddenly—though what connection between the thoughts?—he reflected that Irene had no money either. They were both beggars. This gave him a strange satisfaction.

The silence was broken by a faint creaking through the wall. She was going to bed at last. Ah! Joy and pleasant dreams! If she threw the door open wide he would not go in now!

But his lips, that were twisted in a bitter smile, twitched; he covered his eyes with his hands. . . .

It was late the following afternoon when Soames stood in the dining-room window gazing gloomily into the Square.

The sunlight still showered on the plane-trees, and in the breeze their gay broad leaves shone and swung in rhyme to a barrel organ at the corner. It was playing a waltz, an old waltz that was out of fashion, with a fateful rhythm in the notes; and it went on and on, though nothing indeed but leaves danced to the tune.

The woman did not look too gay, for she was tired; and from the tall houses no one threw her down coppers. She moved the organ on, and three doors off began again.

It was the waltz they had played at Roger's when Irene had danced with Bosinney; and the perfume of the gardenias she had worn came back to Soames, drifted by the malicious music, as it had been drifted to him then, when she passed, her hair glistening, her eyes so soft, drawing Bosinney on and on down an endless ballroom.

The organ-woman plied her handle slowly; she had been grinding her tune all day—grinding it in Sloane Street hard by, grinding it perhaps to Bosinney himself.

Soames turned, took a cigarette from the carven box, and walked back to the window. The tune had mesmerised him, and there came into his view Irene, her sunshade furled, hastening homewards down the Square, in a soft, rose-coloured blouse with drooping sleeves, that he did not know. She stopped before the organ, took out her purse, and gave the woman money.

Soames shrank back and stood where he could see into the hall.

She came in with her latch-key, put down her sunshade, and stood looking at herself in the glass. Her cheeks were flushed as if the sun had burned them; her lips were parted in a smile. She stretched her arms out as though to embrace herself, with a laugh that for all the world was like a sob.

Soames stepped forward.

" Very—pretty ! " he said.

But as though shot she spun round, and would have passed him up the stairs. He barred the way.

" Why such a hurry ? " he said, and his eyes fastened on a curl of hair fallen loose across her ear.

He hardly recognised her. She seemed on fire, so deep and rich the colour of her cheeks, her eyes, her lips, and of the unusual blouse she wore.

She put up her hand and smoothed back the curl. She was breathing fast and deep, as though she had been running, and with every breath perfume seemed to come from her hair, and from her body, like perfume from an opening flower.

" I don't like that blouse," he said slowly, " it's a soft, shapeless thing ! "

He lifted his finger towards her breast, but she dashed his hand aside.

" Don't touch me ! " she cried.

He caught her wrist ; she wrenched it away.

" And where may you have been ? " he asked.

" In heaven—out of this house ! " With those words she fled upstairs.

Outside—in thanksgiving—at the very door, the organ-grinder was playing the waltz.

And Soames stood motionless. What prevented him from following her ?

Was it that, with the eyes of faith, he saw Bosinney looking down from that high window in Sloane Street, straining his eyes for yet another glimpse of Irene's vanished figure, cooling his flushed face, dreaming of the moment when she flung herself on his breast—the scent of her still in the air around, and the sound of her laugh that was like a sob.

The Man of Property.

STANLEY HOUGHTON

1881–1913

31...BEATRICE FARRAR AND ALAN JEFFCOTE

[During Hindle Wakes, Alan Jeffcote, who is engaged to Beatrice Farrar, accidentally meets Fanny Hawthorn, one of his father's mill-hands, and, " for a lark," stays the night with her at an hotel. This comes to the knowledge of Fanny's father, who extracts a promise from Nathaniel Jeffcote, Alan's father, that Alan shall marry Fanny. Beatrice has just been told of the affair.]

The Breakfast-room of the Jeffcotes' *house, Bank Top, Hindle Vale. Tuesday, August 7th. 8 p.m.*

Nathaniel Jeffcote *draws* Sir Timothy Farrar *out of the room. After they have gone* Alan *closes the door, and then turns slowly to* Beatrice. *They do not speak at first. At last* Beatrice *almost whispers.*

Beatrice : Alan !

Alan : So they've told you ?

Beatrice : Yes.

Alan : Perhaps it's as well. I should have hated telling you.

Beatrice : Alan, why did you—— ?

Alan : I don't know. It was her lips.

Beatrice : Her lips ?

Alan : I suppose so.

Beatrice : I—I see.

Alan : I'm not a proper cad, Bee. I haven't been telling her one tale and you another. It was all an accident, like.

Beatrice : You mean it wasn't arranged ?

Alan : No, indeed, it wasn't. I shouldn't like you to think that, Bee. I ran across her at Blackpool.

Beatrice : You didn't go to Blackpool to meet her ?

Alan : On my oath I didn't ! I went there in the car with George Ramsbottom.

Beatrice : What became of him ?

Alan : Him ? Oh ! George is a pal. He made himself scarce.

Beatrice : Just as you would have done, I suppose, if he had been in your place ?

Alan : Of course ! What else can a fellow do ? Two's company, you know. But old George would be all right. I dare say he picked up something himself.

Beatrice : You knew her before you met her at Blackpool ?

Alan : Of course. There's not so many pretty girls in Hindle that you can miss one like Fanny Hawthorn. I knew her well enough, but on the straight, mind you. I thought she looked gay, that was all. I'd hardly spoken to her before I ran into her at the Tower at Blackpool.

Beatrice : So you met her at the Tower ?

Alan : Yes. We'd just had dinner at the Metropole Grill-room, George and I, and I dare say we had drunk about as much champagne as was good for us. We looked in at the Tower for a lark, and we ran into Fanny in the Ball-room. She had a girl with her—Mary—Mary—something or other. I forget. Anyhow, George took Mary on, and I went with Fanny.

Beatrice : Yes ?

Alan : Next day I got her to come with me in the car. We went to Llandudno.

Beatrice : Yes.

Alan : There's not much more to say.

Beatrice : And I've got to be satisfied with that ?

Alan : What else do you want me to tell you ?

Beatrice : Didn't you ever think of me ?

Alan : Yes, Bee, I suppose I did. But you weren't there, you see, and she was. That was what did it. Being near her and looking at her lips. Then I forgot everything else. Oh ! I know. I'm a beast. I couldn't help it.

I suppose you can never understand. It's too much to expect you to see the difference.

Beatrice : Between me and Fanny ?

Alan : Yes. Fanny was just an amusement—a lark. I thought of her as a girl to have a bit of fun with. Going off with her was like going off and getting tight for once in a way. You wouldn't care for me to do that, but if I did you wouldn't think very seriously about it. You wouldn't want to break off our engagement for that. I wonder if you can look on this affair of Fanny's as something like getting tight—only worse ? I'm ashamed of myself, just as I should be if you caught me drunk. I can't defend myself. I feel just an utter swine. What I felt for Fanny was simply—base—horrible——

Beatrice : And how had you always thought of me ?

Alan : Oh, Bee, what I felt for you was something—higher—finer——

Beatrice : Was it ? Or are you only trying to make yourself believe that ?

Alan : No. I respected you.

Beatrice (*thinking*) *:* I wonder which feeling a woman would rather arouse. And I wonder which is most like love ?

Alan : All the time, Bee, I have never loved anyone else but you.

Beatrice : You say so now. But, forgive me, dear, how am I to know ? You have given Fanny the greater proof.

Alan : I'm trying to show you that Fanny was one thing, you were another. Can't you understand that a fellow may love one girl and amuse himself with another ? (*Despondently*) No, I don't suppose you ever can ?

Beatrice : I think I can. We were different kinds of women. On separate planes. It didn't matter to the one how you treated the other.

Alan : That's it. Going away with Fanny was just a fancy—a sort of freak.

Beatrice : But you have never given me any proof half so great as that.

Alan : Haven't I ? I'll give it you now. You know that father says I am to marry Fanny ?

Beatrice : Your mother told me he wished it.

Alan : Wished it ! He's set his mind on it. He won't leave me a farthing unless I marry her.

Beatrice : What did you tell him ?

Alan : If you can't guess that you haven't much confidence in me.

Beatrice : That's hardly my fault, is it ?

Alan : No. Well, I told him I'd see him damned first—or words to that effect.

Beatrice (*with a movement of pleasure*). You did ?

Alan : Yes. Is that good enough for you, Bee ? You wanted proof that it is you I love. I've chucked away everything I had to expect in the world rather than give you up. Isn't that good enough for you ?

Beatrice : Alan !

Alan (*quickly clasping her*) *:* Bee, in a way I've been faithful to you all the time. I tried hard enough to forget all about you, but I couldn't. Often and often I thought about you. Sometimes I thought about you when I was kissing Fanny. I tried to pretend she was you. She never guessed, of course. She thought it was her I was kissing. But it wasn't. It was you. Oh, the awfulness of having another girl in my arms and wanting you !

[Beatrice *does not answer. She closes her eyes, overcome.*

Bee, you'll stick to me, although I shan't have a penny ? I'll get to work, though. I'll work for you. You won't have any cause to reproach me. If only you'll stick to me. If only you'll tell me you forgive me !

Beatrice (*at length*) *:* Could you have forgiven me if I had done the same as you ?

Alan (*surprised*) *:* But—you—you couldn't do it !

Beatrice : Fanny Hawthorn did.

Alan : She's not your class.

Beatrice : She's a woman.

Alan : That's just it. It's different with a woman.

Beatrice : Yet you expect me to forgive you. It doesn't seem fair !

Alan : It isn't fair. But it's usual.

Beatrice : It's what everybody agrees to.

Alan : You always say that you aren't one of these advanced women. You ought to agree to it as well.

Beatrice : I do. I can see that there *is* a difference between men and women in cases of this sort.

Alan : You can ?

Beatrice : Men haven't so much self-control.

Alan : Don't be cruel, Bee. There's no need to rub it in !

Beatrice : I'm not being personal, Alan. I'm old-fashioned enough to really believe there is that difference. You see, men have never had to exercise self-control like women have. And so I'm old-fashioned enough to be able to forgive you.

Alan : To forgive me, and marry me, in spite of what has happened, and in spite of your father and mine ?

Beatrice : I care nothing for my father or yours. I care a good deal for what has happened, but it shows, I think, that you need me even more than I need you. For I do need you, Alan. So much that nothing on earth could make me break off our engagement, if I felt that it was at all possible to let it go on. But it isn't. It's impossible.

Alan : Impossible ? Why do you say that ? Of course it's not impossible.

Beatrice : Yes, it is. Because to all intents and purposes you are already married.

Alan : No, Bee !

Beatrice : You say I'm old-fashioned. Old-fashioned people used to think that when a man treated a girl as you have treated Fanny it was his duty to marry her.

Alan : You aren't going to talk to me like father, Bee ?

Beatrice : Yes. But with your father it is only a fad. You know it isn't that with me. I love you, and I believe that you love me. And yet I'm asking you to give me up for

Fanny. You may be sure that only the very strongest reasons could make me do that.

Alan : Reasons ! Reasons ! Don't talk about reasons, when you are doing a thing like this !

Beatrice : You may not be able to understand my reasons. You have always laughed at me because I go to church and believe things that you don't believe.

Alan : I may have laughed, but I've never tried to interfere with you.

Beatrice : Nor I with you. We mustn't begin it now, either of us.

Alan : Is this what your religion leads you to ? Do you call it a Christian thing to leave me in the lurch with Fanny Hawthorn ? When I need you so much more than I've ever done before ?

Beatrice : I don't know. It's not what I can argue about. I was born to look at things just in the way I do, and I can't help believing what I do.

Alan : And what you believe comes before me ?

Beatrice : It comes before everything. (*A pause.*) Alan, promise that you'll do what I wish.

Alan : You love me ?

Beatrice : If I love anything on earth I love you.

Alan : And you want me to marry Fanny ?

Beatrice : Yes. Oh, Alan ! can't you see what a splendid sacrifice you have it in your power to make ? Not only to do the right thing, but to give up so much in order to do it. (*A pause.*) Alan, promise me.

Alan (*nodding sullenly*) *:* Very well.

Beatrice (*gladly*) *:* You have sufficient courage and strength ?

Alan : I'll do what you ask, but only because I can see that your talk is all humbug. You don't love me. You are shocked by what I did, and you're glad to find a good excuse for getting rid of me. All right. I understand.

Beatrice (*in agony*) *:* You don't—you don't understand.

Alan : Faugh ! You might have spared me all that goody-goody business.

Beatrice (*faintly*) *:* Please——

Alan : You don't care for me a bit.

Beatrice (*passionately*) *:* Alan ! You don't know what it's costing me.

[Alan *looks at her keenly, and then seizes her violently and kisses her several times. She yields to him and returns his embrace.*

Alan (*speaking quickly and excitedly*) *:* Bee, you're talking nonsense. You can't give me up—you can't give me up, however much you try.

[Beatrice *tears herself away from him.*

Beatrice : You don't know me. I can. I will. I shall never be your wife.

Alan : I won't take that for an answer—Bee——

Beatrice : No, no, no ! Never, never ! whilst Fanny Hawthorn has a better right to you than I have.

[*There is a long pause. At length comes a knock at the door.*

Alan : Hello !

[Jeffcote *puts his head inside.*

Jeffcote : Nine o'clock.

Alan : What of it ?

Jeffcote : Hawthorns are due up here at nine.

Alan (*shortly*) *:* Oh !

Beatrice : Is my father there ?

Jeffcote : Ay ! (*Calling*) Tim !

[Sir Timothy *appears in the doorway.*

Sir Timothy : Well ? Fixed it up, eh ?

Beatrice : Alan and I are not going to be married, father.

[*There is a pause.*

Jeffcote : Ah !

Sir Timothy : I'm sure it's all for the best, lass.

Beatrice : Are you quite ready, father ? I want you to take me home.

Sir Timothy : Ay—ay ! Shall I get thee a cab, Bee ?

Beatrice : I'd rather walk, please. (Beatrice *goes to the door.*) I'll write to you, Alan.

[*She goes out, followed by* Sir Timothy.

BEATRICE FARRAR AND ALAN JEFFCOTE

Jeffcote : So you've thought better of it ?

Alan : Seems so.

Jeffcote : And you'll wed Fanny Hawthorn, I take it ?

Alan (*laconically*) *:* Ay !

Jeffcote : Thou'rt a good lad, Alan. I'm right pleased with thee.

[Alan *bursts into a loud peal of mirthless laughter.*

[Jeffcote *stares at* Alan *in surprise.*

Jeffcote : What's the matter ?

Alan : Nothing, father.

[*He flings himself listlessly into an arm-chair.* Jeffcote, *after another look at him, scratches his head and goes out.*

Hindle Wakes.

COMPTON MACKENZIE

1883–

32...CARNI VALE

[Jenny Raeburn, a ballet dancer, is in love with Maurice Avery, a young artist, whose love for her is "the biggest thing in his life." He tells her that he wants her to be more to him even than she is—to be "everything that a woman can be to a man"; and she says that some day perhaps she will. At the height of their passion he is called away on business to Spain, whence he writes urging her to say Yes at once, and join him in Spain; but this she refuses to do. Then suddenly he gives up, and ceases to urge her; for although he tells her that he is returning to England, and arranges to meet her on a certain day at Waterloo, he fails to keep his appointment, and subsequently writes to a friend asking him to let Jenny know that he has decided not to return to England after all. Overcome with grief and disappointment, Jenny "gives herself to a rotter," and then gets married "to what is nothing more than an animal." After her marriage Maurice reappears, and again declares his love. But Jenny tells him that it is too late. Meanwhile, Jenny's husband, Trewhella, who has grown suspicious, keeps watch on Jenny, while pretending that he has been called away from home, and sees her secret meeting with Maurice on the cliffs in Cornwall.]

JENNY woke up the next morning in a grey land of mist. A sea fog had come in to obliterate Trewinnard and even the sparkling month of June, evoking a new and impalpable world, a strange undated season. Above the elm trees and the hill-top the fog floated and swayed in vaporous eddies. Jenny's first impulse was to postpone the meeting on the cliffs, and yet the day somehow suited the enterprise. Shrouded fittingly, she would face whatever ghosts Maurice had power to raise.

"I'm going for a walk," she told May. "By myself. I want to tell Maurice not to hang about here any more because it gets on my nerves."

" I'll look after Frank when you're gone," said May.

" Don't let him eat any more wool off that lamb of his, will you ? "

" All right."

" I shan't be long. Or I don't expect so."

" If he gets back from Plymouth before you come in, where shall I say you've gone ? " May asked.

" Oh, tell him ' Rats ! ' I can't help his troubles. So long," said Jenny emphatically.

" Say ' ta-ta ' nicely to your mother, young Frank," commanded Aunt May.

As Jenny faded into the mist, the boy hammered his farewells upon the window-pane ; and for a while in the colourless air she saw his rosy cheeks burning like lamps, or like the love for him in her own heart. Before she turned up the drive she waited to listen for the click and tinkle of Granfa's horticulture, but there was no sound of his spade. Farther along she met Thomas.

" Morning, Mrs. Trewhella ! "

" Morning, young Thomas."

" Going for a walk, are 'ee ? "

" On the cliffs," Jenny nodded.

" You be careful how you do walk there. I wouldn't like for 'ee to fall over."

" Don't you worry. I'll take jolly good care I don't do that."

" Well, anybody ought to be careful on they cliffs. Nasty old place that is on a foggy morning." Then as she became in a few steps a wraith, he chanted in farewell courtesy, " Mrs. Trewhella ! "

Along the farm road Jenny found herself continually turning round to detect in her wake an unseen follower. She had a feeling of pursuit through the shifting vagueness all around, and stopped to listen. There was no footstep : only the drip-drip, drip-drip of the fog from the elm boughs. Before she knew that she had gone so far, the noise of the sea sounded from the greyness ahead, and beyond there was the groan of a siren from some uncertain ship. Again

she paused for footsteps, and there was nothing but the drip-drip, drip-drip of the fog in the quickset hedge. On the steep road that ran up towards Crickabella, the fog lifted from her immediate neighbourhood, and she could see the washed-out sky and silver sun with vapours curling across the strange luminousness. On either side, thicker by contrast, the mist hung in curtains dreary and impenetrable. Very soon the transparency in which she walked was veiled again, and through an annihilation of shape and colour and scent and sound Jenny pressed forward to the summit.

On the plateau, although the fog was dense enough to mask the edge of the cliff at a distance of fifty yards and to merge in a grey confusion sky and sea beyond, the fresher atmosphere lightened the general effect. She could watch the fog sweeping up and down in diaphanous forms and winged nonentities. The silence in the hedgeless, treeless country was profound. The sea, oily calm in such weather, gave very seldom a low sob in some cavern beneath the cliff. Far out a solitary gull cried occasionally.

How absurd, thought Jenny suddenly, to expect Maurice on such a day. What painting was possible in so elusive a landscape, so immaterial a scene? He was not at all likely to be there. She stood for a moment listening, and was violently startled by the sight of some animal richly hued even in such a negation of colour. The fox slipped by her with lowered brush and ears laid back, vanishing presently over the side of the cliff. She had thought for a second that it was Trewhella's dog, and her heart beat very quickly in the eerie imagination of herself and his master alone in this greyness. She walked on over the cushions of heather, pricking her ankles in the low bushes of gorse. Burnet roses were in bloom, lying like shells on the ground. Ahead of her she saw a lonely flower tremulous in the damp mist. It was a blue columbine, a solitary plant full blown. Jenny thought how beautiful it looked and was stooping to pluck it, when she drew back, conscious that it would be a shame not to let it live, this lovely deep blue flower, nodding faintly.

Jenny stood once more fronting the vapours on each side in turn, and was on the point of going home, when she perceived a shadow upon the mist that with approach acquired the outlines of a man and very soon proved to be Maurice. She noticed how pale he was and anxious, very unlike the old Maurice, even unlike himself of five or six weeks ago.

" You've come at last," he said.

" Yes, I've come to say you mustn't stay here no more. It worries me."

" Jenny," he said, " I knew I'd been a fool before I saw you again last first of May. I've known for four years what a fool and knave I'd been ; but, oh God, I never knew so clearly till the other day, till I'd hung about these cliffs waiting for you to come."

" Where was the good ? " she asked. " It's years too late now."

" When I heard from Castleton where you were, I tried not to come. He told me I should make things worse. He said it would be a crime. And I tried not to all this winter. But you haunted me. I could not rest, and in April the desire to see you became a madness. I had to come."

" I think you acted very silly. It isn't as if you could do anything by coming. I never used to think about you."

" You didn't ? " he repeated, agonised.

" Never. Never once," she stabbed. " I'd forgotten you."

" I deserve it."

" Of course you do. You can't mess up a girl's life and then come and say you're sorry the same as if you'd trod on her toe."

They were walking along involuntarily, and through the mist Jenny's words of sense, hardened to adamantine sharpness by suffering, cut clear and cruel and true. She did not like, however, to prosecute the close encounter in such a profusion of space. She fancied her words were lost in the great fog, and sought some familiar outline that should

point the way to Crickabella. Presently a narrow serpentine path gave her the direction.

" This way," she said, " I can't talk up here. I feel as if there must be listeners in this fog. I wish it would get bright."

" It's like my life has been without you," said Maurice.

" Shut up," she stabbed again, " and don't talk silly. Your life's been quite all right till you took a sudden fancy to see me again."

" Walk carefully," said Maurice humbly. " We're very near the cliff's edge."

Land and air met in a wreathed obscurity.

" Down here," said Jenny.

They scrambled down into Crickabella, slipping on the pulpy leaves of withered bluebells, stumbling over clumps of fern and drenching themselves in the fox-gloves, whose woolly leaves held the dripping fog.

" This is where I often used to sit," said Jenny. " Only it's too wet in the grass now. There's a rock here that's fairly dry, though it does look rather like a gravestone sticking up out of the ground."

They were now about half-way down the escarpment from the top of which the rampart of black cliff, sheer on either side of the path, ran up for twenty feet, so far as could be judged in the deceptive atmosphere. Jenny leaned against the stone outcrop and faced Maurice.

" Jenny," he began, " when I didn't turn up at Waterloo that first of May, I must have been mad. I don't want to make excuses, but I must have been mad."

" Yes, we can all say that, when we've done anything we shouldn't have."

" I know it's not an excuse. But I went away in a jangle of nerves. I set my heart on you coming out to Spain, and when you wouldn't, and I was there and thought of the strain of a passionate love that seemed never likely to come to anything vital, I gave up all of a sudden. I can't explain. It was like that statue. I had to break it, and I broke my heart in the same way."

" If you'd come back," said Jenny, determined he should know all his folly, " I'd have done anything, anything you asked. I'd have come to live with you for ever."

" Oh, don't torture me with the irony of it all. Why were you so uncertain then ? "

" That's my business," she said coolly.

" But I never really was out of love with you. I was always madly in love," Maurice cried. " I travelled all over Europe, thinking I'd finished with love. I tried to be happy without you and couldn't, because I hadn't got you. I adored you the first moment I saw you. I adore you now and for ever. Oh, believe me, my heart of hearts, my life, my soul, I love you now more, more than ever."

" Only because I'm some one else's," said Jenny.

" No," he cried. " No ! no ! The passion and impetuousness and unrestraint is all gone. I love you now—it sounds like cant—for yourself, for your character, your invincible joyousness, your glory in life, your perfection of form. Words ! What are they ? See how this fog destroys the world, making it ghostly. My mere passion for you is gone like the world. It's there, it must be there always, but your spirit, your personality, can destroy it in a moment. Oh, what a tangle of nonsense. Forgive me. I want forgiveness, and once you said ' Bless you.' I want that."

" I don't hate you now," Jenny said. " I did for a time. But not now. Now you're nothing. You just aren't at all. I've got a boy whom I love—such a rogue, bless him—and what are you any more ? "

" I deserve all this. But once you were sorry when I—when I——"

" Ah, once," she said. " Once *I* was mad, too. I nearly died. I didn't care for nothing, not for *any*thing. You was the first man that made me feel things like love. You ! And I gave you more than I'd ever given anyone, even my mother. And you threw it all back in my face—because you are a man, I suppose, and can't understand. And when I was mad to do something that would change me from

ever being soppy again, from ever loving anyone again, ever, ever—I went and gave myself to a rotter. A real dirty rotter. Just nothing but that—if you know what I mean. And that was your fault; you started me off by teaching me love. I wanted to be loved. Yes! But I gave too much of myself to you as it was, and I gave nothing to him really—only anyone would say I did. And then my mother went mad, because she thought I was gone gay: and she died: and I got married to what's nothing more than an animal. But they're all animals. All men. Some are nicer sorts of animals than others, but they're all the same. And that's me since you left me. Only now I've got a boy, and he's like *me*. He's got my eyes, and I'm going to teach him so as he isn't an animal, see? And I've got my little sister May, whom I promised I'd look after, and I have. . . . Go away, Maurice, leave me. I don't want you. I can't forgive you. I can only just not care whether you're there or not. But go away, because I don't want to be worried by other people." Maurice bowed his head.

"I see, I see that I have suffered nothing," he said. "Superficial fool that I am. Shallow, shallow ass, incompetent, dull and unimaginative block! I'm glad I've seen you. I'm glad I've heard you say all that. You've taught me something—perhaps in time. I'm only twenty-eight now—and fancy, you're only twenty-four—so I can go and think what might have been and, better, what I may be—through you, what I will be. I won't say I'm sorry. That would be an impertinence. . . . As you said, I simply am not at all."

The mist closed round them thicker for a moment; then seemed to lighten very slowly. Jenny was staring at the cliff's top.

"Is that a bush blowing up and down or a man's head bobbing?"

"I don't see any man," he answered.

"Good-bye," Jenny said.

"Good-bye."

She turned to the upward path, pulling herself up the

quicker by grasping handfuls of fern-fronds. Suddenly there was a shout through the fog.

" Snared, my lill wild thing ! "

There came a report. Jenny fell backwards into the ferns and foxgloves and withered bluebells.

" Good God ! " cried Maurice. " You're hurt ! "

" Something funny's happened. Oh ! Oh ! It's burning," she shrieked. " Oh, my throat ! my throat ! . . . my throat ! "

The sea-birds wheeled about the mist, screaming dismay.

Carnival.

JAMES ELROY FLECKER

1884–1915

33...RAFI AND PERVANEH

[Rafi, the King of the Beggars, who loves Pervaneh, the Slave, conspires to overthrow the Caliph Haroun Ar Raschid. The plot fails, and after Rafi's trial and conviction, he is given by the Caliph a dreadful choice—eternal separation from Pervaneh (who is to enter the Caliph's harem), or one day and one night of love, and then death for them both by merciless torment.]

A cell. A grating through which streams the sunlight. A heavy door with a narrow spyhole. Rafi *is fettered to the wall, but* Pervaneh *has not been bound. Two* Guards *stand immobile on either side of the door.*

Rafi : They have changed our guard for the last time ; it will be sunset in an hour.

Pervaneh : Still a long hour before your hands are freed to make me a belt of love. Oh, idle sun, I am weary of thy pattern on the wall. Still a long hour !

Rafi : And still a night and a day before our doom.

Pervaneh : Why is your voice so sorrowful ? Your words do not keep step with your decision nor march like standard-bearers of your great resolve.

Rafi : What have I decided ? What have I resolved ? You came near. I saw the wings of your spirit beating the air around you. You locked the silver fetters around my neck and I forgot these manacles of iron: you perfumed me with your hair till this cell became a meadow : you turned toward me eyes in whose night the seven deep oceans flashed their drowned stars, and all your body asked without speech, " Wilt thou die for love ? "

Pervaneh : Do you repent ? Do you unsay the golden words ?

Rafi : Put but your lips on mine and seal my words against unsaying !

Pervaneh : I did wrong to make you passionate. I see that in your heart you do repent. I would not have you bound by a moment's madness but with all your reason and with all your soul.

Rafi : Ah, stand apart and veil your face, you who call in the name of reason ! You are all afire for martyrdom : can you hear reason calling from her snows ? Oh, you woman, Allah curse you for blinding my eyes with love !

Pervaneh : Ah, Rafi !

Rafi : Be silent—be silent ! Your voice is the voice of a garden at daybreak, when all the birds are singing at the sun. Forget your whirling dreams, your fires, your lightnings, your splendours of the soul, and answer the passionless voice that asks you—why should your lover die, and such a death ?

Pervaneh : I am listening.

Rafi : I am very young. Shall I forget to laugh if I continue to live ? Shall I spend all my hours regretting you ? Shall I not return to my country and comfort the hearts of those that gave me birth ? Have I not my white-walled house, my books, my old friends, my garden of flowers and trees ? Has the stream forgotten to sing at the end of my garden because Pervaneh comes no more ?

" Love fades," saith Reason, with a gentler voice. " Love fades, but doth not fall. Love fadeth not to yellow like the rose but to gold like the leaves upon the poplar by the stream." And when my poplars are all gold, I shall sit beneath their shade beside the stream to read my book. When I am tired of my book I will lie on my back and watch the clouds. There in the clouds I shall see your face, and remember you with a wistful remembrance as if you had always been a dream and the silver torment of your arms had never been more than the white mists circling the round mountain snows.

Pervaneh (with growing anger) : And so, wrapped in

pleasant fancies, you will forget the woman whose honour you have sold to a tyrant. And so, while I, far from my country and my home, am dying of shame and confinement, you will dream and you will dream !

Rafi : The plague on your dishonour ! You are to be the Caliph's wife. Is that not held in all Islam for the highest honour to which a woman can attain ? Is that worse shame than being flayed by a foul negro ? The shame ! the selling ! the dishonour ! A woman's vanity : am I to be tortured to death to gratify your pride ? If I must not have you, do I care whose wife you be ? I shall remember you as you are now—rock water undefiled.

Pervaneh : Cold and heartless coward : you are afraid of death !

Rafi : By Allah, I am afraid of death, and the man who fears not death is a dullard and a fool ! Are we still making speeches in full Divan to the admiration of the by-standers ? Must we pose even now ? If you hate me for fearing death, go your way and leave this coward. Ah, no, no, do not leave me, O Pervaneh ! Forgive me that I am what I am. I have not unsaid my promise. I will die with you. I will die ! I will die ! I will endure the tortures that are thrice as terrible as death, the tortures that parch my mouth with fear.

Pervaneh : Shame on you, weak and shivering lover ! What is pain for us ?

Rafi : You do not see—you do not see ! Look at your hands, they shall be torn—ah, I cannot speak of it. I shall see your blood flow like wine from a white fountain drop by drop till you have painted the carpet of execution all red lilies.

Pervaneh : Ah—but will not even your poor love flow deep when I set that crimson seal upon the story of our lives !

Rafi : Alas, you are still dreaming : you are still blind with exaltation : your speech is metaphor. You do not see, you have never heard the high, thin shriek of the tortured, you have not seen the shape of their bodies when

they are cast into the ditch. Come near, Pervaneh. Do you know what they will do to you ? Come near : I cannot say it aloud. (Pervaneh *approaches.*) Ah, I dare not tell you. . . . I dare not tell you !

Pervaneh : Tell me, clear and plain.

Rafi (*whispers in* Pervaneh's *ear*) . . .

Pervaneh (*covering her face with her hands*) *:* Ah, God—they will do that ! No, no ; they will not do that to me !

Rafi : Pitilessly.

Pervaneh (*wildly*) *:* They will do that !—Ah, the shame of it ! They will do that—ah, the pain of it ! I see ! I feel ! I hear ! O save me, Rafi !

Rafi : Alas ! Why did I tell you this ?

Pervaneh : It is beyond endurance : it is foul : my veins will burst at the very thought. I am between a shame and a shame and there is no escape. . . . But, at least, they shall not do this to you, Rafi. Hush . . . talk low : the soldiers must not hear (*glancing at the* Guards *and whispering low*). Will you die here between my hands, instantly, and with no pain ?

Rafi (*in a hushed voice*) *:* Quickly ! How can you do it ? We are guarded—have you a knife ?

Pervaneh : My hands will be cunning round your neck, beloved. Did I not say you should die between my hands ?

Rafi : Be quick : be quiet : I will cast back my head.

A Guard (*thrusting* Pervaneh *back with his drawn sword as she lays her hands on her lover's neck*) *:* Back, in the Caliph's name !

Rafi (*to* Pervaneh) *:* Run in upon his sword. . . .

Pervaneh (*shrinking away from the* Guard's *sword*) *:* I cannot !

Rafi : Quick—quick ! Fall on the sword and save all shame.

Pervaneh : My breast, my breast : I am afraid . . . (*Prostrate on the ground*) I am utterly shamed—I have missed your death and mine.

Rafi : You have flinched.

Pervaneh : The point was on my breast, and it might have been all ended for you and me.

Rafi : You have been afraid.

Pervaneh : It would have driven to my heart. Ah, the woman that I am !

Rafi : It is so small a thing, a pricking of the steel.

Pervaneh : Ah !—it is a little thing, you say ? It is like ice, so sharp and cold. I am a vile coward.

Rafi : We are both cowards, you and I. The sunlight changes on the wall from white to gold. It is evening. Our time has come. Shall we choose life ? Shall we choose the sky and the sea, the mountains, the rivers and the plains ? Shall we choose the flowers and the bees, and all the birds of heaven ? Shall we choose laughter and tears, sorrow and desire, speech and silence, and the shout of the man behind the hill ?

Pervaneh : Ah, empty, empty without your heart ! (*Weeps.*)

Rafi : Empty as death, Pervaneh, empty as death ?

Pervaneh : The wall reddens : the last minute has come : we must choose.

Rafi : Choose for me : I follow. Did I talk of life ? My heart is breaking for desire of you. If you bid me depart, I will not live without you. Choose for me—and choose well. Phantoms of pain ! Phantoms of pain ! Let me but have you in my arms, and one day of love shall widen into eternity. Who knows ? The earth may crack to-night, or the sun stay down for ever in his grave. Who knows—to-morrow—God will begin, and finish the judgment of the world—and when it is all over find you sleeping in my arms ?

Pervaneh (*rising slowly to her feet and laying her hands on the shoulders of her lover*) *:* Oh, let us die ! Not for my dishonour, Rafi. What is my dishonour to me or you, beloved, or the shame of a girl's virginity to him who made the sea ? This clay of mine is fair enough, I think, but God hath cast it in the common mould. O lover, lover, I would

walk beneath the walls and sell my body to the gipsy and the Jew ere you should cry " I am hungry " or " I am cold."

Rafi : Die for love of me—for a day and a night of love !

Pervaneh : I die for love of you, Rafi ! Behold, the Spirit grows bright around you : you are one with the Eternal Lover, the Friend of all the World. His spirit flashes in thine eyes and hovers round thy lips : thy body is all fire !

Rafi : Comfort me, comfort me ! I do not understand thy dreams.

Pervaneh (her arms stiffening in ecstasy) : The splendour pours from the window—the spirits in red and gold. Death with thee, death for thee, death to attain thee, O lover—and then the garden—then the fountain—then the walking side by side.

Rafi : O my sweet life, O my sweet life—must this mad dreaming end thee ?

Pervaneh : Sweet life—we die for thy sweetness, O Lord of the Garden of Peace ! Come, love, for the fire that beats within us, for the air that blows around us, for the mountains of our country and the wind among their pines you and I accept torture and confront our end. We are in the service of the World. The voice of the rolling deep is shouting : " Suffer that my waves may moan." The company of the stars sing out : " Be brave that we may shine." The spirits of children not yet born whisper as they crowd around us : " Endure that we may conquer."

Rafi : Pervaneh ! Pervaneh !

Pervaneh : Hark ! Hark !—down through the spheres—the Trumpeter of Immortality ! " Die, lest I be shamed, lovers. Die, lest I be shamed ! "

Rafi : Die then, Pervaneh, for thy great reasons. Me no ecstasy can help through the hours of pain. I die for love alone.

Herald (entering) : The Caliph demands your choice.

Rafi : Death !

Hassan (*bursting in*) *:* No, no. O God !

Ishak : They have chosen too well.

[*Exit* Herald. Pervaneh *is still in ecstasy when the curtain falls.*

Hassan.

HUGH WALPOLE

1884–

34...IN THE BEDROOM

[Archdeacon Brandon, a man of strong and masterful personality who has long held a dominating position both in the Cathedral and in the Town at Polchester, is slowly moving to disaster. One blow after another falls upon him, and he now learns for the first time that the woman he has thought such a devoted and obedient wife has for years fiercely hated him, and has secretly given herself to another.]

FOR the rest of that day, until the evening, that peace stayed with him. With it still in his heart he came, late that night, into their bedroom. Mrs. Brandon was in bed, awake, staring in front of her, not moving. He sat down in the chair beside the bed, stretched out his hand, and took hers.

" Amy, dear," he said, " I want us to have a little talk."

Her little hand lay still and hot in his large cool one.

" I've been very unhappy," he went on with difficulty, " lately about you—I have seen that you yourself are not happy. I want you to be. I will do anything that is in my power to make you so ! "

" You would not," she said, without looking at him, " have troubled to think of me had not your own private affairs gone wrong and—had not Falk left us ! "

The sound of her hostility irritated him against his will; he beat the irritation down. He felt suddenly very tired, quite exhausted. He had an almost irresistible temptation to go down into his dressing-room, lie on his sofa there, and go instantly to sleep.

" That's not quite fair, Amy," he said. " But we won't dispute about that. I want to know why, after our being happy for twenty years, something now has come in between

us or seems to have done so ; I want to clear that away if I can, so that we can be as we were before."

Be as they were before ! At the strange ludicrous irony of that phrase she turned on her elbow and looked at him, stared at him as though she could not see enough of him.

" Why do you think that there is anything the matter ? " she asked softly, almost gently.

" Why, of course I can see," he said, holding her hand more tightly as though the sudden gentleness in her voice had touched him. " When one has lived with some one a long time," he went on rather awkwardly, " one notices things. Of course I've seen that you were not happy. And Falk leaving us in that way must have made you very miserable. It made me miserable too," he added, suddenly stroking her hand a little.

She could not bear that, and very quietly withdrew her hand.

" Did it really hurt you, Falk's going ? " she asked, still staring at him.

" Hurt me ? " he cried, staring back at her in utter astonishment. " Hurt me ? Why—why——"

" Then why," she went on, " didn't you go up to London after him ? "

The question was so entirely unexpected that he could only repeat :

" Why . . ."

" Oh, well, it doesn't matter now," she said, wearily turning away.

" Perhaps I did wrong. I think perhaps I've done wrong in many ways during these last years. I am seeing many things for the first time. The truth is I have been so absorbed in my work that I've thought of nothing else. I took it too much for granted that you were happy because I was happy. And now I want to make it right. I do indeed, Amy. Tell me what's the matter."

She said nothing. He waited for a long time. Her immobility always angered him. He said at last more impatiently :

" Please tell me, Amy, what you have against me."

" I have nothing against you."

" Then why are things wrong between us ? "

" Are things wrong ? "

" You know they are—ever since that morning when you wouldn't come to Holy Communion."

" I was tired that morning."

" It is more than tiredness," he said, with sudden impatience, beating upon the counterpane with his fist. " Amy—you're not behaving fairly. You must talk to me. I insist on it."

She turned once more towards him.

" What is it you want me to say ? "

" Why you're unhappy."

" But if I am not unhappy ? "

" You are."

" But suppose I say that I am not ? "

" You are. You are. You are ! " he shouted at her.

" Very well, then, I am."

" Why are you ? "

" Who *is* happy really ? At any rate for more than a moment. Only very thoughtless and silly people."

" You're putting me off." He took her hand again. " I'm to blame, Amy—to blame in many ways. But people are talking."

She snatched her hand away.

" People talking ? Who ? . . . But as though that mattered."

" It *does* matter. It has gone far—much farther than I thought."

She looked at him then, quickly, and turned her face away again.

" Who's talking ? And what are they saying ? "

" They are saying——" He broke off. What *were* they saying ? Until the arrival of that horrible letter he had not realised that they were saying anything at all.

" Don't think for a single moment, Amy, that I pay the slightest attention to any of their talk. I would not have

bothered you with any of this had it not been for something else—of which I'll speak in a moment. If everything is right between *us*—between you and me—then it doesn't matter if the whole world talks until it's blue in the face."

" Leave it alone, then," she said. " Let them talk."

Her indifference stung him. She didn't care, then, whether things were right between himself and her or no? It was the same to her. She cared so little for him. . . . That sudden realisation struck him so sharply that it was as though some one had hit him in the back. For so many years he had taken it for granted . . . taken something for granted that was not to be so taken. Very dimly some one was approaching him—that dark, misty, gigantic figure—blotting out the light from the windows. That figure was becoming day by day more closely his companion.

Looking at her now more intently, and with a new urgency, he said:

" Some one brought me a letter, Amy. They said it was a letter of yours."

She did not move nor stir. Then, after a long silence, she said, " Let me see it."

He felt in his pocket and produced it. She stretched out her hand and took it. She read it through slowly. " You think that I wrote this? " she asked.

" No, I know that you did not."

" To whom was it supposed to be written? "

" To Morris of St. James'."

She nodded her head. " Ah, yes. We're friends. That's why they chose him. Of course it's a forgery," she added—" a very clever one."

" What I don't understand," he said eagerly, at his heart the strangest relief that he did not dare to stop to analyse, " is why any one should have troubled to do this—the risk, the danger——"

" You have enemies," she said. " Of course you know that. People who are jealous."

" One enemy," he answered fiercely. " Ronder. The

woman had been to him with this letter before she came to me."

"The woman! What woman?"

"The woman who brought it to me was a Miss Milton—a wretched creature who was once at the Library."

"And she had been with this to Canon Ronder before she came to you?"

"Yes."

"Ah!"

Then she said very quietly:

"And what do you mean to do about the letter?"

"I will do whatever you wish me to do. What I would like to do is to leave no step untaken to bring the authors of this forgery to justice. No step. I will——"

"No," she broke in quickly. "It is much better to leave it alone. What good can it do to follow it up? It only tells every one about it. We should despise it. The thing is so obviously false. Why, you can see," suddenly holding the letter towards him, "it isn't even like my writing. My s's, my m's—they're not like that——"

"No, no," he said eagerly. "I see that they are not. I saw that at once."

"You knew at once that it was a forgery?"

"I knew at once. I never doubted for an instant."

She sighed; then settled back into the pillow with a little shudder.

"This town," she said; "the things they do. Oh! to get away from it, to get away!"

"And we will!" he cried eagerly. "That's what we need, both of us—a holiday. I've been thinking it over. We're both tired. When this Jubilee is over we'll go abroad—Italy, Greece. We'll have a second honeymoon. Oh, Amy, we'll begin life again. I've been much to blame—much to blame. Give me that letter. I'll destroy it. I know my enemy, but I'll not think of him or of any one but our two selves. I'll be good to you now if you'll let me."

She gave him the letter.

" Look at it before you tear it up," she said, staring at him as though she would not miss any change in his features. " You're sure that it *is* a forgery ? "

" Why, of course."

" It's nothing like my handwriting ? "

" Nothing at all."

" You know that I am devoted to you, that I would never be untrue to you in thought, word, or deed ? "

" Why, of course, of course. As though I didn't know——"

" And that I'll love to come abroad with you ? "

" Yes, yes."

" And that we'll have a second honeymoon ? "

" Yes, yes. Indeed, Amy, we will."

" Look well at that letter. You are wrong. It is not a forgery. I did write it."

He did not answer her, but stayed staring at the letter like a boy detected in a theft. She repeated :

" The woman was quite right. I did write that letter."

Brandon said, staring at her, " Don't laugh at me. This is too serious."

" I'm not laughing. I wrote it. I sent it down by Gladys. If you recall the day to her she'll remember."

She watched his face. It had turned suddenly grey, as though some one had slipped a grey mask over the original features.

She thought, " Now perhaps he'll kill me. I'm not sorry."

He whispered, leaning quite close to her as though he were afraid she would not hear.

" You wrote that letter to Morris ? "

" I did." Then suddenly springing up, half out of bed, she cried, " You're not to touch him. Do you hear ? You're not to touch him ! It's not his fault. He's had nothing to do with this. He's only my friend. I love him, but he doesn't love me. Do you hear ? He's had nothing to do with this ! "

" You love him ! " whispered Brandon.

" I've loved him since the first moment I saw him. I've wanted some one to love for years—years and years and years. You didn't love me, so then I hoped Falk would, and Falk didn't, so then I found the first person—any one who would be kind to me. And he was kind—he *is* kind—the kindest man in the world. And he saw that I was lonely, so he let me talk to him and go to him—but none of this is his doing. He's only been kind. He——"

" Your letter says ' Dearest,' " said Brandon. " If you wrote that letter it says ' Dearest.' "

" That was my foolishness. It was wrong of me. He told me that I mustn't say anything affectionate. He's good, and I'm bad. And I'm bad because you've made me."

Brandon took the letter and tore it into little pieces ; they scattered upon the counterpane.

" You've been unfaithful to me ? " he said, bending over her.

She did not shrink back, although that strange, unknown, grey face was very close to her. " Yes. At first he wouldn't. He refused anything. But I would . . . I wanted to be. I hate you. I've hated you for years."

" Why ? " His hand closed on her shoulder.

" Because of your conceit and pride. Because you've never thought of me. Because I've always been a piece of furniture to you—less than that. Because you've been so pleased with yourself and well-satisfied and stupid. Yes. Yes. Most because you're so stupid. So stupid. Never seeing anything, never knowing anything, and always—so satisfied. And when the town was pleased with you and said you were so fine, I've laughed, knowing what you were, and I thought to myself, ' There'll come a time when they'll find him out '—and now they have. They know what you are at last. And I'm glad ! I'm glad ! I'm glad ! " She stopped, her breasts rising and falling beneath her nightdress, her voice shrill, almost a scream.

He put his hands on her thin bony shoulders and pushed her back into the bed. His hands moved to her throat.

His whole weight, he now kneeling on the bed, was on top of her.

" Kill me ! Kill me ! " she whispered. " I'll be glad."

All the while their eyes stared at one another inquisitively, as though they were strangers meeting for the first time.

His hands met round her throat. His knees were over her.

He felt her thin throat between his hands and a voice in his ear whispered, " That's right, squeeze tighter. Splendid ! Splendid ! "

Suddenly his eyes recognised hers. His hands dropped. He crawled from the bed. Then he felt his way, blindly, out of the room.

The Cathedral.

ASHLEY DUKES

1885-

35...THE PERFECT LOVER

[The Lady, a former singer at Covent Garden playhouse, has run away from her royal lover, in an attempt to escape from the sordid life and base intrigues of the Court. She is followed by the Nobleman, a dissolute and worthless rake, and his Man, a philosopher and a man of vision, with the object of restoring her to her lover, who otherwise might be made to appear ridiculous. On the way, her horses bolt with the coach in which she and her maid are travelling, and, after a wild race, are stopped by the Nobleman and his Man. They then all go on together to a wayside inn, *The Man with a Load of Mischief*. Here the Lady discovers the trap that has been laid for her, and scorns the advances of the Nobleman, who, to humble her, proposes to his Man that the latter shall make love to her that night. To this the Man agrees, for he is secretly in love with the Lady, whose real worth he has discovered, and under the cloak of carrying out his master's wishes, he now sees a favourable opportunity for declaring his passion.]

A room in a wayside inn. Night.

The Maid *alone ; then the* Man *enters, and busies himself removing glasses from the table.*

Maid : Not so much as a look. Fine manners indeed !

Man (turning to her) : Forgive me. My thoughts were gone wool-gathering.

Maid : Have you been long in his service ?

Man : Five years, if that is long.

Maid : I dare say you know more than you would tell.

Man : We all know that, I hope.

Maid : And more than suits his lordship to be known ?

Man : That my lord could tell you.

Maid : Oh you can keep your secrets, and your gentlemanly airs ! I know your sort. (*A silence.*) I suppose you

think me a gossip and a scold, because I speak freely to you? Some folks might thank me for it; some folks might know I meant it well; but there! You may be otherwise. (*A silence.*) I thought it from the first. I guessed you would never look my way. Well, all sorts go to make a world. (*A silence.*)

Man: My lord is waiting for you.

Maid: My lady, you mean. Let her wait!

Man: I mean my lord.

Maid: Oh, for shame! You were listening.

Man: There was no need to listen.

Maid: These men! But what if I gave him the go-by? What if you should please me better?

Man: I do not please women.

Maid: So you think, maybe. But ask the women first.

Man: I will, when the time comes.

Maid: Not yet?

Man: Not yet.

Maid: I like you, man.

Man: It is good of you to tell me that.

[*As she comes closer to him, with an air of coquetry, he bends down and kisses her hand.*

Maid: My hand was never kissed before. What sort of man are you?

Man: This glove was left by your lady in her coach. Will you take it to her room as you pass?

Maid: I will say you sent it.

Man: You need not.

Maid: But I will. Good-night, man.

Man: Good-night, maid.

Maid: Pleasant dreams, man.

[*Exit the* Maid. *The* Man, *alone, goes to the windows and opens them to the darkness.*

Man: A woman wished me pleasant dreams. This echo from the stillness—this babble of a sleeping world! On every hand men whisper love. Set ears to earth and hear them murmur: "I love you," "Do you love me?" "You are mine and I am yours." Still they sleep and spin

through nothingness. Shall we whisper so—we who have met in the night? Are we sleep-walkers? Shall we march at every passion's call? Shall we weave a pretty cloak of words and kisses? Shall we lift a mask or two of trickery, only to meet another mask behind? It is a mask that brings us face to face. The masks divide, the masks unite, and we are still in darkness. We grope through labyrinths of self, our fingers grasping thorns, our voices echoed by a wall. We seek for hands and not for lips. O mockery of self, give eyes to love, give hands to lovers!

[*The* Lady *appears at the head of the stairs, carrying a lighted candle, and descends.*

Lady: I lay awake, in a silence restless with fears. We townsfolk are unused to such a silence; it overhangs us like the darkness. (*With a smile.*) Now you see that I am none too brave a woman.

Man: Brave enough, for you have no fear of yourself.

Lady: Perhaps I fear uncertainty the more. My maid is not in her room. This inn creaks misgiving; it is full of stratagems and mysteries. I must know the truth.

Man: The truth is in ourselves; why should you look for it in others? Go if you will, ask them why they sleep or wake, or why they play their comedy, or why they sell their kisses. They can tell you no more than you know already—unless it be one more falsehood. It is better you should ask them nothing.

Lady: I am asking you, for I believe you are my friend.

Man: Friendship is frankness, lady. If you speak of our passing affairs, then I have no secrets to hide from you and no tales to tell. But if you ask me for the truth—that lies deeper, and I beg you let it rest. Go to your room, sleep if you may, and let me watch over the silence that surrounds you. Do not fear it any longer; a sentinel is here.

Lady: I thought—you wished to speak with me.

Man (*mastering himself*): Already I have said too much!

Lady: Why do you mistrust me, sir? Can we not look for the truth together?

Man : No, lady, no !

Lady : And why not ?

Man : Because we shall betray ourselves ! We shall come upon your pride and mine, your vanity and mine, your desires and mine—all the buried thoughts that moulder in us out of sight. Because the outer life itself betrays the inward spirit !

Lady : You speak of strange things, yet I know them as well as you, I see them as clearly.

Man : Then let them rest !

Lady : It shall be as you wish ; but I am not afraid of those thoughts you speak of. I accept all that life offers. I hold out open hands to greet sincerity.

Man (as if in wonder) : No one has spoken such words to me before.

Lady : But I speak them. Come, sir, what is it that troubles you still ?

Man (turning away) : A masquerade—a falsehood, lady ! Ask me nothing, but leave me now ! Do you not know—— ?

[*A silence.*

Lady : What should I know, sir ?

Man : Do you not know that I love you ?

Lady : You !

Man : I thought that all the world must know it. I saw the outer life all grinning at that folly.

Lady : You ? But my friend, my friend, I did not dream of love between us.

Man : Nor did I dream. I awoke, and it was there. I was alone, and suddenly we were together.

Lady : Then you speak in earnest. But do you not know this cannot be ?

Man : Yes, I feel the barrier between us. You hold out empty hands to soothe my pride.

Lady : I hold them out to cover my poverty. I too can say—no one has spoken such words to me before.

Man (bitterly) : Yet they are words, lady, only words !

Lady : Lady ? That word at least is forbidden you.

Man : Friendship is one thing, and love another. I knew that you would find it so.

Lady : And am I not right ?

Man : Maybe—but I look beyond them both. I know that to say " I love you " is only the beginning of love. Possession itself is only the beginning.

Lady : Believe me, it is often the end.

Man : The end is fulfilment.

Lady : A love that is not barren ! For me that is a dream and nothing more. I have lived in the waking world, where lovers' arms are held out everywhere. I am weary of those arms outstretched, asking much and offering little.

Man : I am asking little and offering much.

Lady : A new lover indeed ! I can value the friendship you bring me, indeed I know its worth already ; but what do you ask ?

Man : Yourself.

Lady : And is that so small a favour ?

Man : In the world where you speak of favours it may be the greatest. That trifle may be all, that beginning the end. But such a world is not mine.

Lady : What more can a woman give than herself ?

Man : Those are only words that men have taught you.

Lady : It is true our masters flatter us by rating our surrenders too highly.

Man : They flatter themselves, that is all.

[*A silence.*

Lady : Oh, by what right do you thrust aside these pretences of words and thoughts ? Do you not know we need them like the very clothes we wear ?

Man : Love needs them no longer.

Lady : And who are you to speak for love with such knowledge ?

Man : I am—the man you see and nothing more. (*At a gesture from her.*) Yes, your head swims at the gulf between us.

Lady : That is no more than habit. I know that all service is honourable.

Man : No! It is infamous to serve luxury. It is shameful to pour wine into gouty veins, it is base to creep between borrowed sheets of quality. Lackeys do these things.

Lady : Not only lackeys, my friend. I have done them too.

Man : We have both been waiting for this day.

Lady : Come, you will tell me this attachment is of long standing?

Man : I have loved you since the first hour.

Lady : At Covent Garden? Is it possible? And through that weary round of Bath and London you were there?

Man : I stood in waiting. A door was opened, and you passed. A coach drew up at a gateway, and you alighted. A lamp was lit in your window, a blind was drawn. I stood below.

Lady : Unseen, unseen. This courtship touches me. But I think there was hatred in your love. Confess it—love for the woman, hatred for the plaything and the mistress.

Man : The same wheels splashed us both. I knew that we were one.

Lady : I have turned my back on that life, and yet . . . No, no, my friend. Every meeting brings a parting. More than your candour, I fear your mistrust.

Man : If I did not trust you, should I be speaking now?

Lady : Listen, my friend. You are right to hold my favours lightly. When a woman has given herself often enough, once more or less makes no matter. The house is quiet, we are alone together. I confess you please me well. But because you offer more than I can give, I will say no. Because you are upright and I am stooping, it cannot be. Because we are friends, let us not risk falling out. I cannot give a trifle to such as you.

Man : I do not ask for trifles. I know the shallows are alive with spawning lovers. This world is peopled by them.

We spring from love, we rot and wither in the name of love—and yet fulfilment is there! From spring to spring, the earth renews itself in stillness.

Lady: The spring may come too late. And your fulfilment may be only a promise, for we can give only what is in us to be given. Those promises—no, I will listen to no more of them, and give no more. I will not wrong us both.

Man: Love can be wronged, love can be slighted.

Lady: Ah, do not press me any further! Let me be hard, for I dare not be otherwise. My eyes are open, and I can see the world you ask me to forget. It is an ugly world, but it is mine and yours. We cannot leave it out of reckoning.

Man: Your pride speaks there.

Lady: Believe me, it is the rag of pride that covers humility. Do not strip me of that; I will show you it is no more than a rag. All I have given to others is yours for the asking. Leave it untouched, my friend. Pass by and forget me.

Man: I would strip the rags of pride from both of us, for we have no more to do with them. We have met and spoken: we are two who cannot forget. I will not kneel to you, woman whom I serve. I will not beg from you, woman whom I love. You will give what is in your heart.

Lady: And if it be empty?

Man: It is not.

Lady: Can we be sure?

Man: You and I know the ring of emptiness. We have lived long enough without each other. Yesterday was empty, to-morrow may be empty, to-day is fulfilment!

Lady (under her breath): This day—this night?

Man: Are we not one with the earth about us? The young corn sleeps standing in the mist, and the fern-owl lies awake. The dew falls on trembling leaves, and the sheep are thick in the fold. This inn where we have met is wrapped in stillness—this house of ticking thoughts, this house of whispering passions, this house of dreams that stir the face of night. Words die in empty corridors; our

natures live. You are mine already, as I am yours. We are held in one embrace.

Lady : If that were true !

Man : Our hands are clasped unseen. Ours is this solitude that blots the recollection of ourselves. Ours, this meeting that divides us from the past. Not yours or mine, but ours ! Already you have given all.

Lady : I think—I have given much.

Man : I have never touched you, yet you have given all. There is no parting between us.

Lady : There is no parting. (*Holding out her arms to him.*) My friend—my lover ! (*They embrace.*) Is this for ever ? I have never asked a man before—is this for ever ? Why should I ask you ?

Man : It is for ever and a day.

[*A silence.*

Lady : I fear nothing any more—not even the silence that falls between us. Not even the world that mocks us with unseeing eyes. Alone we have met, alone we have overcome that mockery. (*The* Man *turns suddenly as though to listen.*) What is it, my friend ?

Man : A horse moved in the stable, that was all.

Lady : To-morrow's footstep !

Man : Yes, to-morrow's footstep. To-morrow that we fear more than the silence : to-morrow that ends the strutting of to-day.

Lady : Now your voice is hard. (*Freeing herself from his arms.*) What have I done ? Who are you—my friend ? Who are you, sir ?

Man : Shall I tell my lady that I am a gentleman in disguise, in league with my lord ? And if I tell you so, will you believe me ?

Lady : This world of stratagem ! My heart is worn away. Take what is left of it and give me yours. I will believe your heart, my lover.

The Man with a Load of Mischief.

MARGARET KENNEDY

36...TESSA

[Tessa, the daughter of Albert Sanger, a musician of genius, is in love with Lewis Dodd, a gifted young composer. Lewis, however, marries the cold and formal Florence, and Tessa, who is only fifteen, is sent to continue her education at a school in England. Subsequently Lewis tires of his wife, and runs away with Tessa to Belgium.]

THE train, running over points near Ashford, changed its smooth rhythm for a succession of loud, clanking jerks. Lewis roused from an uncomfortable doze. He opened his eyes at the morning sunlight shining in his face, and discovered confusedly that the night was over.

He tried to think. It was one of those bad days when everything is out of gear, and he could not put two ideas together. He was aware of the slowness of mind, the extreme lassitude of spirit, which always overtook him after a concert. He was listening for some coherence in the noise of the train and could find none. The sun in his eyes gave him a headache. He blinked at it angrily.

The person opposite leant forward and pulled down a blind so that his face was shaded. Looking towards her, in a sort of dumb gratitude, he was not much surprised to discover that it was Tessa. But it took him a little time to remember why she was there and that they were on their way to Dover. He recollected slowly how Roberto had brought him her message, the night before, and how he had nearly missed the train. He had bounded down the platform at the very last moment and she was waiting for him, steadfast but a little pale, by the barrier. And as they slid clear of the murky station, into the sunlight, he had fallen asleep, only rousing for a second when they crossed the

bridge because Tessa opened the window and hung out, taking a last look at London and the glittering river. Now, as far as he could see, they were deep in Kent, rushing southwards through a bright, windy morning.

It was lovely to be with her. She was the only person in the world with the wits to draw blinds without being asked. He found his tongue and inquired if she had breakfasted. She shook her head.

" Nor have I," he said. " We'll get something on the boat."

" You can if you like. For me to eat on a boat is simply a waste of good food. I've a queasy stomach."

The other people in the carriage looked at her with a sort of wondering, dull resentment, and Lewis said :

" It's inconsiderate of you to talk in that way. We've all got to go on the boat." Then, vaguely : " Are you ill ? "

He hardly knew why he asked this ; but she did not look right somehow.

" No. It's all the fuss yesterday, and the concert, and not sleeping, and getting up early, and having no food."

This catalogue of hardship almost reassured him. Perhaps, after all, she did not look so very queer. He told her to wake him up when they got to Dover. Then he shut his eyes, but opened them again a moment later to take another look at her. She had put on, for this expedition, a new serge school suit, very neat and brief, and she had a brown paper parcel by way of luggage. It occurred to him, for the first time, that she might be unhappy and frightened at the step she was taking. He smiled at her and she returned his look a little dimly, like a person a long way off. He tried to think of some very protecting, comfortable thing to say, but could only manage to demand if she was quite all right. She nodded, and he reflected that she ought to know how to look after herself, having been brought up to it. The blessed peace of being with her stole over him again and he drifted off into sleep.

She sat staring out of the window at the long rows of hop poles, spinning like the spokes of a wheel. These

had interested her, she remembered, when she came first to England, less than a year ago. And now, so unexpectedly soon, she was off again, having learnt in this short time a number of things which would be in future of no use to her whatever. She had an idea that, for her peace of mind, she had best forget everything that had happened since Sanger's death. She was going back to the ways of her childhood, not because they seemed admirable to her but because there was no place for her elsewhere.

She was profoundly happy, but a little bewildered at this sudden change in her life. It was such a miracle to find herself alive and with Lewis, instead of dead and at school. It seemed to her now as though she had escaped annihilation by the merest chance, and she could hardly believe in her recovered safety. Having chosen life instead of death, she was secure for ever. She sat very still with her hands folded, watching her friend as he slept. He was all huddled up in his corner, and his face in repose looked young and weary, the harsh lines which scored it in his guarded hours seemed now painful and innocent. She saw that he was tired out, and she felt sorry when they flashed in and out of the chalk cuttings by the sea and she knew that she must wake him.

The morning air at Dover was very cold and her paper parcel, though not large, had grown so heavy that she nearly dropped it as she followed Lewis up the gangplank on to the boat. A chattering crowd pushed her this way and that, and she could see no place where she might sit down and rest herself.

" Oh, dear," she gasped, " I'm so cold ! I'm so tired ! Couldn't we get a chair or something ! There are some men with chairs."

" Those are for the first-class passengers, my dear. Let's walk about a bit and get warm."

She shivered so much that he opened his bag and pulled out his old yellow muffler to wrap round her throat and shoulders. It brought back the old times very suddenly, for in the Tyrol he had worn it on all occasions and she

had never seen it since. Florence had suppressed it. It smelt of a good many things, chiefly tobacco. She snuggled into it gratefully and they found a sheltered place where they could watch the great, rattling crane which heaved up endless loads of luggage and plunged them into the hold. Teresa thought of all the clothes in all those boxes, and looked at her own parcel and felt glad that she had kept so free of possessions during her English sojourn. Even her lustre bowl was broken; she was as free as the sea-gulls flashing through the sunlight over their heads.

Presently the bell rang and the siren hooted, and the long line of porters ran back the gangplanks. The boat drew away from Dover quayside and the blank wall that hides the trains, and the grey, terraced town with its white cliffs, and all the ramparts of the English coast, getting lower and smaller. Teresa waved good-bye to it and to Uncle Charles's niece, a shadowy person, the creation of his persuasive fancy, and once, for a short time, almost convincing. It was not a difficult farewell, for the capacities of this dimly apprehended young woman had been so unripe, her destiny had lain so very much in the future, that she might never have come to life. Teresa had lost faith in her.

They had not gone far into the windy morning before she was compelled to go down into that Limbo where Belgian stewardesses in dubious aprons ply their grim trade. She felt desperately ill, but not so bad that she could not enjoy the antics of her fellow-passengers. In an undertone she rehearsed their complaints, announcing her condition in every sort of accent, Glasgow, Kensington, Cambridge, Dublin, Leeds, Wapping, and New York. But before the end of the crossing, which was a bad one, she lost interest in life. Time had ceased to exist for her, when a voice penetrated the chilly fog of exhaustion which shut out the world.

"Mademoiselle is alone? She has no friends?"

Two stewardesses were looking at her in evident anxiety. Their faces floated in the fog above her head. One of them said that she was blue, and they asked again if she

was alone, this time in French, and very loud, blaring at her like a couple of trombones.

" *Toute seule . . .*" she replied weakly. " *. . . non . . . un monsieur . . . là-haut . . . on arrive déjà ?* "

" *Nous sommes en retard . . . Mademoiselle est vraiment malade ? Elle se trouve mieux à présent ?* "

" Woirse and woirse ! " said Teresa, with a recollection of the lady from New York in the next bunk. If she could survive this crossing she would make Lewis laugh, telling him about all these ladies. She said in a stronger voice that she could do with some brandy if they had any.

They gave her brandy and she found the strength to struggle to her feet. All round her the battered wrecks of women were gathering themselves and their possessions together. She looked in her purse and found half a crown and three halfpence. She gave the half-crown to the stewardess and climbed rather uncertainly up the steep ladder. She noticed that the woman stood at the bottom watching her anxiously as if afraid she might fall back suddenly.

" I must look frightful," she thought.

Outside, the cold air did her good. She found that they were nearly in, slipping past the endless Ostend Plage, with its fringe of hotels and casinos. It was a boisterous, changeable afternoon and the enormous sky seemed to be full of clouds, all sailing at different speeds, speared through with brilliant, watery shafts of sunlight. Behind them was a grey forbidding waste, already blurred with rain.

A dense crowd was lined up for the gangplanks and she could not see Lewis anywhere. But, as they began to stream off the boat, she thought she caught sight of him, well ahead of her, going into the Douane. Thither she followed him and got an official to deal with her parcel, after a long interval of pushing and shouting. She had to untie the string, and as she was doing it up again she was appalled to hear somebody call out that the Brussels train was just starting. Gathering her possessions in her arms,

she ran, strewing articles of toilet over the railway lines. Lewis, hanging out of a carriage window, hailed her :

" Here you are ! Jump in ! I nearly went without you ! "

She jumped in, and the train started.

" Your toothbrush is on the line," he said, taking a last look out of the window. " What made you cut it so fine ? Were you changing your money ? "

" No," she replied, at last getting her breath back. " I didn't like to change such a large amount in a hurry."

She showed him her three halfpence and he laughed.

" You'll have to buy me another toothbrush," she said.

" On the contrary, you must do without one. Many most admirable people do."

She raised her eyebrows and asked sweetly :

" Were you sick on the boat, my turtle dove ? "

He said not, but she scarcely believed him, for he looked very yellow. They were going along through the flatness of Belgium, and he would not tell her what any of the towns were. Whereupon she made all her inquiries of an impudent looking young Belgian beside her, explaining that her husband, with a gesture at Lewis, had never been abroad before and was recovering from the effects of sea-sickness. The youth, with a broad stare at her swinging plaits and school clothes, asked pointedly if Madame had never been abroad before either. Madame replied with some aplomb that she had ; she was still sustained by the brandy she had taken on the boat, and talked a great deal to all the people in their carriage, giving much uneasiness to Lewis, who knew that their appearance was odd and might cause comment. He was relieved when they reached Brussels and got out of the train unmolested.

They walked a little way and then took a tram. Teresa was silent now and docile. She sat beside Lewis, as they rumbled along towards a distant suburb, leaning against his shoulder and watching the stormy sunset behind the houses. It was a menacing sky : rags and banners of red cloud hung above the noisy streets and lit the faces of the people with

an angry flame. The cries and shouts of the city sounded in her ears like cries of danger, warnings called forth by the wild light. Her dim remembrances of Brussels were not like this. When she had been there as a little girl it had seemed rather dull; this was a town imagined in a dream, a flaming adventurous place where anything might happen. She looked up at Lewis to see if he too found it exciting. He was gazing at the bright sky with the extreme concentration of purpose which he used for all important things; it was the first time that he had looked really awake since they started on their journey. He seemed to be gathering in that noisy radiance and stowing it away in his mind. An idea came to her and she asked:

"Where are we going?"

He removed his light, steady eyes from the fiery clouds and blinked at her, as if trying to remember. Then he said:

"To Mdme. Marxse. She'll put us up. You remember her? You all stayed in her house once before, didn't you?"

"I think I remember," she said slowly.

When she was a very little girl Sanger's circus had spent some months with Mdme. Marxse. Only she seemed to remember an old woman who was unbelievably fat. Oh, but monstrous! At that age one sees things out of scale.

"Is she fat?" she asked.

"Fat! We call her *Reine des Fées*. You see!"

Teresa remembered now that that was what they did call her. Yes, and she had a bust like a broad shelf, buoyed up by a much boned corsage; it was with some awe that the young Sangers had watched her eat, so impossible was it that she could see her plate. The same idea had occurred to all of them—that it would be much better if she would put the plate on the shelf just under her chin. And like a lurid picture stood out the day when Sanger had said it. Suddenly he had leant forward in the middle of a silent meal and said persuasively:

"Reine, why don't you allow your plate to repose on your

bosom? It would go better. You are dropping your food on your best gown."

Another memory dawned; Evelyn, the beautiful mother who was so difficult to remember, had reproved the children for giggling, in case Mdme. Marxse might be mortified.

"Must we go there?" asked Teresa, rather reluctantly.

"She knows us all," explained Lewis. "She'll . . . she'll hold her tongue . . . if anybody comes asking for us . . ."

"I see. I've quite forgotten Brussels."

But when they stood on the doorstep of Maison Marxse, she recognized the house opposite which used to have a bird-cage with a canary in it. The smell of the entresol, a mixed smell of onions, stale scent, dirty black clothes and dust, carried her back more entirely into childhood. The door shut behind them like a trap, and the meagre boy who had let them in went shuffling down the passage in front of them. An overpowering odour of the past rose up and clutched at her in the little room where Mdme. Marxse, larger even than memory had painted her, wheezed upon a sofa amid sacred reliquaries, pampas grass, and cats. It was such a small room, far too small for its occupant; it must have been built round her, for she could never have got in at the door.

Lewis was greeted with a cascade of asthmatic chuckles and many shrill questions. Teresa had time to look about her. She remembered the picture over the stove, a puzzling group of a much curved, nude lady and a swan, which recent study of a classical dictionary enabled her to identify. But in spite of this piece of information she felt very much like a little girl, as she stood shyly clinging to her lover's hand, while he bargained with *Reine des Fées* for a room. Presently she was pulled forward and introduced. The old woman remembered her, and she was folded in an odious, flabby embrace spiced with a whiff of strong waters. Inquiries were made after the other brothers and sisters. Caryl and Kate? How were they?

" I don't know," said Teresa vaguely. " When Sanger died we were all separated."

" Ah, that man ! That man ! " wheezed Madame. " So many children he had ! It is unknown how many ! And now all scattered ? Here we have one. Thou knowest Mignonne ? A brother of thine. My grandson."

" Yes," said Lewis. " I'd forgotten Paul. How is he, Reine ? "

" But ill ! We shan't keep him long. He is at school now, with the Jesuits. Many days his cough is bad and he cannot go. But still he wins all the prizes."

" Takes after his father," commented Lewis. " They all do. They're all too clever to live."

Teresa remembered the narrow-chested boy in the hall ; she felt no enthusiasm on hearing that he was her brother. But it was probably true that he was intelligent ; Sanger seemed to have scattered the curse of intellect most lavishly about the world. She got an uneasy glimpse of life's continuity ; it appeared that these things could have no end. She wondered how many of the children called to life by Sanger's lust would thank him for it. Her next thought caused her to tell Madame that Tony had a baby. Madame remembered Tony perfectly. A pretty little bitch ! And a mother already ? Well, well ! Teresa, it seemed, had also got a man. The little black eyes leered round at Lewis. Sanger's daughters were not likely to die old maids. Well, well ! Lewis would teach her.

" For he's the first, isn't he, *petite ange* ? "

Teresa nodded, still clinging to his hand.

" Thou couldst scarcely have begun younger," commented the old woman. " How old . . . say . . . fifteen ? Mother of God ! What a hurry the girls are in nowadays ! Still, I was no older . . ."

She plunged into grimy reminiscence. Lewis, who had scarcely listened to the conversation, became at last attentive and said impatiently in English :

" A bawdy old thing, isn't she ? "

Teresa laughed. She thought Mdme. Marxse as good

as a Shakespeare play at the Nine Muses, a rich entertainment, better even than the sea-sick ladies. That was because she and Lewis were together; their completeness shut them off from the world. They were like people watching a comedy from a box, seeing more significance in life, savouring its humour more soundly, because in their hearts they were remote.

Mdme. Marxse had, it appeared, a room for them on the third floor. A fine room with a good bed.

"That will do, I think? If you wish you may sleep well. Myself I often think that a good bed is wasted on a pair of lovers. They never notice. But she looks tired, the *gosse*; tired and pale. Thou hast been ill lately, my child?"

"Only on the boat, Madame."

"The boat! Ah! Ah! One understands. Will you go up and see the room? Myself I cannot take you; I never climb these stairs. For five years now I have lived *au rez de chaussée*. But my daughter shall take you up. You remember Gabrielle, *petite*? No? Ah, your father would, I think, remember."

She screeched for her daughter, who answered in a deep bellow from the next room and presently joined them, wearing a petticoat and underbodice, protesting angrily that she was just dressing to go out. She was a handsome slattern with small black eyes, a sallow skin and a sumptuous figure. Teresa seemed to remember her little, lascivious mouth, which was almost lost in the ample curves of cheek and chin, but the face which memory recalled was younger, more animated, and framed in cloudy black hair, very different from the short, woolly tufts which hung over Gabrielle's brown neck. This, it seemed, was the mother of the intelligent Paul.

Gabrielle greeted Lewis with a spurt of sudden laughter and a brief warmth in her hard eyes, but she refused to recollect anything about Teresa.

"One of Sanger's children," cackled Madame. "A little sister for thy Paul."

" I'm sorry to hear such a poor account of Paul," put in Lewis.

" *Est poitrinaire,*" Gabrielle told them indifferently. " What good are his brains to me? He will never earn a sou. Always he will be an expense to us, if he lives . . ."

And she asked Teresa abruptly if her mother was dead.

" Yes," said Teresa, in an annoyed voice, " and I was born in wedlock. "

She felt somehow that Gabrielle had once been a trial to Evelyn and that a little rudeness from Evelyn's children would pass as an expression of loyalty. Madame screeched with laughter and called Teresa a " *type original.*"

" Which means," said Lewis severely, as they climbed the stairs behind Gabrielle, " that you are a very rude little girl."

Teresa pinched his arm and murmured an aphorism which she had learned from Aunt May, the wife of Robert Churchill :

" It all goes to show that you can't be too careful."

And they arrived at their lofty bower quite breathless with giggling. Gabrielle threw open the shutters and flounced out of the room, shouting over her shoulder, before she banged the door, that they must come down soon if they wanted food. It was a small, dingy room with a large, dingy bed in it. Other furniture was hard to find. The strength which had thus far supported Teresa went from her ; she sank with a little gasp on the bed, too much exhausted even to take her hat off. Lewis took it off for her, moved to some compunction, and vowing that they should go down directly and get something to eat. Then he began to unpack his bag, strewing things about the room. Soon there were sheets of music everywhere, and these, with the yellow scarf that hung over the end of the bed, made the place look exactly like every other room which had ever belonged to him. To Teresa it was home ; she saw in her mind's eye all the funny rooms which they would share, and

they were all like this one, half smothered in music, with a pair of boots on the mantelpiece and a big, hard, untidy bed. She wanted to tell him about it, but instead she discovered that she had said :

" Lewis . . . I do feel so very ill . . ."

He looked frightened and then said that it was no wonder. She had fasted for nearly twenty-four hours. She would be quite restored by food and a good night's rest. Urgently he demanded that she should agree with him, which she readily did, surprised at herself for having been so plaintive.

" Though I doubt the night's rest," she said. " I wonder if this is really Old Greymalkin's idea of a good bed."

" Old what ? "

" Old Greymalkin ; the hag downstairs. She made a point of it that this was such a good bed and everything . . ."

" Did she ? It'll be our bridal bed I suppose, so it's a pity it shouldn't be comfortable. Let me feel it ! Oh, Tessa, it's not so bad. I've slept on worse."

" Feels to me more like a stone quarry. But this is a very odd place altogether. I'm surprised at you for bringing me here. Will you look at the stove-piece with that indecent little china ornament next door to a statue of the Sacred Heart ! How Uncle Charles would laugh ! "

" Would he ? "

" I'm sure he would. That's why I do. A year ago I wouldn't have seen the joke of that. I'd have thought it a perfectly natural thing for those two to be side by side. Oh, dear ! There's no getting away from it ! You can never get quite back."

Lewis was looking round the room, taking it in, with an immense effort of imagination, through the eyes of Uncle Charles. He examined the torn curtains and the flyblown paper and the gas-jet and the incongruous ornaments ; finally he looked at Teresa, exhausted but intrepid, stretched upon the bed. He clapped his hand to his head in a sort of seizure and announced :

" Call me a fool ! We'll go away to-morrow."

" Dear heart ! Why ? Are we the wandering Jew ? "

" Filthy place ! "

" It can't hurt us."

" Can't it, my blessing ? I'm not so sure. There must be other places . . ."

" I think you'll find they all look pretty much the same."

" I ought to have thought . . . it took me so much by surprise when you changed your mind like that, at the last minute . . . I never thought . . . Tessa ! "

" Um ? "

" You haven't told me yet, why you did change so suddenly."

" No. And I shan't ever tell you."

" Why not ? "

" It isn't . . . a suitable subject for people to talk about."

" Dear me ! "

He was surprised. He could not imagine the subject which would appal Tessa into silence. He came and sat on the bed beside her and said in a low voice :

" Tell me ! "

" Blest if I do."

" Tessa, you must ! You must let me have everything . . . now. . . ."

" Not a bit of it. You'll never know ; you can keep on guessing till the cows come home, but I won't tell you."

" I don't need to guess. You've got a face like a cinematograph. He who runs may read. I know what it was."

" Bet you don't . . ."

" Something frightened you."

" Aren't you clever ! "

" What was it ? I always know when you're frightened ; there are two funny little lamps in your eyes, right in the very middle of your eyes, and they light up when you're frightened. I can see them now ; you're frightened still. Tessa ! Don't hide away from me ! Tell me what it is ! "

She had twisted herself away from him, and was hiding her tell-tale face in the pillow. But he could see a deep blush spreading over her cheek and the back of her neck. His astonishment grew. What in the world could ever make her blush?

"Are you ashamed of anything?" he demanded sternly.

A muffled voice bade him leave her alone.

"Well then, look at me!"

She sat up and looked at him, straightfaced and rather indignant, the pink slowly ebbing from her cheeks. He saw that she had been ashamed, but not for herself. Some one else had been at her. But who? After he had left Chiswick. . . . Oh, it was obvious!

"It was something Florence said," he stated.

"Lewis! Please . . ."

"Did you have words?"

"I shan't tell you."

"And she made you frightened and ashamed? Why can't you tell me?"

"Because . . . women oughtn't to . . . to tell men . . . about each other. . . ."

"I see. Then we'll leave it. But you're an astounding creature, Tessa. You'll listen to Reine's conversation without turning a hair, and yet a genteel person like Florence . . ."

"Please!"

He laughed. He could quite imagine the sort of thing that Florence had said; it was probably enough to make anybody blush. Whatever it was, he blessed her for it, since it had sent Tessa to him. He went on teasing for a little while, but he did not press the point.

"I don't believe that you really understood half that Reine said," he insisted.

"Perhaps not," she murmured, her cheek against his. "But I know what she thinks. She thinks a funny thing about you and me. She thinks I'm your fancy lady."

"So does Florence, as a matter of fact."

"Does she?" Tessa sheered away from all thought of

Florence. " Well, but Lewis, I've a hard thing to ask you. If I'm not . . . what they think . . . what am I ? "

He sat for a long time silent, holding her carefully as though she was something precious and easily broken. Then he said :

" You mean, what would I call you if I wasn't your lover ? That's a tight place ! Listen ! Will this do ? I won't . . . I couldn't . . . ever again, in all my life, call any woman by a name that sounded too hard for you. I would think of any woman that she could be to some man, perhaps, what you are to me."

" That sounds all right. Don't look so worried. I only just wanted to know. It's . . . completely unimportant . . ."

He had lost himself a little, quite carried away by her passion and the fiery intensity of her mind. Almost he believed himself capable of a love like hers. They sat watching the swift fading of the daylight in the sky, while sounds of distant traffic floated up from the street to their high, hidden retreat. He discovered at last that she was very cold ; her little fingers, locked in his, were icy, and she shivered so often that he again offered to lend her his muffler. He lit the gas, a bare, noisy jet which threw a green light upon the disorder of the room and turned the window-panes from sapphire to black. She looked more wan and frail than ever, and he exclaimed :

" You look very mouldy. Come down to supper."

" I couldn't really. I don't want anything. I'm too tired."

" Well then I'll go down and bring something up."

And he left her, treading lightly from the room and shutting the door behind him with caution. Outside, in the closeness of the dark landing, the evil of the house seemed to pounce upon him, and he was faced with the knowledge that he had brought her there. He would take her away. He groped his way downstairs past shut, secret doors, ranging the world in his mind, seeking a suitable shelter for the pair of them. No place offered itself to his imagina-

tion. As she had said, all places seemed so very much alike. Their safety lay only in themselves, and she had no doubts about it. Why should she? But for himself it was different; he had not that constant and unswerving love which would shine like a torch in dark, unfriendly places.

He interviewed Gabrielle and induced her, with some bribery, to prepare and bring up a tray of food. He told her that they would be leaving in the morning. Then he started up again, still wrestling with the problem of the future. What in the world was he to do with her? They had, unfortunately, no friend whom they could consult. Nobody appreciated Tessa, unless it might be that old gentleman, her uncle.

Confronted by the idea of Charles Churchill, Lewis became very thoughtful.

He found Teresa upon her feet, struggling with some labour and difficulty to take off her frock. He sat down and buried his face in his hands, trying to clear his mind, still distracted by the lethargy of thought which had disabled him all day. At last he said:

"Suppose I wrote to your uncle . . ."

"Uncle Charles? What do you want to write to him for?"

"I don't know."

"I'll send your love when I write, shall I?" she jeered.

"Oh! You'll write, will you?"

"I thought I'd send him a picture postcard now and then."

"Well, when you do, tell him . . ."

"What? Damn these buttons!"

"I must think."

What indeed was he to say to Charles? It was more easy to guess what Charles would say to him. And yet Charles was the only person in the world who had a proper value for Tessa.

"It's very stuffy in here," she said suddenly, in a choked little voice.

He told her to open the window. In his mind he had begun a letter to Charles. He was never very good at writing letters. He could not at all plan one that explained the nature of his passion for Charles's niece—a thing so delicate that words seemed to hurt it, a thing so beautiful that it must somehow be preserved, a thing so strong that nothing in the world could stand in its way.

" I can't open it," said Tessa, who had been tugging at the window. " It's stiff."

" Try at the top," he advised, without looking round.

She stared at the top, clutching her breast for a moment, where pain was alive and threatening. Then she braced herself for another effort.

Lewis gave it up. There would be no sort of good in writing to Charles. The only result would be a separation ; they would come and take her away from him. That was not to be thought of. The alternative was to succumb to Maison Marxse. He wished that Gabrielle would hurry up with that food. Not that he would let her in. This room was Tessa's stronghold. He would go out and fetch the tray in from the landing.

The noise of the flaming gas seemed to have grown very much louder. The room was frighteningly quiet. Teresa had stopped pulling at the window ; she had stopped moving. He looked round and saw that she had slipped down on to the floor.

" Have you fainted ? " he asked, jumping up.

She made no reply.

He picked her up and put her on the bed. There was no water in the room, but he found a damp sponge among her things and began anxiously to sponge her face in the hope of bringing her round. Her colour disturbed him. Presently a gleam of consciousness returned to her eyes.

" Light the light ! " she whispered.

" It's lighted."

She stared fixedly at the soaring green flame. He began to think that she could not see it.

" Tessa ! " he protested. " Dearest love . . ."

He went on sponging her face. The hissing of the gas grew so loud that he could hardly be sure that she breathed. And all day she had been cold.

He heard the tray clinking outside and cried to Gabrielle for help. She opened the door with a bump, pushing the tray in front of her. But when she looked at the bed she exclaimed, and came quickly forward. She put the tray on the floor and came to Lewis and took the sponge away from him.

" What's the good of doing that ? " she asked in tones of anger and alarm.

He saw, then, that there was no sort of good in it. His heart's treasure was gone ; she had eluded finally both his love and his folly. He became, in an instant, so certain of his loss that he gave up the defenceless thing in his arms to the rude, untender handling of Gabrielle ; she could do no harm now to the living Tessa. He stood watching while she made a hasty, indignant examination, and at last he explained, stupidly :

" She has got away . . . she's dead . . ."

" That is evident," agreed Gabrielle. " Still, a doctor must be fetched. I will send Paul."

She hurried off, and soon there began to be noises of footsteps, the cries of alarmed people, lower in the house.

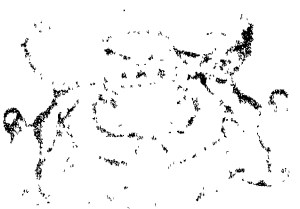
Lewis, discovering in his turn that the room was very airless, went to open the window. It would not move, and he found a wedge at the top. When he had taken this away the sash slid up easily. He stood holding the wedge in his hand, looking at it and thinking, with a kind of slow amazement, that it had killed Tessa.

The night wind blew in, swaying the dusty curtains, and all the sheets of music on the floor went rustling and flapping like fallen leaves. A chill tempest, it blew over the quiet bed, but it could not wake her. She slept on, where they had flung her down among the pillows, silent, undefeated, young.

Lewis leant far out of the window, as if to hail a departing

friend. Down in the street he saw a long, long double row of lamps burning steadily in spite of the gale. People moved like shadows over the bright pavements. Above the houses, very high in the sky, a small, pale moon raced through the clouds as though some enemy pursued her.

The Constant Nymph.



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