

Diana of the Crossways — Volume 5 eBook

Diana of the Crossways — Volume 5 by George Meredith

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Contents

Diana of the Crossways — Volume 5 eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	5
Page 1.....	6
Page 2.....	8
Page 3.....	9
Page 4.....	10
Page 5.....	12
Page 6.....	14
Page 7.....	16
Page 8.....	18
Page 9.....	20
Page 10.....	22
Page 11.....	24
Page 12.....	26
Page 13.....	28
Page 14.....	29
Page 15.....	30
Page 16.....	32
Page 17.....	34
Page 18.....	36
Page 19.....	38
Page 20.....	40
Page 21.....	42
Page 22.....	43

Page 23.....	44
Page 24.....	45
Page 25.....	47
Page 26.....	49
Page 27.....	50
Page 28.....	51
Page 29.....	52
Page 30.....	54
Page 31.....	56
Page 32.....	57
Page 33.....	59
Page 34.....	60
Page 35.....	61
Page 36.....	62
Page 37.....	64
Page 38.....	65
Page 39.....	67
Page 40.....	69
Page 41.....	71
Page 42.....	73
Page 43.....	75
Page 44.....	76
Page 45.....	78
Page 46.....	80
Page 47.....	81
Page 48.....	83

Page 49.....	84
Page 50.....	86
Page 51.....	88
Page 52.....	90
Page 53.....	91
Page 54.....	93
Page 55.....	94
Page 56.....	96
Page 57.....	97
Page 58.....	99
Page 59.....	101
Page 60.....	103
Page 61.....	105
Page 62.....	106
Page 63.....	108

Table of Contents

Section	Page
Start of eBook	1
Title: Diana of the Crossways, v5	1
	1
DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS	1
BOOK 5.	1
CHAPTER XXXVI	2
CHAPTER XXXVII	8
CHAPTER XXXVIII	16
CHAPTER XXXIX	20
CHAPTER XL	28
CHAPTER XLI	36
CHAPTER XLII	41
CHAPTER XLIII	48
ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:	57
	58
Information about Project Gutenberg	59
(one page)	
(Three Pages)	60



Page 1

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DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS

By George Meredith

1897

BOOK 5.

XXXVI. *Is conclusive as to the heartlessness of women with brains*

XXXVII. *An exhibition of some champions of the stricken lady*

XXXVIII. *Convalescence of A healthy mind distraught*



- XXXIX. *Of nature with one of her cultivated daughters and A short excursion in anti-climax*
- XL. *In which we see nature making of A woman A maid again, and A thrice whimsical*
- XLI. *Contains A revelation of the origin of the tigress in Diana*
- XLII. *The penultimate : Showing A final struggle for liberty and run into harness*
- XLIII. *Nuptial chapter: And of how A barely Willing woman was led to bloom with nuptial sentiment*

Page 2

CHAPTER XXXVI

IS CONCLUSIVE AS TO THE HEARTLESSNESS OF WOMEN WITH BRAINS

Hymenaeal rumours are those which might be backed to run a victorious race with the tale of evil fortune; and clearly for the reason that man's livelier half is ever alert to speed them. They travel with an astonishing celerity over the land, like flames of the dry beacon-faggots of old time in announcement of the invader or a conquest, gathering as they go: wherein, to say nothing of their vastly wider range, they surpass the electric wires. Man's nuptial half is kindly concerned in the launch of a new couple; it is the business of the fair sex: and man himself (very strangely, but nature quickens him still) lends a not unfavouring eye to the preparations of the matrimonial vessel for its oily descent into the tides, where billows will soon be rising, captain and mate soon discussing the fateful question of who is commander. We consent, it appears, to hope again for mankind; here is another chance! Or else, assuming the happiness of the pair, that pomp of ceremonial, contrasted with the little wind-blown candle they carry between them, catches at our weaker fibres.

After so many ships have foundered, some keel up, like poisoned fish, at the first drink of water, it is a gallant spectacle, let us avow; and either the world perpetuating it is heroical or nature incorrigible in the species. Marriages are unceasing. Friends do it, and enemies; the unknown contractors of this engagement, or armistice, inspire an interest. It certainly is both exciting and comforting to hear that man and woman are ready to join in a mutual affirmative, say Yes together again. It sounds like the end of the war.

The proclamation of the proximate marriage of a young Minister of State and the greatest heiress of her day; notoriously 'The young Minister of State' of a famous book written by the beautiful, now writhing, woman madly enamoured of him—and the heiress whose dowry could purchase a Duchy; this was a note to make the gossips of England leap from their beds at the midnight hour and wag tongues in the marketplace. It did away with the political hubbub over the Tonans article, and let it noise abroad like nonsense. The Hon. Percy Dacier espouses Miss Asper; and she rescues him from the snares of a siren, he her from the toils of the Papists. She would have gone over to them, she was going when, luckily for the Protestant Faith, Percy Dacier intervened with his proposal. Town and country buzzed the news; and while that dreary League trumpeted about the business of the nation, a people suddenly become Oriental chattered of nothing but the blissful union to be celebrated in princely state, with every musical accessory, short of Operatic.

Page 3

Lady Wathin was an active agent in this excitement. The excellent woman enjoyed marriages of High Life: which, as there is presumably wealth to support them, are manifestly under sanction: and a marriage that she could consider one of her own contrivance, had a delicate flavour of a marriage in the family; not quite equal to the seeing a dear daughter of her numerous progeny conducted to the altar, but excelling it in the pomp that bids the heavens open. She and no other spread the tidings of Miss Asper's debating upon the step to Rome at the very instant of Percy Dacier's declaration of his love; and it was a beautiful struggle, that of the half-dedicated nun and her deep-rooted earthly passion, love prevailing! She sent word to Lady Dunstane: 'You know the interest I have always taken in dear Constance Aspen' *etc.*; inviting her to come on a visit a week before the end of the month, that she might join in the ceremony of a wedding 'likely to be the grandest of our time.' Pitiful though it was, to think of the bridal pair having but eight or ten days at the outside, for a honeymoon, the beauty of their 'mutual devotion to duty' was urged by Lady Wathin upon all hearers.

Lady Dunstane declined the invitation. She waited to hear from her friend, and the days went by; she could only sorrow for her poor Tony, divining her state. However little of wrong in the circumstances, they imposed a silence on her decent mind, and no conceivable shape of writing would transmit condolences. She waited, with a dull heartache: by no means grieving at Dacier's engagement to the heiress; until Redworth animated her, as the bearer of rather startling intelligence, indirectly relating to the soul she loved. An accident in the street had befallen Mr. Warwick. Redworth wanted to know whether Diana should be told of it, though he had no particulars to give; and somewhat to his disappointment, Lady Dunstane said she would write. She delayed, thinking the accident might not be serious; and the information of it to Diana surely would be so. Next day at noon her visitor was Lady Wathin, evidently perturbed and anxious to say more than she dared: but she received no assistance. After beating the air in every direction, especially dwelling on the fond reciprocal affection of the two devoted lovers, to be united within three days' time, Lady Wathin said at last: 'And is it not shocking! I talk of a marriage and am appalled by a death. That poor man died last night in the hospital. I mean poor Mr. Warwick. He was recovering, getting strong and well, and he was knocked down at a street-crossing and died last night. It is a warning to us!'

'Mr. Redworth happened to hear of it at his Club, near which the accident occurred, and he called at the hospital. Mr. Warwick was then alive,' said Lady Dunstane; adding: 'Well, if prevention is better than cure, as we hear! Accidents are the specific for averting the maladies of age, which are a certain crop!'

Page 4

Lady Wathin's eyelids worked and her lips shut fast at the cold-hearted remark void of meaning.

She sighed. 'So ends a life of misery, my dear!'

'You are compassionate.'

'I hope so. But . . . Indeed I must speak, if you will let me. I think of the living.'

Lady Dunstane widened her eyes. 'Of Mrs. Warwick?'

'She has now the freedom she desired. I think of others. Forgive me, but Constance Asper is to me as a daughter. I have perhaps no grounds for any apprehension. Love so ardent, so sincere, was never shown by bridegroom elect: and it is not extraordinary to those acquainted with dear Constance. But—one may be a worshipped saint and experience defection. The terrible stories one hears of a power of fascination almost . . . !' Lady Wathin hung for the word.

'Infernal,' said Lady Dunstane, whose brows had been bent inquiringly. 'Have no fear. The freedom you allude to will not be used to interfere with any entertainment in prospect. It was freedom my friend desired. Now that her jewel is restored to her, she is not the person to throw it away, be sure. And pray, drop the subject.'

'One may rely . . . you think?'

'Oh! Oh!'

'This release coming just before the wedding . . . !'

'I should hardly suppose the man to be the puppet you depict, or indicate.'

'It is because men—so many—are not puppets that one is conscious of alarm.'

'Your previous remark,' said Lady Dunstane, 'sounded superstitious. Your present one has an antipodal basis. But, as for your alarm, check it: and spare me further. My friend has acknowledged powers. Considering that, she does not use them, you should learn to respect her.'

Lady Wathin bowed stiffly. She refused to partake of lunch, having, she said, satisfied her conscience by the performance of a duty and arranged with her flyman to catch a train. Her cousin Lady Dunstane smiled loftily at everything she uttered, and she felt that if a woman like this Mrs. Warwick could put division between blood-relatives, she could do worse, and was to be dreaded up to the hour of the nuptials.

'I meant no harm in coming,' she said, at the shaking of hands.

'No, no; I understand,' said her hostess: 'you are hen-hearted over your adopted brood. The situation is perceptible and your intention creditable.'

As one of the good women of the world, Lady Wathin in departing was indignant at the tone and dialect of a younger woman not modestly concealing her possession of the larger brain. Brains in women she both dreaded and detested; she believed them to be devilish. Here were instances:—they had driven poor Sir Lukin to evil courses, and that poor Mr. Warwick straight under the wheels of a cab. Sir Lukin's name was trotting in public with a naughty Mrs. Fryar-Gunnett's: Mrs. Warwick might still trim her arts to baffle the

Page 5

marriage. Women with brains, moreover, are all heartless: they have no pity for distress, no horror of catastrophes, no joy in the happiness of the deserving. Brains in men advance a household to station; but brains in women divide it and are the wrecking of society. Fortunately Lady Wathin knew she could rally a powerful moral contingent, the aptitude of which for a one-minded cohesion enabled it to crush those fractional daughters of mischief. She was a really good woman of the world, heading a multitude; the same whom you are accustomed to hear exalted; lucky in having had a guided girlhood, a thick-curtained prudence; and in having stock in the moral funds, shares in the sentimental tramways. Wherever the world laid its hoards or ran its lines, she was found, and forcible enough to be eminent; though at fixed hours of the day, even as she washed her hands, she abjured worldliness: a performance that cleansed her. If she did not make morality appear loveable to the objects of her dislike, it was owing to her want of brains to see the origin, nature and right ends of morality. But a world yet more deficient than she, esteemed her cordially for being a bulwark of the present edifice; which looks a solid structure when the microscope is not applied to its components.

Supposing Percy Dacier a dishonourable tattler as well as an icy lover, and that Lady Wathin, through his bride, had become privy to the secret between him and Diana? There is reason to think that she would have held it in terror over the baneful woman, but not have persecuted her: for she was by no means the active malignant of theatrical plots. No, she would have charged it upon the possession of brains by women, and have had a further motive for inciting the potent dignitary her husband to employ his authority to repress the sex's exercise of those fell weapons, hurtful alike to them and all coming near them.

So extreme was her dread of Mrs. Warwick, that she drove from the London railway station to see Constance and be reassured by her tranquil aspect.

Sweet Constance and her betrothed Percy were together, examining a missal.

Lady Dunstane despatched a few words of the facts to Diana. She hoped to hear from her; rather hoped, for the moment, not to see her. No answer came. The great day of the nuptials came and passed. She counted on her husband's appearance the next morning, as the good gentleman made a point of visiting her, to entertain the wife he adored, whenever he had a wallet of gossip that would overlay the blank of his absence. He had been to the church of the wedding—he did not say with whom: all the world was there; and he rapturously described the ceremony, stating that it set women weeping and caused him to behave like a fool.

'You are impressionable,' said his wife.

He murmured something in praise of the institution of marriage—when celebrated impressively, it seemed.

Page 6

'Tony calls the social world "the theatre of appetites," as we have it at present,' she said; 'and the world at a wedding is, one may reckon, in the second act of the hungry tragicomedy.'

'Yes, there's the breakfast,' Sir Lukin assented. Mrs. Fryar-Gunnett was much more intelligible to him: in fact, quite so, as to her speech.

Emma's heart now yearned to her Tony: Consulting her strength, she thought she might journey to London, and on the third morning after the Dacier-Asper marriage, she started.

Diana's door was open to Arthur Rhodes when Emma reached it.

'Have you seen her?' she asked him.

His head shook dolefully. 'Mrs. Warwick is unwell; she has been working too hard.'

'You also, I'm afraid.'

'No.' He could deny that, whatever the look of him.

'Come to me at Copsley soon,' said she, entering to Danvers in the passage.

'My mistress is upstairs, my lady,' said Danvers. 'She is lying on her bed.'

'She is ill?'

'She has been lying on her bed ever since.'

'Since what?' Lady Dunstane spoke sharply.

Danvers retrieved her indiscretion. 'Since she heard of the accident, my lady.'

'Take my name to her. Or no: I can venture.'

'I am not allowed to go in and speak to her. You will find the room quite dark, my lady, and very cold. It is her command. My mistress will not let me light the fire; and she has not eaten or drunk of anything since She will die, if you do not persuade her to take nourishment: a little, for a beginning. It wants the beginning.'

Emma went upstairs, thinking of the enigmatical maid, that she must be a good soul after all. Diana's bedroom door was opened slowly.

'You will not be able to see at first, my lady,' Danvers whispered. 'The bed is to the left, and a chair. I would bring in a candle, but it hurts her eyes. She forbids it.'

Emma stepped in. The chill thick air of the unlighted London room was cavernous. She almost forgot the beloved of her heart in the thought that a living woman had been lying here more than two days and nights, fasting. The proof of an uttermost misery revived the circumstances within her to render her friend's presence in this desert of darkness credible. She found the bed by touch, silently, and distinguished a dark heap on the bed; she heard no breathing. She sat and listened; then she stretched out her hand and met her Tony's. It lay open. It was the hand of a drowned woman.

Shutters and curtains and the fireless grate gave the room an appalling likeness to the vaults.

So like to the home of death it seemed, that in a few minutes the watcher had lost count of time and kept but a wormy memory of the daylight. She dared not speak, for some fear of startling; for the worse fear of never getting answer. Tony's hand was lifeless. Her clasp of it struck no warmth.

Page 7

She stung herself with bitter reproaches for having let common mundane sentiments, worthy of a Lady Wathin, bar her instant offer of her bosom to the beloved who suffered in this depth of mortal agony. Tony's love of a man, as she should have known, would be wrought of the elements of our being: when other women named Happiness, she said Life; in division, Death. Her body lying still upon the bed here was a soul borne onward by the river of Death.

The darkness gave sight after a while, like a curtain lifting on a veil: the dead light of the underworld. Tony lay with her face up, her underlip dropped; straight from head to feet. The outline of her face, without hue of it, could be seen: sign of the hapless women that have souls in love. Hateful love of men! Emma thought, and was; moved to feel at the wrist for her darling's pulse. He has, killed her! the thought flashed, as, with pangs chilling her frame, the pressure at the wrist continued insensible of the faintest beat. She clasped it, trembling, in pain to stop an outcry.

'It is Emmy,' said the voice.

Emma's heart sprang to heaven on a rush of thanks.

'My Tony,' she breathed softly.

She hung for a further proof of life in the motionless body. 'Tony!' she said.

The answer was at her hand, a thread-like return of her clasp.

'It is Emmy come to stay with you, never to leave you.'

The thin still answer was at her hand a moment; the fingers fell away. A deep breath was taken twice to say:

'Don't talk to me.'

Emma retained the hand. She was warned not to press it by the deadness following its effort to reply.

But Tony lived; she had given proof of life. Over this little wavering taper in the vaults Emma cowered, cherishing the hand, silently hoping for the voice.

It came: 'Winter.'

'It is a cold winter, Tony.'

'My dear will be cold.'

'I will light the fire.'

Emma lost no time in deciding to seek the match-box. The fire was lit and it flamed; it seemed a revival in the room. Coming back to the bedside, she discerned her Tony's lacklustre large dark eyes and her hollow cheeks: her mouth open to air as to the drawing-in of a sword; rather as to the releaser than the sustainer. Her feet were on the rug her maid had placed to cover them. Emma leaned across the bed to put them to her breast, beneath her fur mantle, and held them there despite the half-animate tug of the limbs and the shaft of iciness they sent to her very heart. When she had restored them to some warmth, she threw aside her bonnet and lying beside Tony, took her in her arms, heaving now and then a deep sigh.

She kissed her cheek.

'It is Emmy.'

'Kiss her.'

'I have no strength.'

Emma laid her face on the lips. They were cold; even the breath between them cold.

Page 8

'Has Emmy been long . . .?'

'Here, dear? I think so. I am with my darling.'

Tony moaned. The warmth and the love were bringing back her anguish.

She said: 'I have been happy. It is not hard to go.'

Emma strained to her. 'Tony will wait for her soul's own soul to go, the two together.'

There was a faint convulsion in the body. 'If I cry, I shall go in pain.'

'You are in Emmy's arms, my beloved.'

Tony's eyes closed for forgetfulness under that sensation. A tear ran down from her, but the pain was lag and neighboured sleep, like the pleasure.

So passed the short winter day, little spoken.

Then Emma bethought her of a way of leading Tony to take food, and she said: 'I shall stay with you; I shall send for clothes; I am rather hungry. Don't stir, dear. I will be mistress of the house.'

She went below to the kitchen, where a few words in the ear of a Frenchwoman were sufficient to waken immediate comprehension of what was wanted, and smart service: within ten minutes an appetizing bouillon sent its odour over the bedroom. Tony, days back, had said her last to the act of eating; but Emma sipping at the spoon and expressing satisfaction, was a pleasant picture. The bouillon smelt pleasantly.

'Your servants love you,' Emma said.

'Ah, poor good souls.'

'They crowded up to me to hear of you. Madame of course at the first word was off to her pots. And we English have the habit of calling ourselves the practical people!—This bouillon is consummate.—However, we have the virtues of barbarians; we can love and serve for love. I never tasted anything so good. I could become a glutton.'

'Do,' said Tony.

'I should be ashamed to "drain the bowl" all to myself: a solitary toper is a horrid creature, unless he makes a song of it.'

'Emmy makes a song of it to me.'



'But "pledge me" is a noble saying, when you think of humanity's original hunger for the whole. It is there that our civilizing commenced, and I am particularly fond of hearing the call. It is grandly historic. So pledge me, Tony. We two can feed from one spoon; it is a closer, bond than the loving cup. I want you just to taste it and excuse my gluttony.'

Tony murmured, 'No.' The spoon was put to her mouth. She sighed to resist. The stronger will compelled her to move her lips. Emma fed her as a child, and nature sucked for life.

The first effect was a gush of tears.

Emma lay with her that night, when the patient was, the better sleeper. But during the night at intervals she had the happiness of feeling Tony's hand travelling to make sure of her.

CHAPTER XXXVII

AN EXHIBITION OF SOME CHAMPIONS OF THE STRICKEN LADY

Page 9

Close upon the hour of ten every morning the fortuitous meeting of two gentlemen at Mrs. Warwick's housedown was a signal for punctiliously stately greetings, the salutation of the raised hat and a bow of the head from a position of military erectness, followed by the remark: 'I trust you are well, sir': to which the reply: 'I am very well, sir, and trust you are the same,' was deemed a complimentary fulfilment of their mutual obligation in presence. Mr. Sullivan Smith's initiative imparted this exercise of formal manners to Mr. Arthur Rhodes, whose renewed appearance, at the minute of his own arrival, he viewed, as he did not conceal, with a disappointed and a reproving eye. The inquiry after the state of Mrs. Warwick's health having received its tolerably comforting answer from the footman, they left their cards in turn, then descended the doorsteps, faced for the performance of the salute, and departed their contrary ways.

The pleasing intelligence refreshed them one morning, that they would. be welcomed by Lady Dunstane. Thereupon Mr. Sullivan Smith wheeled about to Mr. Arthur Rhodes and observed to him: 'Sir, I might claim, by right of seniority, to be the foremost of us two in offering my respects to the lady, but the way is open to you.'

'Sir,' said Mr. Arthur Rhodes, 'permit me to defer to your many superior titles to that distinction.'

'The honour, sir, lies rather in the bestowing than in the taking.'

'I venture to think, sir, that though I cannot speak pure Castilian, I require no lesson from a Grandee of Spain in acknowledging the dues of my betters.'

'I will avow myself conquered, sir, by your overpowering condescension,' said Mr. Sullivan Smith; 'and I entreat you—to ascribe my acceptance of your brief retirement to the urgent character of the business I have at heart.'

He laid his fingers on the panting spot, and bowed.

Mr. Arthur Rhodes, likewise bowing, deferentially fell to rearward.

'If I mistake not,' said the Irish gentleman, 'I am indebted to Mr. Rhodes; and we have been joint participators in the hospitality of Mrs. Warwick's table.'

The English gentleman replied: 'It was there that I first had the pleasure of an acquaintance which is graven on my memory, as the words of the wise king on tablets of gold and silver.'

Mr. Sullivan Smith gravely smiled at the unwonted match he had found in ceremonious humour, in Saxonland, and saying: 'I shall not long detain you, Mr. Rhodes,' he passed through the doorway.

Arthur waited for him, pacing up and down, for a quarter of an hour, when a totally different man reappeared in the same person, and was the Sullivan Smith of the rosy beaming features and princely heartiness. He was accosted: 'Now, my dear boy, it's your turn to try if you have a chance, and good luck go with ye. I've said what I could on your behalf, for you're one of ten thousand in this country, you are.'

Page 10

Mr. Sullivan Smith had solemnified himself to proffer a sober petition within the walls of the newly widowed lady's house; namely, for nothing less than that sweet lady's now unfettered hand: and it had therefore been perfectly natural to him, until his performance ended with the destruction of his hopes, to deliver himself in the high Castilian manner. Quite unexpected, however, was the reciprocal loftiness of tone spontaneously adopted by the young English squire, for whom, in consequence, he conceived a cordial relish; and as he paced in the footsteps of Arthur, anxious to quiet his curiosity by hearing how it had fared with one whom he had to suppose the second applicant, he kept ejaculating: 'Not a bit! The fellow can't be Saxon! And she had a liking for him. She's nigh coming of the age when a woman takes to the chicks. Better he than another, if it's to be any one. For he's got fun in him; he carries his own condiments, instead of borrowing from the popular castors, as is their way over here. But I might have known there 's always sure to be salt and savour in the man she covers with her wing. Excepting, if you please, my dear lady, a bad shot you made at a rascal cur, no more worthy of you than Beelzebub of Paradise. No matter! The daughters' of Erin must share the fate of their mother Isle, that their tears may shine in the burst of sun to follow. For personal and patriotic motives, I would have cheered her and been like a wild ass combed and groomed and tamed by the adorable creature. But her friend says there 's not a whisk of a chance for me, and I must roam the desert, kicking up, and worshipping the star I hail brightest. They know me not, who think I can't worship. Why, what were I without my star? At best a pickled porker.'

Sullivan Smith became aware of a ravishing melodiousness in the soliloquy, as well as a clean resemblance in the simile. He would certainly have proceeded to improvise impassioned verse, if he had not seen Arthur Rhodes on the pavement. 'So, here's the boy. Query, the face he wears.'

'How kind of you to wait,' said Arthur.

'We'll call it sympathy, for convenience,' rejoined Sullivan Smith. 'Well, and what next?'

'You know as much as I do. Thank heaven, she is recovering.'

'Is that all?'

'Why, what more?'

Arthur was jealously, inspected.

'You look open-hearted, my dear boy.' Sullivan Smith blew the sound of a reflected ahem. 'Excuse me for cornemusing in your company,' he said. 'But seriously, there was only one thing to pardon your hurrying to the lady's door at such a season, when the wind tells tales to the world. She's down with a cold, you know.'

‘An influenza,’ said Arthur.

The simplicity of the acquiescence was vexatious to a champion desirous of hostilities, to vindicate the lady, in addition to his anxiety to cloak her sad plight.

Page 11

'She caught it from contact with one of the inhabitants of this country. 'Tis the fate of us Irish, and we're condemned to it for the sin of getting tired of our own. I begin to sneeze when I land at Holyhead. Unbutton a waistcoat here, in the hope of meeting a heart, and you're lucky in escaping a pulmonary attack of no common severity, while the dog that infected you scampers off, to celebrate his honeymoon mayhap. Ah, but call at her house in shoals, the world 'll soon be saying it's worse than a coughing cold. If you came to lead her out of it in triumph, the laugh 'd be with you, and the lady well covered. D' ye understand?'

The allusion to the dog's honeymoon had put Arthur Rhodes on the track of the darting cracker-metaphor.

'I think I do,' he said. 'She will soon be at Copsley—Lady Dunstane's house, on the hills—and there we can see her.'

'And that's next to the happiness of consoling—if only it had been granted! She's not an ordinary widow, to be caught when the tear of lamentation has opened a practicable path or water-way to the poor nightcapped jewel within. So, and you're a candid admirer, Mr. Rhodes! Well, and I'll be one with you; for there's not a star in the firmament more deserving of homage than that lady.'

'Let's walk in the park and talk of her,' said Arthur. 'There's no sweeter subject to me.'

His boyish frankness rejoiced Sullivan Smith. 'As long as you like!—nor to me!' he exclaimed. 'And that ever since I first beheld her on the night of a Ball in Dublin: before I had listened to a word of her speaking: and she bore her father's Irish name:—none of your Warwicks and your . . . But let the cur go barking. He can't tell what he's lost; perhaps he doesn't care. And after inflicting his hydrophobia on her tender fame! Pooh, sir; you call it a civilized country, where you and I and dozens of others are ready to start up as brothers of the lady, to defend her, and are paralyzed by the Law. 'Tis a law they've instituted for the protection of dirty dogs—their majority!'

'I owe more to Mrs. Warwick than to any soul I know,' said Arthur.

'Let 's hear,' quoth Sullivan Smith; proceeding: 'She's the Arabian Nights in person, that's sure; and Shakespeare's Plays, tragic and comic; and the Book of Celtic History; and Erin incarnate—down with a cold, no matter where; but we know where it was caught. So there's a pretty library for who's to own her now she's enfranchized by circumstances; and a poetical figure too!'

He subsided for his companion to rhapsodize.

Arthur was overcharged with feeling, and could say only: 'It would be another world to me if I lost her.'

'True; but what of the lady?'

'No praise of mine could do her justice.'

'That may be, but it's negative of yourself, and not a portrait of the object. Hasn't she the brain of Socrates—or better, say Minerva, on the bust of Venus, and the remainder of her finished off to an exact resemblance of her patronymic Goddess of the bow and quiver?'

Page 12

'She has a wise head and is beautiful.'

'And chaste.'

Arthur reddened: he was prepared to maintain it, could not speak it.

'She is to us in this London, what the run of water was to Theocritus in Sicily: the nearest to the visibly divine,' he said, and was applauded.

'Good, and on you go. Top me a few superlatives on that, and I 'm your echo, my friend. Isn't the seeing and listening to her like sitting under the silvery canopy of a fountain in high Summer?'

'All the comparisons are yours,' Arthur said enviously.

'Mr. Rhodes, you are a poet, I believe, and all you require to loosen your tongue is a drop of Bacchus, so if you will do me the extreme honour to dine with me at my Club this evening, we'll resume the toast that should never be uttered dry. You reprove me justly, my friend.'

Arthur laughed and accepted. The Club was named, and the hour, and some items of the little dinner: the birds and the year of the wines.

It surprised him to meet Mr. Redworth at the table of his host. A greater surprise was the partial thaw in Redworth's bearing toward him. But, as it was partial, and he a youth and poor, not even the genial influences of Bacchus could lift him to loosen his tongue under the repressing presence of the man he knew to be his censor, though Sullivan Smith encouraged him with praises and opportunities. He thought of the many occasions when Mrs. Warwick's art of management had produced a tacit harmony between them. She had no peer. The dinner failed of the pleasure he had expected from it. Redworth's bluntness killed the flying metaphors, and at the end of the entertainment he and Sullivan Smith were drumming upon politics.

'Fancies he has the key of the Irish difficulty!' said the latter, clapping hand on his shoulder, by way of blessing, as they parted at the Club-steps.

Redworth asked Arthur Rhodes the way he was going, and walked beside him.

'I suppose you take exercise; don't get colds and that kind of thing,' he remarked in the old bullying fashion; and changed it abruptly. 'I am glad to have met you this evening. I hope you'll dine with me one day next week. Have you seen Mrs. Warwick lately?'

'She is unwell; she has been working too hard,' said Arthur.

'Seriously unwell, do you mean?'

‘Lady Dunstane is at her house, and speaks of her recovering.’

‘Ah. You’ve not seen her?’

‘Not yet.’

‘Well, good-night.’

Redworth left him, and only when moved by gratitude to the lad for his mention of Mrs. Warwick’s ‘working too hard,’ as the cause of her illness, recollected the promised dinner and the need for having his address.

Page 13

He had met Sullivan Smith accidentally in the morning and accepted the invitation to meet young Rhodes, because these two, of all men living, were for the moment dearest to him, as Diana Warwick's true and simple champions; and he had intended a perfect cordiality toward them both; the end being a semi-wrangle with the patriot, and a patronizing bluntness with the boy; who, by the way, would hardly think him sincere in the offer of a seat at his table. He owned himself incomplete. He never could do the thing he meant, in the small matters not leading to fortune. But they led to happiness! Redworth was guilty of a sigh: for now Diana Warwick stood free; doubly free, he was reduced to reflect in a wavering dubiousness. Her more than inclination for Dacier, witnessed by him, and the shot of the world, flying randomly on the subject, had struck this cuirassier, making light of his armour, without causing any change of his habitual fresh countenance. As for the scandal, it had never shaken his faith in her nature. He thought of the passion. His heart struck at Diana's, and whatever might by chance be true in the scandal affected him little, if but her heart were at liberty. That was the prize he coveted, having long read the nature of the woman and wedded his spirit to it. She would complete him.

Of course, infatuated men argue likewise, and scandal does not move them. At a glance, the lower instincts and the higher spirit appear equally to have the philosophy of overlooking blemishes. The difference between appetite and love is shown when a man, after years of service, can hear and see, and admit the possible, and still desire in worship; knowing that we of earth are begrimed and must be cleansed for presentation daily on our passage through the miry ways, but that our souls, if flame of a soul shall have come of the agony of flesh, are beyond the baser mischances: partaking of them indeed, but sublimely. Now Redworth believed in the soul of Diana. For him it burned, and it was a celestial radiance about her, unquenched by her shifting fortunes, her wilfulnesses and, it might be, errors. She was a woman and weak; that is, not trained for strength. She was a soul; therefore perpetually pointing to growth in purification. He felt it, and even discerned it of her, if he could not have phrased it. The something sovereignty characteristic that aspired in Diana enchained him. With her, or rather with his thought of her soul, he understood the right union of women and men, from the roots to the flowering heights of that rare graft. She gave him comprehension of the meaning of love: a word in many mouths, not often explained. With her, wound in his idea of her, he perceived it to signify a new start in our existence, a finer shoot of the tree stoutly planted in good gross earth; the senses running their live sap, and the minds companioned, and the spirits made one by the whole-natured conjunction. In Booth, a happy prospect for the sons and daughters of Earth, divinely indicating more than happiness: the speeding of us, compact of what we are, between the ascetic rocks and the sensual whirlpools, to the creation of certain nobler races, now very dimly imagined.

Page 14

Singularly enough, the man of these feelings was far from being a social rebel. His Diana conjured them forth in relation to her, but was not on his bosom to enlighten him generally. His notions of citizenship tolerated the female Pharisees, as ladies offering us an excellent social concrete where quicksands abound, and without quite justifying the Lady Wathins and Constance Aspers of the world, whose virtues he could set down to accident or to acid blood, he considered them supportable and estimable where the Mrs. Fryar-Gunnetts were innumerable, threatening to become a majority; as they will constantly do while the sisterhood of the chaste are wattled in formalism and throned in sourness.

Thoughts of Diana made phantoms of the reputable and their reverse alike. He could not choose but think of her. She was free; and he too; and they were as distant as the horizon sail and the aft-floating castaway. Her passion for Dacier might have burnt out her heart. And at present he had no claim to visit her, dared not intrude. He would have nothing to say, if he went, save to answer questions upon points of business: as to which, Lady Dunstane would certainly summon him when he was wanted.

Riding in the park on a frosty morning, he came upon Sir Lukin, who looked gloomy and inquired for news of Diana Warwick, saying that his wife had forbidden him to call at her house just yet. 'She's got a cold, you know,' said Sir Lukin; adding, 'confoundedly hard on women!—eh? Obligated to keep up a show. And I'd swear, by all that's holy, Diana Warwick hasn't a spot, not a spot, to reproach herself with. I fancy I ought to know women by this time. And look here, Redworth, last night—that is, I mean yesterday evening, I broke with a woman—a lady of my acquaintance, you know, because she would go on scandal-mongering about Diana Warwick. I broke with her. I told her I'd have out any man who abused Diana Warwick, and I broke with her. By Jove! Redworth, those women can prove spitfires. They've bags of venom under their tongues, barley-sugar though they look—and that's her colour. But I broke with her for good. I doubt if I shall ever call on her again. And in point of fact, I won't.'

Mrs. Fryar-Gunnett was described in the colouring of the lady.

Sir Lukin, after some further remarks, rode on, and Redworth mused on a moral world that allows a woman of Mrs. Fryar-Gunnett's like to hang on to it, and to cast a stone at Diana; forgetful, in his championship, that Diana was not disallowed a similar licence.

When he saw Emma Dunstane, some days later, she was in her carriage driving, as she said, to Lawyerland, for an interview with old Mr. Braddock, on her friend's affairs. He took a seat beside her. 'No, Tony is not well,' she replied to his question, under the veil of candour. 'She is recovering, but she—you can understand—suffered a shock. She is not able to attend to business, and certain things have to be done.'

Page 15

'I used to be her man of business,' Redworth observed.

'She speaks of your kind services. This is mere matter for lawyers.'

'She is recovering?'

'You may see her at Copsley next week. You can come down on Wednesdays or Saturdays?'

'Any day. Tell her I want her opinion upon the state of things.'

'It will please her; but you will have to describe the state of things.'

Emma feared she had said too much. She tried candour again for concealment. 'My poor Tony has been struck down low. I suppose it is like losing a diseased limb:—she has her freedom, at the cost of a blow to the system.'

'She may be trusted for having strength,' said Redworth.'

'Yes.' Emma's mild monosyllable was presently followed by an exclamation: 'One has to experience the irony of Fate to comprehend how cruel it is!' Then she remembered that such language was peculiarly abhorrent to him.

'Irony of Fate!' he echoed her. 'I thought you were above that literary jargon.'

'And I thought I was: or thought it would be put in a dialect practically explicable,' she answered, smiling at the lion roused.

'Upon my word,' he burst out, 'I should like to write a book of Fables, showing how donkeys get into grinding harness, and dogs lose their bones, and fools have their sconces cracked, and all run jabbering of the irony of Fate, to escape the annoyance of tracing the causes. And what are they? nine times out of ten, plain want of patience, or some debt for indulgence. There's a subject:—let some one write, Fables in illustration of the irony of Fate: and I'll undertake to tack-on my grandmother's maxims for a moral to teach of 'em. We prate of that irony when we slink away from the lesson—the rod we conjure. And you to talk of Fate! It's the seed we sow, individually or collectively. I'm bound-up in the prosperity of the country, and if the ship is wrecked, it ruins my fortune, but not me, unless I'm bound-up in myself. At least I hope that's my case.'

He apologized for intruding Mr. Thomas Redworth.

His hearer looked at him, thinking he required a more finely pointed gift of speech for the ironical tongue, but relishing the tonic directness of his faculty of reason while she considered that the application of the phrase might be brought home to him so as to render 'my Grandmother's moral' a conclusion less comfortingly, if quite intelligibly,

summary. And then she thought of Tony's piteous instance; and thinking with her heart, the tears insisted on that bitter irony of the heavens, which bestowed the long-withheld and coveted boon when it was empty of value or was but as a handful of spices to a shroud.

Perceiving the moisture in her look, Redworth understood that it was foolish to talk rationally. But on her return to her beloved, the real quality of the man had overcome her opposing state of sentiment, and she spoke of him with an iteration and throb in the voice that set a singular query whirring round Diana's ears. Her senses were too heavy for a suspicion.

Page 16

CHAPTER XXXVIII

CONVALESCENCE OF A HEALTHY MIND DISTRAUGHT

From an abandonment that had the last pleasure of life in a willingness to yield it up, Diana rose with her friend's help in some state of fortitude, resembling the effort of her feet to bear the weight of her body. She plucked her courage out of the dust to which her heart had been scattered, and tasked herself to walk as the world does. But she was indisposed to compassionate herself in the manner of the burdened world. She lashed the creature who could not raise a head like others, and made the endurance of torture a support, such as the pride of being is to men. She would not have seen any similarity to pride in it; would have deemed it the reverse. It was in fact the painful gathering of the atoms composing pride. For she had not only suffered; she had done wrongly: and when that was acknowledged, by the light of her sufferings the wrongdoing appeared gigantic, chorussing eulogies of the man she had thought her lover: and who was her lover once, before the crime against him. In the opening of her bosom to Emma, he was painted a noble figure; one of those that Romance delights to harass for the sake of ultimately the more exquisitely rewarding. He hated treachery: she had been guilty of doing what he most hated. She glorified him for the incapacity to forgive; it was to her mind godlike. And her excuses of herself?

At the first confession, she said she had none, and sullenly maintained that there was none to exonerate. Little by little her story was related—her version of the story: for not even as woman to woman, friend to great-hearted friend, pure soul to soul, could Diana tell of the state of shivering abjection in which Dacier had left her on the fatal night; of the many causes conducing to it, and of the chief. That was an unutterable secret, bound by all the laws of feminine civilization not to be betrayed. Her excessive self-abasement and exaltation of him who had struck her down, rendered it difficult to be understood; and not till Emma had revolved it and let it ripen in the mind some days could she perceive with any clearness her Tony's motives, or mania. The very word Money thickened the riddle: for Tony knew that her friend's purse was her own to dip in at her pleasure; yet she, to escape so small an obligation, had committed the enormity for which she held the man blameless in spurning her.

'You see what I am, Emmy,' Diana said.

'What I do not see, is that he had grounds for striking so cruelly.'

'I proved myself unworthy of him.'

But does a man pretending to love a woman cut at one blow, for such a cause, the ties uniting her to him? Unworthiness of that kind, is not commonly the capital offence in love. Tony's deep prostration and her resplendent picture of her judge and executioner,



kept Emma questioning within herself. Gradually she became enlightened enough to distinguish in the man a known, if not common, type of the externally soft and polished, internally hard and relentless, who are equal to the trials of love only as long as favouring circumstances and seemings nurse the fair object of their courtship.

Page 17

Her thoughts recurred to the madness driving Tony to betray the secret; and the ascent unhelped to get a survey of it and her and the conditions, was mountainous. She toiled up but to enter the regions of cloud; sure nevertheless that the obscurity was penetrable and excuses to be discovered somewhere. Having never wanted money herself, she was unable perfectly to realize the urgency of the need: she began however to comprehend that the very eminent gentleman, before whom all human creatures were to bow in humility, had for an extended term considerably added to the expenses of Tony's household, by inciting her to give those little dinners to his political supporters, and bringing comrades perpetually to supper-parties, careless of how it might affect her character and her purse. Surely an honourable man was bound to her in honour? Tony's remark: 'I have the reptile in me, dear,' her exaggeration of the act, in her resigned despair,—was surely no justification for his breaking from her, even though he had discovered a vestige of the common 'reptile,' to leave her with a stain on her name?—There would not have been a question about it if Tony had not exalted him so loftily, refusing, in visible pain, to hear him blamed.

Danvers had dressed a bed for Lady Dunstane in her mistress's chamber, where often during the night Emma caught a sound of stifled weeping or the long falling breath of wakeful grief. One night she asked whether Tony would like to have her by her side.

'No, dear,' was the answer in the dark; 'but you know my old pensioners, the blind fifer and his wife; I've been thinking of them.'

'They were paid as they passed down the street yesterday, my love.'

'Yes, dear, I hope so. But he flourishes his tune so absurdly. I've been thinking, that is the part I have played, instead of doing the female's duty of handing round the tin-cup for pennies. I won't cry any more.'

She sighed and turned to sleep, leaving Emma to disburden her heart in tears.

For it seemed to her that Tony's intellect was weakened. She not merely abased herself and exalted Dacier preposterously, she had sunk her intelligence in her sensations: a state that she used to decry as the sin of mankind, the origin of error and blood.

Strangely too, the proposal came from her, or the suggestion of it, notwithstanding her subjectedness to the nerves, that she should show her face in public. She said: 'I shall have to run about, Emmy, when I can fancy I am able to rattle up to the old mark. At present, I feel like a wrestler who has had a fall. As soon as the stiffness is over, it's best to make an appearance, for the sake of one's backers, though I shall never be in the wrestling ring again.'

'That is a good decision—when you feel quite yourself, dear Tony,' Emma replied.



'I dare say I have disgraced my sex, but not as they suppose. I feel my new self already, and can make the poor brute go through fire on behalf of the old. What is the task?—merely to drive a face!'

Page 18

'It is not known.'

'It will be known.'

'But this is a sealed secret.'

'Nothing is a secret that has been spoken. It 's in the air, and I have to breathe to live by it. And I would rather it were out. "She betrayed him." Rather that, than have them think—anything! They will exclaim, How could she! I have been unable to answer it to you—my own heart. How? Oh! our weakness is the swiftest dog to hunt us; we cannot escape it. But I have the answer for them, that I trust with my whole soul none of them would have done the like.'

'None, my Tony, would have taken it to the soul as you do.'

'I talk, dear. If I took it honestly, I should be dumb, soon dust. The moment we begin to speak, the guilty creature is running for cover. She could not otherwise exist. I am sensible of evasion when I open my lips.'

'But Tony has told me all.'

'I think I have. But if you excuse my conduct, I am certain I have not.'

'Dear girl, accounting for it, is not the same as excusing.'

'Who can account for it! I was caught in a whirl—Oh! nothing supernatural: my weakness; which it pleases me to call a madness—shift the ninety-ninth! When I drove down that night to Mr. Tonans, I am certain I had my clear wits, but I felt like a bolt. I saw things, but at too swift a rate for the conscience of them. Ah! let never Necessity draw the bow of our weakness: it is the soul that is winged to its perdition. I remember I was writing a story, named *the man of two minds*. I shall sign it, By the Woman of Two Natures. If ever it is finished. Capacity for thinking should precede the act of writing. It should; I do not say that it does. Capacity for assimilating the public taste and reproducing it, is the commonest. The stuff is perishable, but it pays us for our labour, and in so doing saves us from becoming tricksters. Now I can see that Mr. Redworth had it in that big head of his—the authoress outliving her income!'

'He dared not speak.'

'Why did he not dare?'

'Would it have checked you?'

'I was a shot out of a gun, and I am glad he did not stand in my way. What power charged the gun, is another question. Dada used to say, that it is the devil's

masterstroke to get us to accuse him. “So fare ye well, old Nickie Ben.” My dear, I am a black sheep; a creature with a spotted reputation; I must wash and wash; and not with water—with sulphur-flames.’ She sighed. ‘I am down there where they burn. You should have let me lie and die. You were not kind. I was going quietly.’

‘My love!’ cried Emma, overborne by a despair that she traced to the woman’s concealment of her bleeding heart, ‘you live for me. Do set your mind on that. Think of what you are bearing, as your debt to Emma. Will you?’

Tony bowed her head mechanically.

Page 19

'But I am in love with King Death, and must confess it,' she said. 'That hideous eating you forced on me, snatched me from him. And I feel that if I had gone, I should have been mercifully forgiven by everybody.'

'Except by me,' said Emma, embracing her. 'Tony would have left her friend for her last voyage in mourning. And my dearest will live to know happiness.'

'I have no more belief in it, Emmy.'

'The mistake of the world is to think happiness possible to the senses.'

'Yes; we distil that fine essence through the senses; and the act is called the pain of life. It is the death of them. So much I understand of what our existence must be. But I may grieve for having done so little.'

'That is the sound grief, with hope at the core—not in love with itself and wretchedly mortal, as we find self is under every shape it takes; especially the chief one.'

'Name it.'

'It is best named Amor.'

There was a writhing in the frame of the hearer, for she did want Love to be respected; not shadowed by her misfortune. Her still-flushed senses protested on behalf of the eternalness of the passion, and she was obliged to think Emma's cold condemnatory intellect came of the no knowledge of it.

A letter from Mr. Tonans, containing an enclosure, was a sharp trial of Diana's endurance of the irony of Fate. She had spoken of the irony in allusion to her freedom. Now that, according to a communication from her lawyers, she was independent of the task of writing, the letter which paid the price of her misery bruised her heavily.

'Read it and tear it all to strips,' she said in an abhorrence to Emma, who rejoined: 'Shall I go at once and see him?'

'Can it serve any end? But throw it into the fire. Oh! no simulation of virtue. There was not, I think, a stipulated return for what I did. But I perceive clearly—I can read only by events—that there was an understanding. You behold it. I went to him to sell it. He thanks me, says I served the good cause well. I have not that consolation. If I had thought of the cause—of anything high, it would have arrested me. On the fire with it!'

The letter and square slip were consumed. Diana watched the blackening papers.

So they cease their sinning, Emmy; and as long as I am in torment, I may hope for grace. We talked of the irony. It means, the pain of fire.'

'I spoke of the irony to Redworth,' said Emma; 'incidentally, of course.'

'And he fumed?'

'He is really not altogether the Mr. Cuthbert Dering of your caricature. He is never less than acceptably rational. I won't repeat his truisms; but he said, or I deduced from what he said, that a grandmother's maxims would expound the enigma.'

'Probably the simple is the deep, in relation to the mysteries of life,' said Diana, whose wits had been pricked to a momentary activity by the letter. 'He behaves wisely; so perhaps we are bound to take his words for wisdom. Much nonsense is talked and written, and he is one of the world's reserves, who need no more than enrolling, to make a sturdy phalanx of common sense. It's a pity they are not enlisted and drilled to express themselves.' She relapsed. 'But neither he nor any of them could understand my case.'

Page 20

'He puts the idea of an irony down to the guilt of impatience, Tony.'

'Could there be a keener irony than that? A friend of Dada's waited patiently for a small fortune, and when it arrived, he was a worn-out man, just assisted to go decently to his grave.'

'But he may have gained in spirit by his patient waiting.'

'Oh! true. We are warmer if we travel on foot sunward, but it is a discovery that we are colder if we take to ballooning upward. The material good reverses its benefits the more nearly we clasp it. All life is a lesson that we live to enjoy but in the spirit. I will brood on your saying.'

'It is your own saying, silly Tony, as the only things worth saying always, are!' exclaimed Emma, as she smiled happily to see her friend's mind reviving, though it was faintly and in the dark.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Of nature with one of her cultivated daughters and A short excursion in anti-climax

A mind that after a long season of oblivion in pain returns to wakefulness without a keen edge for the world, is much in danger of souring permanently. Diana's love of nature saved her from the dire mischance during a two months' residence at Copsley, by stupefying her senses to a state like the barely conscious breathing on the verge of sleep. February blew South-west for the pairing of the birds. A broad warm wind rolled clouds of every ambiguity of form in magnitude over peeping azure, or skimming upon lakes of blue and lightest green, or piling the amphitheatre for majestic sunset. Or sometimes those daughters of the wind flew linked and low, semi-purple, threatening the shower they retained and teaching gloom to rouse a songful nest in the bosom of the viewer. Sometimes they were April, variable to soar with rain-skirts and sink with sunshafts. Or they drenched wood and field for a day and opened on the high South-western star. Daughters of the wind, but shifty daughters of this wind of the dropping sun, they have to be watched to be loved in their transformations.

Diana had Arthur Rhodes and her faithful Leander for walking companions. If Arthur said: 'Such a day would be considered melancholy by London people,' she thanked him in her heart, as a benefactor who had revealed to her things of the deepest. The simplest were her food. Thus does Nature restore us, by drugging the brain and making her creature confidingly animal for its new growth. She imagined herself to have lost the power to think; certainly she had not the striving or the wish. Exercise of her limbs to reach a point of prospect, and of her ears and eyes to note what bird had piped, what

flower was out on the banks, and the leaf of what tree it was that lay beneath the budding, satiated her daily desires. She gathered unknowingly a sheaf of

Page 21

landscapes, images, keys of dreamed horizons, that opened a world to her at any chance breath altering shape or hue: a different world from the one of her old ambition. Her fall had brought her renovatingly to earth, and the saving naturalness of the woman recreated her childlike, with shrouded recollections of her strange taste of life behind her; with a tempered fresh blood to enjoy aimlessly, and what would erewhile have been a barrenness to her sensibilities.

In time the craving was evolved for positive knowledge, and shells and stones and weeds were deposited on the library-table at Copsley, botanical and geological books comparingly examined, Emma Dunstane always eager to assist; for the samples wafted her into the heart of the woods. Poor Sir Lukin tried three days of their society, and was driven away headlong to Club-life. He sent down Redworth, with whom the walks of the zealous inquirers were profitable, though Diana, in acknowledging it to herself, reserved a decided preference for her foregone ethereal mood, larger, and untroubled by the presence of a man. The suspicion Emma had sown was not excited to an alarming activity; but she began to question: could the best of men be simply—a woman's friend?—was not long service rather less than a proof of friendship? She could be blind when her heart was on fire for another. Her passion for her liberty, however, received no ominous warning to look to the defences. He was the same blunt speaker, and knotted his brows as queerly as ever at Arthur, in a transparent calculation of how this fellow meant to gain his livelihood. She wilfully put it to the credit of Arthur's tact that his elder was amiable, without denying her debt to the good man for leaving her illness and her appearance unmentioned. He forbore even to scan her features. Diana's wan contemplativeness, in which the sparkle of meaning slowly rose to flash, as we see a bubble rising from the deeps of crystal waters, caught at his heart while he talked his matter-of-fact. But her instinct of a present safety was true. She and Arthur discovered—and it set her first meditating whether she did know the man so very accurately—that he had printed, for private circulation, when at Harrow School, a little book, a record of his observations in nature. Lady Dunstane was the casual betrayer. He shrugged at the nonsense of a boy's publishing; anybody's publishing he held for a doubtful proof of sanity. His excuse was, that he had not published opinions. Let us observe, and assist in our small sphere; not come mouthing to the footlights!

'We retire,' Diana said, for herself and Arthur.

'The wise thing, is to avoid the position that enforces publishing,' said he, to the discomposure of his raw junior.

Page 22

In the fields he was genially helpful; commending them to the study of the South-west wind, if they wanted to forecast the weather and understand the climate of our country. 'We have no Seasons, or only a shuffle of them. Old calendars give seven months of the year to the Southwest, and that's about the average. Count on it, you may generally reckon what to expect. When you don't have the excess for a year or two, you are drenched the year following.' He knew every bird by its flight and its pipe, habits, tricks, hints of sagacity homely with the original human; and his remarks on the sensitive life of trees and herbs were a spell to his thirsty hearers. Something of astronomy he knew; but in relation to that science, he sank his voice, touchingly to Diana, who felt drawn to kinship with him when he had a pupil's tone. An allusion by Arthur to the poetical work of Aratus, led to a memorably pleasant evening's discourse upon the long reading of the stars by these our mortal eyes. Altogether the mind of the practical man became distinguishable to them as that of a plain brother of the poetic. Diana said of him to Arthur: 'He does not supply me with similes; he points to the source of them.' Arthur, with envy of the man of positive knowledge, disguised an unstrung heart in agreeing.

Redworth alluded passingly to the condition of public affairs. Neither of them replied. Diana was wondering how one who perused the eternal of nature should lend a thought to the dusty temporary of the world. Subsequently she reflected that she was asking him to confine his great male appetite to the nibble of bread which nourished her immediate sense of life. Her reflections were thin as mist, coming and going like the mist, with no direction upon her brain, if they sprang from it. When he had gone, welcome though Arthur had seen him to be, she rebounded to a broader and cheerfuller liveliness. Arthur was flattered by an idea of her casting off incubus—a most worthy gentleman, and a not perfectly sympathetic associate. Her eyes had their lost light in them, her step was brisker; she challenged him to former games of conversation, excursions in blank verse here and there, as the mood dictated. They amused themselves, and Emma too. She revelled in seeing Tony's younger face and hearing some of her natural outbursts. That Dacier never could have been the man for her, would have compressed and subjected her, and inflicted a further taste of bondage in marriage, she was assured. She hoped for the day when Tony would know it, and haply that another, whom she little comprehended, was her rightful mate.

Page 23

March continued South-westerly and grew rainier, as Redworth had foretold, bidding them look for gales and storm, and then the change of wind. It came, after wettings of a couple scorning the refuge of dainty townsfolk under umbrellas, and proud of their likeness to dripping wayside wildflowers. Arthur stayed at Copsley for a week of the crisp North-easter; and what was it, when he had taken his leave, that brought Tony home from her solitary walk in dejection? It could not be her seriously regretting the absence of the youthful companion she had parted with gaily, appointing a time for another meeting on the heights, and recommending him to repair idle hours with strenuous work. The fit passed and was not explained. The winds are sharp with memory. The hard shrill wind crowed to her senses of an hour on the bleak sands of the French coast; the beginning of the curtailed misery, inscribed as her happiness. She was next day prepared for her term in London with Emma, who promised her to make an expedition at the end of it by way of holiday, to see The Crossways, which Mr. Redworth said was not tenanted.

‘You won’t go through it like a captive?’ said Emma.

‘I don’t like it, dear,’ Diana put up a comic mouth. ‘The debts we owe ourselves are the hardest to pay. That is the discovery of advancing age: and I used to imagine it was quite the other way. But they are the debts of honour, imperative. I shall go through it grandly, you will see. If I am stopped at my first recreancy and turned directly the contrary way, I think I have courage.’

‘You will not fear to meet . . . any one?’ said Emma.

‘The world and all it contains! I am robust, eager for the fray, an Amazon, a brazen-faced hussy. Fear and I have parted. I shall not do you discredit. Besides you intend to have me back here with you? And besides again, I burn to make a last brave appearance. I have not outraged the world, dear Emmy, whatever certain creatures in it may fancy.’

She had come out of her dejectedness with a shrewder view of Dacier; equally painful, for it killed her romance, and changed the garden of their companionship in imagination to a waste. Her clearing intellect prompted it, whilst her nature protested, and reviled her to uplift him. He had loved her. ‘I shall die knowing that a man did love me once,’ she said to her widowed heart, and set herself blushing and blanching. But the thought grew inveterate: ‘He could not bear much.’ And in her quick brain it shot up a crop of similitudes for the quality of that man’s love. She shuddered, as at a swift cleaving of cold steel. He had not given her a chance; he had not replied to her letter written with the pen dipped in her heart’s blood; he must have gone straight away to the woman he married. This after almost justifying the scandalous world:—after . . . She realized her sensations of that night when the house-door

Page 24

had closed on him; her feeling of lost sovereignty, degradation, feminine danger, friendliness: and she was unaware, and never knew, nor did the world ever know, what cunning had inspired the frosty Cupid to return to her and be warmed by striking a bargain for his weighty secret. She knew too well that she was not of the snows which do not melt, however high her conceit of herself might place her. Happily she now stood out of the sun, in a bracing temperature, Polar; and her compassion for women was deeply sisterly in tenderness and understanding. She spoke of it to Emma as her gain.

'I have not seen that you required to suffer to be considerate,' Emma said.

'It is on my conscience that I neglected Mary Paynham, among others—and because you did not take to her, Emmy.'

'The reading of it appears to me, that she has neglected you.'

'She was not in my confidence, and so I construe it as delicacy. One never loses by believing the best.'

'If one is not duped.'

'Expectations dupe us, not trust. The light of every soul burns upward. Of course, most of them are candles in the wind. Let us allow for atmospheric disturbance. Now I thank you, dear, for bringing me back to life. I see that I was really a selfish suicide, because I feel I have power to do some good, and belong to the army. When we are beginning to reflect, as I do now, on a recovered basis of pure health, we have the world at the dawn and know we are young in it, with great riches, great things gained and greater to achieve. Personally I behold a queer little wriggling worm for myself; but as one, of the active world I stand high and shapely; and the very thought of doing work, is like a draught of the desert-springs to me. Instead of which, I have once more to go about presenting my face to vindicate my character. Mr. Redworth would admit no irony in that! At all events, it is anti-climax.'

'I forgot to tell you, Tony, you have been proposed for,' said Emma; and there was a rush of savage colour over Tony's cheeks.

Her apparent apprehensions were relieved by hearing the name of Mr. Sullivan Smith.

'My poor dear countryman! And he thought me worthy, did he? Some day, when we are past his repeating it, I'll thank him.'

The fact of her smiling happily at the narration of Sullivan Smith's absurd proposal by mediatrix, proved to Emma how much her nature thirsted for the smallest support in her self-esteem.

The second campaign of London was of bad augury at the commencement, owing to the ridiculous intervention of a street-organ, that ground its pipes in a sprawling roar of one of the Puritani marches, just as the carriage was landing them at the door of her house. The notes were harsh, dissonant, drunken, interlocked and horribly torn asunder, intolerable to ears not keen to extract the tune through dreadful memories. Diana sat startled and paralyzed. The melody

Page 25

crashed a revival of her days with Dacier, as in gibes; and yet it reached to her heart. She imagined a Providence that was trying her on the threshold, striking at her feebleness. She had to lock herself in her room for an hour of deadly abandonment to misery, resembling the run of poison through her blood, before she could bear to lift eyes on her friend; to whom subsequently she said: 'Emmy, there are wounds that cut sharp as the enchanter's sword, and we don't know we are in halves till some rough old intimate claps us on the back, merely to ask us how we are! I have to join myself together again, as well as I can. It's done, dear; but don't notice the cement.'

'You will be brave,' Emma petitioned.

'I long to show you I will.'

The meeting with those who could guess a portion of her story, did not disconcert her. To Lady Pennon and Lady Singleby, she was the brilliant Diana of her nominal luminary issuing from cloud. Face and tongue, she was the same; and once in the stream, she soon gathered its current topics and scattered her arrowy phrases. Lady Pennon ran about with them, declaring that the beautiful speaker, if ever down, was up, and up to her finest mark. Mrs. Fryar-Gannett had then become the blazing regnant antisocial star; a distresser of domesticity, the magnetic attraction in the spirituous flames of that wild snapdragon bowl, called the Upper class; and she was angelically blonde, a straw-coloured Beauty. 'A lovely wheat sheaf, if the head were ripe,' Diana said of her.

'Threshed, says her fame, my dear,' Lady Pennon replied, otherwise allusive.

'A wheatsheaf of contention for the bread of wind,' said Diana, thinking of foolish Sir Lukin; thoughtless of talking to a gossip.

She would have shot a lighter dart, had she meant it to fly and fix.

Proclaim, ye classics, what minor Goddess, or primal, Iris or Ate, sped straight away on wing to the empty wheatsheaf-ears of the golden-visaged Amabel Fryar-Gunnett, daughter of Demeter in the field to behold, of Aphrodite in her rosy incendiarism for the many of men; filling that pearly concave with a perversion of the uttered speech, such as never lady could have repeated, nor man, if less than a reaping harvester: which verily for women to hear, is to stamp a substantial damnatory verification upon the delivery of the saying:—

'Mrs. Warwick says of you, that you're a bundle of straws for everybody and bread for nobody.'

Or, stranger speculation, through what, and what number of conduits, curious, and variously colouring, did it reach the fair Amabel of the infant-in-cradle smile, in that

deformation of the original utterance! To pursue the thing, would be to enter the subter-sensual perfumed caverns of a Romance of Fashionable Life, with no hope of coming back to light, other than by tail of lynx, like the great Arabian seaman, at the last page of the final chapter. A prospectively

Page 26

popular narrative indeed! and coin to reward it, and applause. But I am reminded that a story properly closed on the marriage of the heroine Constance and her young Minister of State, has no time for conjuring chemists' bouquet of aristocracy to lure the native taste. When we have satisfied English sentiment, our task is done, in every branch of art, I hear: and it will account to posterity for the condition of the branches. Those yet wakeful eccentrics interested in such a person as Diana, to the extent of remaining attentive till the curtain falls, demand of me to gather-up the threads concerning her: which my gardener sweeping his pile of dead leaves before the storm and night, advises me to do speedily. But it happens that her resemblance to her sex and species of a civilized period plants the main threads in her bosom. Rogues and a policeman, or a hurried change of front of all the actors, are not a part of our slow machinery.

Nor is she to show herself to advantage. Only those who read her woman's blood and character with the head, will care for Diana of the Crossways now that the knot of her history has been unravelled. Some little love they must have for her likewise: and how it can be quickened on behalf of a woman who never sentimentalizes publicly, and has no dolly-dolly compliance, and muses on actual life, and fatigues with the exercise of brains, and is in sooth an alien: a princess of her kind and time, but a foreign one, speaking a language distinct from the mercantile, trafficking in ideas:—this is the problem. For to be true to her, one cannot attempt at propitiation. She said worse things of the world than that which was conveyed to the boxed ears of Mrs. Fryar-Gunnett. Accepting the war declared against her a second time, she performed the common mental trick in adversity of setting her personally known innocence to lessen her generally unknown error—but anticipating that this might become known, and the other not; and feeling that the motives of the acknowledged error had served to guard her from being the culprit of the charge she writhed under, she rushed out of a meditation compounded of mind and nerves, with derision of the world's notion of innocence and estimate of error. It was a mood lasting through her stay in London, and longer, to the discomfort of one among her friends; and it was worthy of The Anti-climax Expedition, as she called it.

For the rest, her demeanour to the old monster world exacting the servility of her, in repayment for its tolerating countenance, was faultless. Emma beheld the introduction to Mrs. Warwick of his bride, by Mr. Percy Dacier. She had watched their approach up the Ball-room, thinking, how differently would Redworth and Tony have looked. Differently, had it been Tony and Dacier: but Emma could not persuade herself of a possible harmony between them, save at the cost of Tony's expiation of the sin of the greater heart in a performance equivalent to Suttee.

Page 27

Perfectly an English gentleman of the higher order, he seemed the effigy of a tombstone one, fixed upright, and civilly proud of his effigy bride. So far, Emma considered them fitted. She perceived his quick eye on her corner of the room; necessarily, for a man of his breeding, without a change of expression. An emblem pertaining to her creed was on the heroine's neck; also dependant at her waist. She was white from head to foot; a symbol of purity. Her frail smile appeared deeply studied in purity. Judging from her look and her reputation, Emma divined that the man was justly mated with a devious filmy sentimentalist, likely to 'fiddle harmonics on the sensual strings' for him at a mad rate in the years to come. Such fiddling is indeed the peculiar diversion of the opulent of a fatly prosperous people; who take it, one may concede to them, for an inspired elimination of the higher notes of life: the very highest. That saying of Tony's ripened with full significance to Emma now. Not sensualism, but sham spiritualism, was the meaning; and however fine the notes, they come skilfully evoked of the under-brute in us. Reasoning it so, she thought it a saying for the penetration of the most polished and deceptive of the later human masks. She had besides, be it owned, a triumph in conjuring a sentence of her friend's, like a sword's edge, to meet them; for she was boiling angrily at the ironical destiny which had given to those Two a beclouding of her beloved, whom she could have rebuked in turn for her insane caprice of passion.

But when her beloved stood-up to greet Mrs. Percy Dacier, all idea save tremulous admiration of the valiant woman, who had been wounded nigh to death, passed from Emma's mind. Diana tempered her queenliness to address the favoured lady with smiles and phrases of gentle warmth, of goodness of nature; and it became a halo rather than a personal eclipse that she cast.

Emma looked at Dacier. He wore the prescribed conventional air, subject in half a minute to a rapid blinking of the eyelids. His wife could have been inimically imagined fascinated and dwindling. A spot of colour came to her cheeks. She likewise began to blink.

The happy couple bowed, proceeding; and Emma had Dacier's back for a study. We score on that flat slate of man, unattractive as it is to hostile observations, and unprotected, the device we choose. Her harshest, was the positive thought that he had taken the woman best suited to him. Doubtless, he was a man to prize the altar-candle above the lamp of day. She fancied the back-view of him shrunken and straitened: perhaps a mere hostile fancy: though it was conceivable that he should desire as little of these meetings as possible. Eclipses are not courted.

Page 28

The specially womanly exultation of Emma Dunstane in her friend's noble attitude, seeing how their sex had been struck to the dust for a trifling error, easily to be overlooked by a manful lover, and had asserted its dignity in physical and moral splendour, in self-mastery and benignness, was unshared by Diana. As soon as the business of the expedition was over, her orders were issued for the sale of the lease of her house and all it contained. 'I would sell Danvers too,' she said, 'but the creature declines to be treated as merchandize. It seems I have a faithful servant; very much like my life, not quite to my taste; the one thing out of the wreck!—with my dog!'

Before quitting her house for the return to Copsley, she had to grant Mr. Alexander Hepburn, post-haste from his Caledonia, a private interview. She came out of it noticeably shattered. Nothing was related to Emma, beyond the remark: 'I never knew till this morning the force of No in earnest.' The weighty little word—woman's native watchdog and guardian, if she calls it to her aid in earnest—had encountered and withstood a fiery ancient host, astonished at its novel power of resistance.

Emma contented herself with the result. 'Were you much supplicated?'

'An Operatic Fourth-Act,' said Diana, by no means; feeling so flippantly as she spoke.

She received, while under the impression of this man's, honest, if primitive, ardour of courtship, or effort to capture, a characteristic letter from Westlake, choicely phrased, containing presumeably an application for her hand, in the generous offer of his own. Her reply to a pursuer of that sort was easy. Comedy, after the barbaric attack, refreshed her wits and reliance on her natural fencing weapons. To Westlake, the unwritten No was conveyed in a series of kindly ironic subterfuges, that, played it like an impish flea across the pages, just giving the bloom of the word; and rich smiles come to Emma's life in reading the dexterous composition: which, however, proved so thoroughly to Westlake's taste, that a second and a third exercise in the comedy of the negative had to be despatched to him from Copsley.

CHAPTER XL

In which we see nature making of A woman A maid again, and A thrice whimsical

On their way from London, after leaving the station, the drive through the valley led them past a field, where cricketers were at work bowling and batting under a vertical sun: not a very comprehensible sight to ladies, whose practical tendencies, as observers of the other sex, incline them to question the gain of such an expenditure of energy. The dispersal of the alphabet over a printed page is not less perplexing to the illiterate. As soon as Emma Dunstane discovered the Copsley head-gamekeeper at one wicket, and, actually,

Page 29

Thomas Redworth facing him, bat in hand, she sat up, greatly interested. Sir Lukin stopped the carriage at the gate, and reminded his wife that it was the day of the year for the men of his estate to encounter a valley Eleven. Redworth, like the good fellow he was, had come down by appointment in the morning out of London, to fill the number required, Copsley being weak this year. Eight of their wickets had fallen for a lamentable figure of twenty-nine runs; himself clean-bowled the first ball. But Tom Redworth had got fast hold of his wicket, and already scored fifty to his bat. 'There! grand hit!' Sir Lukin cried, the ball flying hard at the rails. 'Once a cricketer, always a cricketer, if you've legs to fetch the runs. And Pullen's not doing badly. His business is to stick. We shall mark them a hundred yet. I do hate a score on our side without the two 00's.' He accounted for Redworth's mixed colours by telling the ladies he had lent him his flannel jacket; which, against black trousers, looked odd but not ill.

Gradually the enthusiasm of the booth and bystanders converted the flying of a leather ball into a subject of honourable excitement.

'And why are you doing nothing?' Sir Lukin was asked; and he explained:

'My stumps are down: I'm married.' He took his wife's hand prettily.

Diana had a malicious prompting. She smothered the wasp, and said: 'Oh! look at that!'

'Grand hit again! Oh! good! good!' cried Sir Lukin, clapping to it, while the long-hit-off ran spinning his legs into one for an impossible catch; and the batsmen were running and stretching bats, and the ball flying away, flying back, and others after it, and still the batsmen running, till it seemed that the ball had escaped control and was leading the fielders on a coltish innings of its own, defiant of bowlers.

Diana said merrily: 'Bravo our side!'

'Bravo, old Tom Redworth'; rejoined Sir Lukin. 'Four, and a three! And capital weather, haven't we: Hope we shall have same sort day next month—return match, my ground. I've seen Tom Redworth score—old days—over two hundred t' his bat. And he used to bowl too. But bowling wants practice. And, Emmy, look at the old fellows lining the booth, pipe in mouth and cheering. They do enjoy a day like this. We'll have a supper for fifty at Copsley's—it's fun. By Jove! we must have reached up to near the hundred.'

He commissioned a neighbouring boy to hie to the booth for the latest figures, and his emissary taught lightning a lesson.

Diana praised the little fellow.

‘Yes, he’s a real English boy,’ said Emma.

‘We ’ve thousands of ’em, thousands, ready to your hand,’ exclaimed Sir Lukin, ‘and a confounded Radicalized country . . .’ he murmured gloomily of ‘lets us be kicked! . . . any amount of insult, meek as gruel! . . . making of the finest army the world has ever seen! You saw the papers this morning? Good heaven! how a nation with an atom of self-respect can go on standing that sort of bullying from foreigners! We do. We’re insulted and we’re threatened, and we call for a hymn!— Now then, my man, what is it?’

Page 30

The boy had flown back. 'Ninety-two marked, sir; ninety-nine runs; one more for the hundred.'

'Well reckoned; and mind you're up at Copsley for the return match.— And Tom Redworth says, they may bite their thumbs to the bone—they don't hurt us. I tell him, he has no sense of national pride. He says, we're not prepared for war: We never are! And whose the fault? Says, we're a peaceful people, but 'ware who touches us! He doesn't feel a kick.—Oh! clever snick! Hurrah for the hundred!—Two-three. No, don't force the running, you fools!—though they 're wild with the ball: ha!—no?—all right!' The wicket stood. Hurrah!

The heat of the noonday sun compelled the ladies to drive on.

'Enthusiasm has the privilege of not knowing monotony,' said Emma. 'He looks well in flannels.'

'Yes, he does,' Diana replied, aware of the reddening despite her having spoken so simply. 'I think the chief advantage men have over us is in their amusements.'

'Their recreations.'

'That is the better word.' Diana fanned her cheeks and said she was warm. 'I mean, the permanent advantage. For you see that age does not affect them.'

'Tom Redworth is not a patriarch, my dear.'

'Well, he is what would be called mature.'

'He can't be more than thirty-two or three; and that, for a man of his constitution, means youth.'

'Well, I can imagine him a patriarch playing cricket.'

'I should imagine you imagine the possible chances. He is the father who would play with his boys.'

'And lock up his girls in the nursery.' Diana murmured of the extraordinary heat.

Emma begged her to remember her heterodox views of the education for girls.

'He bats admirably,' said Diana. 'I wish I could bat half as well.'

'Your batting is with the tongue.'

'Not so good. And a solid bat, or bludgeon, to defend the poor stumps, is surer. But there is the difference of cricket:—when your stumps are down, you are idle, at leisure; not a miserable prisoner.'

'Supposing all marriages miserable.'

'To the mind of me,' said Diana, and observed Emma's rather saddened eyelids for a proof that schemes to rob her of dear liberty were certainly planned.

They conversed of expeditions to Redworth's Berkshire mansion, and to The Crossways, untenanted at the moment, as he had informed Emma, who fancied it would please Tony to pass a night in the house she loved; but as he was to be of the party she coldly acquiesced.

Page 31

The woman of flesh refuses pliancy when we want it of her, and will not, until it is her good pleasure, be bent to the development called a climax, as the puppet-woman, mother of Fiction and darling of the multitude! ever amiably does, at a hint of the Nuptial Chapter. Diana in addition sustained the weight of brains. Neither with waxen optics nor with subservient jointings did she go through her pathways of the world. Her direct individuality rejected the performance of simpleton, and her lively blood, the warmer for its containment quickened her to penetrate things and natures; and if as yet, in justness to the loyal male friend, she forbore to name him conspirator, she read both him and Emma, whose inner bosom was revealed to her, without an effort to see. But her characteristic chasteness of mind, not coldness of the 'blood,—which had supported an arduous conflict, past all existing rights closely to depict, and which barbed her to pierce to the wishes threatening her freedom, deceived her now to think her flaming blushes came of her relentless divination on behalf of her recovered treasure: whereby the clear reading of others distracted the view of herself. For one may be the cleverest alive, and still hoodwinked while blood is young and warm.

The perpetuity of the contrast presented to her reflections, of Redworth's healthy, open, practical, cheering life, and her own freakishly interwinding, darkly penetrative, simulacrum of a life, cheerless as well as useless, forced her humiliated consciousness by degrees, in spite of pride, to the knowledge that she was engaged in a struggle with him; and that he was the stronger;—it might be, the worthier: she thought him the handsomer. He throve to the light of day, and she spun a silly web that meshed her in her intricacies. Her intuition of Emma's wishes led to this; he was constantly before her. She tried to laugh at the image of the concrete cricketer, half-flannelled, and red of face: the 'lucky calculator,' as she named him to Emma, who shook her head, and sighed. The abstract, healthful and powerful man, able to play besides profitably working, defied those poor efforts. Consequently, at once she sent up a bubble to the skies, where it became a spherical realm, of far too fine an atmosphere for men to breathe in it; and thither she transported herself at will, whenever the contrast, with its accompanying menace of a tyrannic subjugation, overshadowed her. In the above, the kingdom composed of her shattered romance of life and her present aspirings, she was free and safe. Nothing touched her there—nothing that Redworth did. She could not have admitted there her ideal of a hero. It was the sublimation of a virgin's conception of life, better fortified against the enemy. She peopled it with souls of the great and pure, gave it illimitable horizons, dreamy nooks, ravishing landscapes, melodies of the poets of music. Higher and more-celestial than the Salvatore, it was likewise, now she could assure herself serenely, independent of the horrid blood-emotions. Living up there, she had not a feeling.

Page 32

The natural result of this habit of ascending to a superlunary home, was the loss of an exact sense of how she was behaving below. At the Berkshire mansion, she wore a supercilious air, almost as icy as she accused the place of being. Emma knew she must have seen in the library a row of her literary ventures, exquisitely bound; but there was no allusion to the books. Mary Paynham's portrait of Mrs. Warwick hung staring over the fireplace, and was criticized, as though its occupancy of that position had no significance.

'He thinks she has a streak of genius,' Diana said to Emma.

'It may be shown in time,' Emma replied, for a comment on the work. 'He should know, for the Spanish pictures are noble acquisitions.'

'They are, doubtless, good investments.'

He had been foolish enough to say, in Diana's hearing, that he considered the purchase of the Berkshire estate a good investment. It had not yet a name. She suggested various titles for Emma to propose: 'The Funds'; or 'Capital Towers'; or 'Dividend Manor'; or 'Railholm'; blind to the evidence of inflicting pain. Emma, from what she had guess concerning the purchaser of The Crossways, apprehended a discovery there which might make Tony's treatment of him unkind, seeing that she appeared actuated contrariwise; and only her invalid's new happiness in the small excursions she was capable of taking to a definite spot, of some homely attractiveness, moved her to follow her own proposal for the journey. Diana pleaded urgently, childish in tone, to have Arthur Rhodes with them, 'so as to be sure of a sympathetic companion for a walk on the Downs.' At The Crossways, they were soon aware that Mr. Redworth's domestics were in attendance to serve them. Manifestly the house was his property, and not much of an investment! The principal bed-room, her father's once, and her own, devoted now to Emma's use, appalled her with a resemblance to her London room. She had noticed some of her furniture at 'Dividend Manor,' and chosen to consider it in the light of a bargain from a purchase at the sale of her goods. Here was her bed, her writing-table, her chair of authorship, desks, books, ornaments, water-colour sketches. And the drawing-room was fitted with her brackets and etageres, holding every knickknack she had possessed and scattered, small bronzes, antiques, ivory junks, quaint ivory figures Chinese and Japanese, bits of porcelain, silver incense-urns, dozens of dainty sundries. She had a shamed curiosity to spy for an omission of one of them; all were there. The Crossways had been turned into a trap.

Her reply to this blunt wooing, conspired, she felt justified in thinking, between him and Emma, was emphatic in muteness. She treated it as if unobserved. At night, in bed, the scene of his mission from Emma to her under this roof, barred her customary ascent to her planetary kingdom. Next day she took Arthur after breakfast for a walk on the Downs and remained absent till ten minutes before the hour of dinner. As to that young gentleman, he was near to being caressed in public. Arthur's opinions, his good

sayings, were quoted; his excellent companionship on really poetical walks, and perfect sympathy, praised to his face. Challenged by her initiative to a kind of language that threw Redworth out, he declaimed: 'We pace with some who make young morning stale.'

Page 33

'Oh! stale as peel of fruit long since consumed,' she chimed.

And go they proceeded; and they laughed, Emma smiled a little, Redworth did the same beneath one of his questioning frowns—a sort of fatherly grimace.

A suspicion that this man, when infatuated, was able to practise the absurdest benevolence, the burlesque of chivalry, as a man-admiring sex esteems it, stirred very naughty depths of the woman in Diana, labouring under her perverted mood. She put him to proof, for the chance of arming her wickedest to despise him. Arthur was petted, consulted, cited, flattered all round; all but caressed. She played, with a reserve, the maturish young woman smitten by an adorable youth; and enjoyed doing it because she hoped for a visible effect—more paternal benevolence—and could do it so dispassionately. Coquetry, Emma thought, was most unworthily shown; and it was of the worst description. Innocent of conspiracy, she had seen the array of Tony's lost household treasures she wondered at a heartlessness that would not even utter common thanks to the friendly man for the compliment of prizing her portrait and the things she had owned; and there seemed an effort to wound him.

The invalided woman, charitable with allowances for her erratic husband, could offer none for the woman of a long widowhood, that had become a trebly sensitive maidenhood; abashed by her knowledge of the world, animated by her abounding blood; cherishing her new freedom, dreading the menacer; feeling that though she held the citadel, she was daily less sure of its foundations, and that her hope of some last romance in life was going; for in him shone not a glimpse. He appeared to Diana as a fatal power, attracting her without sympathy, benevolently overcoming: one of those good men, strong men, who subdue and do not kindle. The enthrallment revolted a nature capable of accepting subjection only by burning. In return for his moral excellence, she gave him the moral sentiments: esteem, gratitude, abstract admiration, perfect faith. But the man? She could not now say she had never been loved; and a flood of tenderness rose in her bosom, swelling from springs that she had previously repressed with a desperate severity: the unhappy, unsatisfied yearning to be more than loved, to love. It was alive, out of the wreck of its first trial. This, the secret of her natural frailty, was bitter to her pride: chastely-minded as she was, it whelmed her. And then her comic imagination pictured Redworth dramatically making love. And to a widow! It proved him to be senseless of romance. Poetic men take aim at maidens. His devotedness to a widow was charged against him by the widow's shudder at antecedents distasteful to her soul, a discolouration of her life. She wished to look entirely forward, as upon a world washed clear of night, not to be cast back on her antecedents by practical wooings or words of love; to live spiritually; free of the shower at her eyelids attendant on any idea of her loving. The woman who talked of the sentimentalist's 'fiddling harmonics,' herself stressed the material chords, in her attempt to escape out of herself and away from her pursuer.

Page 34

Meanwhile she was as little conscious of what she was doing as of how she appeared. Arthur went about with the moony air of surcharged sweetness, and a speculation on it, alternately tiptoe and prostrate. More of her intoxicating wine was administered to him, in utter thoughtlessness of consequences to one who was but a boy and a friend, almost of her own rearing. She told Emma, when leaving The Crossways, that she had no desire to look on the place again: she wondered at Mr. Redworth's liking such a solitude. In truth, the look back on it let her perceive that her husband haunted it, and disfigured the man, of real generosity, as her heart confessed, but whom she accused of a lack of prescient delicacy, for not knowing she would and must be haunted there. Blaming him, her fountain of colour shot up, at a murmur of her unjustness and the poor man's hopes.

A week later, the youth she publicly named 'her Arthur' came down to Copsley with news of his having been recommended by Mr. Redworth for the post of secretary to an old Whig nobleman famous for his patronage of men of letters. And besides, he expected to inherit, he said, and gazed in a way to sharpen her instincts. The wine he had drunk of late from her flowing vintage was in his eyes. They were on their usual rambles out along the heights. 'Accept, by all means, and thank Mr. Redworth,' said she, speeding her tongue to intercept him. 'Literature is a good stick and a bad horse. Indeed, I ought to know. You can always write; I hope you will.'

She stepped fast, hearing: 'Mrs. Warwick—Diana! May I take your hand?'

This was her pretty piece of work! 'Why should you? If you speak my Christian name, no: you forfeit any pretext. And pray, don't loiter. We are going at the pace of the firm of Potter and Dawdle, and you know they never got their shutters down till it was time to put them up again.'

Nimble-footed as she was, she pressed ahead too fleetly for amorous eloquence to have a chance. She heard 'Diana!' twice, through the rattling of her discourse and flapping of her dress.

'Christian names are coin that seem to have an indifferent valuation of the property they claim,' she said in the Copsley garden; 'and as for hands, at meeting and parting, here is the friendliest you could have. Only don't look rueful. My dear Arthur, spare me that, or I shall blame myself horribly.'

His chance had gone, and he composed his face. No hope in speaking had nerved him; merely the passion to speak. Diana understood the state, and pitied the naturally modest young fellow, and chafed at herself as a senseless incendiary, who did mischief right and left, from seeking to shun the apparently inevitable. A sidethought intruded, that he would have done his wooing poetically—not in the burly storm, or bull-Saxon, she apprehended. Supposing it imperative with her to choose? She looked up, and the bird of broader wing darkened the whole sky, bidding her know that she had no choice.

Page 35

Emma was requested to make Mr. Redworth acquainted with her story, all of it:—'So that this exalted friendship of his may be shaken to a common level. He has an unbearably high estimate of me, and it hurts me. Tell him all; and more than even you have known:—but for his coming to me, on the eve of your passing under the surgeon's hands, I should have gone —flung the world my glove! A matter of minutes. Ten minutes later! The train was to start for France at eight, and I was awaited. I have to thank heaven that the man was one of those who can strike icily. Tell Mr. Redworth what I say. You two converse upon every subject. One may be too loftily respected—in my case. By and by—for he is a tolerant reader of life and women, I think—we shall be humdrum friends of the lasting order.'

Emma's cheeks were as red as Diana's. 'I fancy Tom Redworth has not much to learn concerning any person he cares for,' she said. 'You like him? I have lost touch of you, my dear, and ask.'

'I like him: that I can say. He is everything I am not. But now I am free, the sense of being undeservedly over-esteemed imposes fetters, and I don't like them. I have been called a Beauty. Rightly or other, I have had a Beauty's career; and a curious caged beast's life I have found it. Will you promise me to speak to him? And also, thank him for helping Arthur Rhodes to a situation.'

At this, the tears fell from her. And so enigmatical had she grown to Emma, that her bosom friend took them for a confessed attachment to the youth.

Diana's wretched emotion shamed her from putting any inquiries whether Redworth had been told. He came repeatedly, and showed no change of face, always continuing in the form of huge hovering griffin; until an idea, instead of the monster bird, struck her. Might she not, after all, be cowering under imagination? The very maidenly idea awakened her womanliness—to reproach her remainder of pride, not to see more accurately. It was the reason why she resolved, against Emma's extreme entreaties, to take lodgings in the South valley below the heights, where she could be independent of fancies and perpetual visitors, but near her beloved at any summons of urgency; which Emma would not habitually send because of the coming of a particular gentleman. Dresses were left at Copsley for dining and sleeping there upon occasion, and poor Danvers, despairing over the riddle of her mistress, was condemned to the melancholy descent.

'It's my belief,' she confided to Lady Dunstane's maid Bartlett, 'she'll hate men all her life after that Mr. Dacier.'

If women were deceived, and the riddle deceived herself, there is excuse for a plain man like Redworth in not having the slightest clue to the daily shifting feminine maze he beheld. The strange thing was, that during her maiden time she had never been shiftily or flighty, invariably limpid and direct.

Page 36

CHAPTER XLI

CONTAINS A REVELATION OF THE ORIGIN OF THE TIGRESS IN DIANA

An afternoon of high summer blazed over London through the City's awning of smoke, and the three classes of the population, relaxed by the weariful engagement with what to them was a fruitless heat, were severally bathing their ideas in dreams of the contrast possible to embrace: breezy seas or moors, aerial Alps, cool beer. The latter, if confessedly the lower comfort, is the readier at command; and Thomas Redworth, whose perspiring frame was directing his inward vision to fly for solace to a trim new yacht, built on his lines, beckoning from Southampton Water, had some of the amusement proper to things plucked off the levels, in the conversation of a couple of journeymen close ahead of him, as he made his way from a quiet street of brokers' offices to a City Bank. One asked the other if he had ever tried any of that cold stuff they were now selling out of barrows, with cream. His companion answered, that he had not got much opinion of stuff of the sort; and what was it like?

'Well, it's cheap, it ain't bad; it's cooling. But it ain't refreshing.'

'Just what I reckoned all that newfangle rubbish.'

Without a consultation, the conservatives in beverage filed with a smart turn about, worthy of veterans at parade on the drill-ground, into a public-house; and a dialogue chiefly remarkable for absence of point, furnished matter to the politician's head of the hearer. Provided that their beer was unadulterated! Beer they would have; and why not, in weather like this? But how to make the publican honest! And he was not the only trickster preying on the multitudinous poor copper crowd, rightly to be protected by the silver and the golden. Revelations of the arts practised to plump them with raw-earth and minerals in the guise of nourishment, had recently knocked at the door of the general conscience and obtained a civil reply from the footman. Repulsive as the thought was to one still holding to Whiggish Liberalism, though flying various Radical kites, he was caught by the decisive ultratorrent, and whirled to amid the necessity for the interference of the State, to stop the poisoning of the poor. Upper classes have never legislated systematically in their interests; and quid . . . rabidae tradis ovile lupae? says one of the multitude. We may be seeing fangs of wolves where fleeces waxed. The State that makes it a vital principle to concern itself with the helpless poor, meets instead of waiting for Democracy; which is a perilous flood but when it is dammed. Or else, in course of time, luxurious yachting, my friend, will encounter other reefs and breakers than briny ocean's! Capital, whereat Diana Warwick aimed her superbest sneer, has its instant duties. She theorized on the side of poverty, and might do so: he had no right to be theorizing on the side of riches. Across St. George's Channel, the cry for humanity in Capital was an agony. He ought to be there, doing, not cogitating. The

post of Irish Secretary must be won by real service founded on absolute local knowledge. Yes, and sympathy, if you like; but sympathy is for proving, not prating

Page 37

These were the meditations of a man in love; veins, arteries, headpiece in love, and constantly brooding at a solitary height over the beautiful coveted object; only too bewildered by her multifarious evanescent feminine evasions, as of colours on a ruffle water, to think of pouncing for he could do nothing to soften, nothing that seemed to please her: and all the while, the motive of her mind impelled him in reflection beyond practicable limits: even pointing him to apt quotations! Either he thought within her thoughts, or his own were at her disposal. Nor was it sufficient for him to be sensible of her influence, to restrain the impetus he took from her. He had already wedded her morally, and much that he did, as well as whatever he debated, came of Diana; more than if they had been coupled, when his downright practical good sense could have spoken. She held him suspended, swaying him in that posture; and he was not a whit ashamed of it. The beloved woman was throned on the very highest of the man.

Furthermore, not being encouraged, he had his peculiar reason for delay, though now he could offer her wealth. She had once in his hearing derided the unpleasant hiss of the ungainly English matron's title of Mrs. There was no harm in the accustomed title, to his taste; but she disliking it, he did the same, on her special behalf; and the prospect, funereally draped, of a title sweeter-sounding to her ears, was above his horizon. Bear in mind, that he underwent the reverse of encouragement. Any small thing to please her was magnified, and the anticipation of it nerved the modest hopes of one who deemed himself and any man alive deeply her inferior.

Such was the mood of the lover condemned to hear another malignant scandal defiling the name of the woman he worshipped. Sir Lukin Dunstane, extremely hurried, bumped him on the lower step of the busy Bank, and said:

'Pardon!' and 'Ha! Redwarth! making money?'

'Why, what are you up to down here?' he was asked, and he answered: 'Down to the Tower, to an officer quartered there. Not bad quarters, but an infernal distance. Business.'

Having cloaked his expedition to the distance with the comprehensive word, he repeated it; by which he feared he had rendered it too significant, and he said: 'No, no; nothing particular'; and that caused the secret he contained to swell in his breast rebelliously, informing the candid creature of the fact of his hating to lie: whereupon thus he poured himself out, in the quieter bustle of an alley, off the main thoroughfare. 'You're a friend of hers. I'm sure you care for her reputation; you're an old friend of hers, and she's my wife's dearest friend; and I'm fond of her too; and I ought to be, and ought to know, and do know:—pure? Strike off my fist if there's a spot on her character! And a scoundrel like that fellow Wroxeter! Damnedest rage I ever was in!—Swears . . . down at Lockton . . . when she was a girl. Why, Redworth, I can tell you, when Diana Warwick was a girl!'

Page 38

Redworth stopped him. 'Did he say it in your presence?'

Sir Lukin was drawn-up by the harsh question. 'Well, no; not exactly.' He tried to hesitate, but he was in the hot vein of a confidence and he wanted advice. 'The cur said it to a woman—hang the woman! And she hates Diana Warwick: I can't tell why—a regular snake's hate. By Jove! how women carp hate!'

'Who is the woman?' said Redworth.

Sir Lukin complained of the mob at his elbows. 'I don't like mentioning names here.'

A convenient open door of offices invited him to drag his receptacle, and possible counsellor, into the passage, where immediately he bethought him of a postponement of the distinct communication; but the vein was too hot. 'I say, Redworth, I wish you'd dine with me. Let's drive up to my Club.—Very well, two words. And I warn you, I shall call him out, and make it appear it 's about another woman, who'll like nothing so much, if I know the Jezebel. Some women are hussies, let 'em be handsome as houris. And she's a fire-ship; by heaven, she is! Come, you're a friend of my wife's, but you're a man of the world and my friend, and you know how fellows are tempted, Tom Redworth.—Cur though he is, he's likely to step out and receive a lesson.—Well, he's the favoured cavalier for the present . . . h'm . . . Fryar-Gannett. Swears he told her, circumstantially; and it was down at Lockton, when Diana Warwick was a girl. Swears she'll spit her venom at her, so that Diana Warwick shan't hold her head up in London Society, what with that cur Wroxeter, Old Dannisburgh, and Dacier. And it does count a list, doesn't it? confound the handsome hag! She's jealous of a dark rival. I've been down to Colonel Hartswood at the Tower, and he thinks Wroxeter deserves horsewhipping, and we may manage it. I know you 're dead against duelling; and so am I, on my honour. But you see there are cases where a lady must be protected; and anything new, left to circulate against a lady who has been talked of twice—Oh, by Jove! it must be stopped. If she has a male friend on earth, it must be stopped on the spot.'

Redworth eyed Sir Lukin curiously through his wrath.

'We'll drive up to your Club,' he said.

'Hartswood dines with me this evening, to confer,' rejoined Sir Lukin. 'Will you meet him?'

'I can't,' said Redworth, 'I have to see a lady, whose affairs I have been attending to in the City; and I 'm engaged for the evening. You perceive, my good fellow,' he resumed, as they rolled along, 'this is a delicate business. You have to consider your wife. Mrs. Warwick's, name won't come up, but another woman's will.'



'I meet Wroxeter at a gambling-house he frequents, and publicly call him cheat—slap his face, if need be.'

'Sure to!' repeated Redworth. 'No stupid pretext will quash the woman's name. Now, such a thing as a duel would give pain enough.'

Page 39

'Of course; I understand,' Sir Lukin nodded his clear comprehension. 'But what is it you advise, to trounce the scoundrel, and silence him?'

'Leave it to me for a day. Let me have your word that you won't take a step: positively—neither you nor Colonel Hartswood. I'll see you by appointment at your Club.' Redworth looked up over the chimneys. 'We 're going to have a storm and a gale, I can tell you.'

'Gale and storm!' cried Sir Lukin; 'what has that got to do with it?'

'Think of something else for, a time.'

'And that brute of a woman—deuced handsome she is!—if you care for fair women, Redworth:—she's a Venus, jumped slap out of the waves, and the Devil for sire—that you learn: running about, sowing her lies. She's a yellow witch. Oh! but she's a shameless minx. And a black-leg cur like Wroxeter! Any woman intimate with a fellow like that, stamps herself. I loathe her. Sort of woman who swears in the morning you're the only man on earth; and next day—that evening-engaged!—fee to Polly Hopkins —and it's a gentleman, a nobleman, my lord!—been going on behind your back half the season!—and she isn't hissed when she abuses a lady, a saint in comparison! You know the world, old fellow:—Brighton, Richmond, visits to a friend as deep in the bog. How Fryar-Gunnett— a man, after all—can stand it! And drives of an afternoon for an airing-by heaven! You're out of that mess, Redworth: not much taste for the sex; and you're right, you're lucky. Upon my word, the corruption of society in the present day is awful; it's appalling.—I rattled at her: and oh! dear me, perks on her hind heels and defies me to prove: and she's no pretender, but hopes she's as good as any of my "chaste Dianas." My dear old friend, it's when you come upon women of that kind you have a sickener. And I'm bound by the best there is in a man-honour, gratitude, all the' list—to defend Diana Warwick.'

'So, you see, for your wife's sake, your name can't be hung on a woman of that kind,' said Redworth. 'I'll call here the day after to-morrow at three P.M.'

Sir Lukin descended and vainly pressed Redworth to run up into his Club for refreshment. Said he roguishly:

'Who 's the lady?'

The tone threw Redworth on his frankness.

'The lady I 've been doing business for in the City, is Miss Paynham.'

'I saw her once at Copsley; good-looking. Cleverish?'

'She has ability.'

Entering his Club, Sir Lukin was accosted in the reading-room by a cavalry officer, a Colonel Launay, an old Harrovian, who stood at the window and asked him whether it was not Tom Redworth in the cab. Another, of the same School, standing squared before a sheet of one of the evening newspapers, heard the name and joined them, saying: 'Tom Redworth is going to be married, some fellow told me.'

'He'll make a deuced good husband to any woman—if it's true,' said Sir Lukin, with Miss Paynham ringing in his head. 'He's a cold-blooded old boy, and likes women for their intellects.'

Page 40

Colonel Launay hummed in meditative emphasis. He stared at vacancy with a tranced eye, and turning a similar gaze on Sir Lukin, as if through him, burst out: 'Oh, by George, I say, what a hugging that woman 'll get!'

The cocking of ears and queries of Sir Lukin put him to the test of his right to the remark; for it sounded of occult acquaintance with interesting subterranean facts; and there was a communication, in brief syllables and the dot language, crudely masculine. Immensely surprised, Sir Lukin exclaimed: 'Of course! when fellows live quietly and are careful of themselves. Ah! you may think you know a man for years, and you don't: you don't know more than an inch or two of him. Why, of course, Tom Redworth would be uxorious—the very man! And tell us what has become of the Firefly now? One never sees her. Didn't complain?'

'Very much the contrary.'

Both gentlemen were grave, believing their knowledge in the subterranean world of a wealthy city to give them a positive cognizance of female humanity; and the substance of Colonel Launay's communication had its impressiveness for them.

'Well, it's a turn right-about-face for me,' said Sir Lukin. 'What a world we live in! I fancy I've hit on the woman he means to marry;—had an idea of another woman once; but he's one of your friendly fellows with women. That's how it was I took him for a fish. Great mistake, I admit. But Tom Redworth 's a man of morals after all; and when those men do break loose for a plunge—ha! Have you ever boxed with him? Well, he keeps himself in training, I can tell you.'

Sir Lukin's round of visits drew him at night to Lady Singleby's, where he sighted the identical young lady of his thoughts, Miss Paynham, temporarily a guest of the house; and he talked to her of Redworth, and had the satisfaction to spy a blush, a rageing blush: which avowal presented her to his view as an exceedingly good-looking girl; so that he began mentally to praise Redworth for a manly superiority to small trifles and the world's tattle.

'You saw him to-day,' he said.

She answered: 'Yes. He goes down to Copsley tomorrow.'

'I think not,' said Sir Lukin.'

'I have it from him.' She closed her eyelids in speaking.

'He and I have some rather serious business in town.'

'Serious?'

'Don't be alarmed: not concerning him.'

'Whom, then? You have told me so much—I have a right to know.'

'Not an atom of danger, I assure you?'

'It concerns Mrs. Warwick!' said she.

Sir Lukin thought the guess extraordinary. He preserved an impenetrable air. But he had spoken enough to set that giddy head spinning.

Nowhere during the night was Mrs. Fryar-Gannett visible. Earlier than usual, she was riding next day in the Row, alone for perhaps two minutes, and Sir Lukin passed her, formally saluting. He could not help the look behind him, she sat so bewitchingly on horseback! He looked, and behold, her riding-whip was raised erect from the elbow. It was his horse that wheeled; compulsorily he was borne at a short canter to her side.

Page 41

'Your commands?'

The handsome Amabel threw him a sombre glance from the corners of her uplifted eyelids; and snakish he felt it; but her colour and the line of her face went well with sullenness; and, her arts of fascination cast aside, she fascinated him more in seeming homelier, girlish. If the trial of her beauty of a woman in a temper can bear the strain, she has attractive lures indeed; irresistible to the amorous idler: and when, in addition, being the guilty person, she plays the injured, her show of temper on the taking face pitches him into perplexity with his own emotions, creating a desire to strike and be stricken, howl and set howling, which is of the happiest augury for tender reconciliation, on the terms of the gentleman on his kneecap.

'You've been doing a pretty thing!' she said, and briefly she named her house and half an hour, and flew. Sir Lukin was left to admire the figure of the horsewoman. Really, her figure had an air of vindicating her successfully, except for the poison she spat at Diana Warwick. And what pretty thing had he been doing? He reviewed dozens of speculations until the impossibility of seizing one determined him to go to Mrs. Fryar-Gunnett at the end of the half-hour—'Just to see what these women have to say for themselves.'

Some big advance drops of Redworth's thunderstorm drawing gloomily overhead, warned him to be quick and get his horse into stables. Dismounted, the sensational man was irresolute, suspecting a female trap. But curiosity, combined with the instinctive turning of his nose in the direction of the lady's house, led him thither, to an accompaniment of celestial growls, which impressed him, judging by that naughty-girl face of hers and the woman's tongue she had, as a likely prelude to the scene to come below.

CHAPTER XLII

The penultimate: Showing A final struggle for liberty and run into harness

The prophet of the storm had forgotten his prediction; which, however, was of small concern to him, apart from the ducking he received midway between the valley and the heights of Copsley; whither he was bound, on a mission so serious that, according to his custom in such instances, he chose to take counsel of his active legs: an adviseable course when the brain wants clearing and the heart fortifying. Diana's face was clearly before him through the deluge; now in ogle features, the dimple running from her mouth, the dark bright eyes and cut of eyelids, and nostrils alive under their lightning; now inkier whole radiant smile, or musefully listening, nursing a thought. Or she was obscured, and he felt the face. The individuality of it had him by the heart, beyond his powers of visioning. On his arrival, he stood in the hall, adrip like one of the trees of the lawn, laughing at Lady Dunstane's anxious exclamations. His portmanteau

had come and he was expected; she hurried out at the first ringing of the bell, to greet and reproach him for walking in such weather.

Page 42

'Diana has left me,' she said, when he reappeared in dry clothing. 'We are neighbours; she has taken cottage-lodgings at Selshall, about an hour's walk:—one of her wild dreams of independence. Are you disappointed?'

'I am,' Redworth confessed.

Emma coloured. 'She requires an immense deal of humouring at present. The fit will wear off; only we must wait for it. Any menace to her precious liberty makes her prickly. She is passing the day with the Pettigrews, who have taken a place near her village for a month. She promised to dine and sleep here, if she returned in time. What is your news?'

'Nothing; the world wags on.'

'You have nothing special to tell her?'

'Nothing'; he hummed; 'nothing, I fancy, that she does not know.'

'You said you were disappointed.'

'It's always a pleasure to see her.'

'Even in her worst moods, I find it so.'

'Oh! moods!' quoth Redworth.

'My friend, they are to be reckoned, with women.'

'Certainly; what I meant was, that I don't count them against women.'

'Good: but my meaning was . . . I think I remember your once comparing them and the weather; and you spoke of the "one point more variable in women." You may forestall your storms. There is no calculating the effect of a few little words at a wrong season.'

'With women! I suppose not. I have no pretension to a knowledge of the sex.'

Emma imagined she had spoken plainly enough, if he had immediate designs; and she was not sure of that, and wished rather to shun his confidences while Tony was in her young widowhood, revelling in her joy of liberty. By and by, was her thought: perhaps next year. She dreaded Tony's refusal of the yoke, and her iron-hardness to the dearest of men proposing it; and moreover, her further to be apprehended holding to the refusal, for the sake of consistency, if it was once uttered. For her own sake, she shrank from hearing intentions, that distressing the good man, she would have to discountenance. His candour in confessing disappointment, and his open face, his excellent sense too, gave her some assurance of his not being foolishly impetuous. After he had read to her

for an hour, as his habit was on evenings and wet days, their discussion of this and that in the book lulled any doubts she had of his prudence, enough to render it even a dubious point whether she might be speculating upon a wealthy bachelor in the old-fashioned ultra-feminine manner; the which she so abhorred that she rejected the idea. Consequently, Redworth's proposal to walk down to the valley for Diana, and bring her back, struck her as natural when a shaft of western sunshine from a whitened edge of raincloud struck her windows. She let him go without an intimated monition or a thought of one; thinking simply that her Tony would be more likely to come, having him for escort. Those are silly women who are always imagining designs and intrigues and future palpitations in the commonest actions of either sex. Emma Dunstane leaned to the contrast between herself and them.

Page 43

Danvers was at the house about sunset, reporting her mistress to be on her way, with Mr. Redworth. The maid's tale of the dreadful state of the lanes, accounted for their tardiness; and besides the sunset had been magnificent. Diana knocked at Emma's bedroom door, to say, outside, hurriedly in passing, how splendid the sunset had been, and beg for an extra five minutes. Taking full fifteen, she swam into the drawing-room, lively with kisses on Emma's cheeks, and excuses, referring her misconduct in being late to the seductions of 'Sol' in his glory. Redworth said he had rarely seen so wonderful a sunset. The result of their unanimity stirred Emma's bosom to match-making regrets; and the walk of the pair together, alone under the propitious laming heavens, appeared to her now as an opportunity lost. From sisterly sympathy, she fancied she could understand Tony's liberty-loving reluctance: she had no comprehension of the backwardness of the man beholding the dear woman handsomer than in her maiden or her married time: and sprightlier as well. She chatted deliciously, and drew Redworth to talk his best on his choicer subjects, playing over them like a fide-wisp, determined at once to flounder him and to make him shine. Her tender esteem for the man was transparent through it all; and Emma, whose evening had gone happily between them, said to her, in their privacy, before parting: 'You seemed to have been inspired by "Sol," my dear. You do like him, don't you?'

Diana vowed she adored him; and with a face of laughter in rosy suffusion, put Sol for Redworth, Redworth for Sol; but, watchful of Emma's visage, said finally: 'If you mean the mortal man, I think him up to almost all your hyperboles—as far as men go; and he departed to his night's rest, which I hope will be good, like a king. Not to admire him, would argue me senseless, heartless. I do; I have reason to.'

'And you make him the butt of your ridicule, Tony.'

'No; I said "like a king"; and he is one. He has, to me, morally the grandeur of your Sol sinking, Caesar stabbed, Cato on the sword-point. He is Roman, Spartan, Imperial; English, if you like, the pick, of the land. It is an honour to call him friend, and I do trust he will choose the pick among us, to make her a happy woman—if she's for running in harness. There, I can't say more.'

Emma had to be satisfied with it, for the present.

They were astonished at breakfast by seeing Sir Lukin ride past the windows. He entered with the veritable appetite of a cavalier who had ridden from London fasting; and why he had come at that early hour, he was too hungry to explain. The ladies retired to read their letters by the morning's post; whereupon Sir Lukin called to Redworth; 'I met that woman in the park yesterday, and had to stand a volley. I went beating about London for you all the afternoon and evening. She swears you rated her like a scullery wench, and threatened to ruin Wroxeter. Did you see him? She says, the story's true in one particular, that he did snatch a kiss, and got mauled. Not so much to pay for it! But what a ruffian— eh?'

Page 44

'I saw him,' said Redworth. 'He 's one of the new set of noblemen who take bribes to serve as baits for transactions in the City. They help to the ruin of their order, or are signs of its decay. We won't judge it by him. He favoured me with his "word of honour" that the thing you heard was entirely a misstatement, and so forth:—apologized, I suppose. He mumbled something.'

'A thorough cur!'

'He professed his readiness to fight, if either of us was not contented.'

'He spoke to the wrong man. I've half a mind to ride back and have him out for that rascal "osculation" and the lady unwilling!—and she a young one, a girl, under the protection of the house! By Jove! Redworth, when you come to consider the scoundrels men can be, it stirs a fellow's bile. There's a deal of that sort of villany going—and succeeding sometimes! He deserves the whip or a bullet.'

'A sermon from Lukin Dunstane might punish him.'

'Oh! I'm a sinner, I know. But, go and tell one woman of another woman, and that a lie! That's beyond me.'

'The gradations of the deeps are perhaps measurable to those who are in them.'

'The sermon's at me—pop!' said Sir Lukin. 'By the way, I'm coming round to think Diana Warwick was right when she used to jibe at me for throwing up my commission. Idleness is the devil—or mother of him. I manage my estates; but the truth is, it doesn't occupy my mind.'

'Your time.'

'My mind, I say.'

'Whichever you please.'

'You're crusty to-day, Redworth. Let me tell you, I think—and hard too, when the fit's on me. However, you did right in stopping—I'll own—a piece of folly, and shutting the mouths of those two; though it caused me to come in for a regular drencher. But a pretty woman in a right-down termagant passion is good theatre; because it can't last, at that pace; and you're sure of your agreeable tableau. Not that I trust her ten minutes out of sight—or any woman, except one or two; my wife and Diana Warwick. Trust those you've tried, old boy. Diana Warwick ought to be taught to thank you; though I don't know how it's to be done.'

'The fact of it is,' Redworth frowned and rose, 'I've done mischief. I had no right to mix myself in it. I'm seldom caught off my feet by an impulse; but I was. I took the fever from you.'

He squared his figure at the window, and looked up on a driving sky.

'Come, let's play open cards, Tom Redworth,' said Sir Lukin, leaving the table and joining his friend by the window. 'You moral men are doomed to be marrying men, always; and quite right. Not that one doesn't hear a roundabout thing or two about you: no harm. Very much the contrary:— as the world goes. But you're the man to marry a wife; and if I guess the lady, she's a sensible girl and won't be jealous. I'd swear she only waits for asking.'

Page 45

'Then you don't guess the lady,' said Redworth.

'Mary Paynham?'

The desperate half-laugh greeting the name convinced more than a dozen denials.

Sir Lukin kept edging round for a full view of the friend who shunned inspection. 'But is it? . . . can it be? it must be, after all! . . . why, of course it is! But the thing staring us in the face is just what we never see. Just the husband for her!—and she's the wife! Why, Diana Warwick 's the very woman, of course! I remember I used to think so before she was free to wed.'

'She is not of that opinion.' Redworth blew a heavy breath; and it should be chronicled as a sigh; but it was hugely masculine.

'Because you didn't attack, the moment she was free; that 's what upset my calculations,' the sagacious gentleman continued, for a vindication of his acuteness: then seizing the reply: 'Refuses? you don't mean to say you're the man to take a refusal? and from a green widow in the blush? Did you see her cheeks when she was peeping at the letter in her hand? She colours at half a word—takes the lift of a finger for Hymen coming. And lots of fellows are after her; I know it from Emmy. But you're not the man to be refused. You're her friend—her champion. That woman Fryar-Gunnett would have it you were the favoured lover, and sneered at my talk of old friendship. Women are always down dead on the facts; can't put them off a scent!'

'There's the mischief!' Redworth blew again. 'I had no right to be championing Mrs. Warwick's name. Or the world won't give it, at all events. I'm a blundering donkey. Yes, she wishes to keep her liberty. And, upon my soul, I'm in love with everything she wishes! I've got the habit.'

'Habit be hanged!' cried Sir Lukin. 'You're in love with the woman. I know a little more of you now, Mr. Tom. You're a fellow in earnest about what you do. You're feeling it now, on the rack, by heaven! though you keep a bold face. Did she speak positively?—sort of feminine of "you're the monster, not the man"? or measured little doctor's dose of pity?—worse sign.' You 're not going?'

'If you'll drive me down in half an hour,' said Redworth.

'Give me an hour,' Sir Lukin replied, and went straight to his wife's blue-room.

Diana was roused from a meditation on a letter she held, by the entrance of Emma in her bed-chamber, to whom she said: 'I have here the very craziest bit of writing!—but what is disturbing you, dear?'

Emma sat beside her, panting and composing her lips to speak. 'Do you, love me? I throw policy to the winds, if only, I can batter at you for your heart and find it! Tony, do you love me? But don't answer: give me your hand. You have rejected him!'

'He has told you?'

'No. He is not the man to cry out for a wound. He heard in London— Lukin has had the courage to tell me, after his fashion:—Tom Redworth heard an old story, coming from one of the baser kind of women: grossly false, he knew. I mention only Lord Wroxeter and Lockton. He went to man and woman both, and had it refuted, and stopped their tongues, on peril; as he of all men is able to do when he wills it.'

Page 46

Observing the quick change in Tony's eyes, Emma exclaimed: 'How you looked disdain when you asked whether he had told me! But why are you the handsome tigress to him, of all men living! The dear fellow, dear to me at least! since the day he first saw you, has worshipped you and striven to serve you:—and harder than any Scriptural service to have the beloved woman to wife. I know nothing to compare with it, for he is a man of warmth. He is one of those rare men of honour who can command their passion; who venerate when they love: and those are the men that women select for punishment! Yes, you! It is to the woman he loves that he cannot show himself as he is, because he is at her feet. You have managed to stamp your spirit on him; and as a consequence, he defends you now, for flinging him off. And now his chief regret is, that he has caused his name to be coupled with yours. I suppose he had some poor hope, seeing you free. Or else the impulse to protect the woman of his heart and soul was too strong. I have seen what he suffered, years back, at the news of your engagement.'

'Oh, for God's sake, don't,' cried Tony, tears running over, and her dream of freedom, her visions of romance, drowning.

'It was like the snapping of the branch of an oak, when the trunk stands firm,' Emma resumed, in her desire to scourge as well as to soften. 'But similes applied to him will strike you as incongruous.' Tony swayed her body, for a negative, very girlishly and consciously. 'He probably did not woo you in a poetic style, or the courtly by prescription.' Again Tony swayed; she had to hug herself under the stripes, and felt as if alone at sea, with her dear heavens pelting. 'You have sneered at him for his calculating—to his face: and it was when he was comparatively poor that he calculated—to his cost! that he dared not ask you to marry a man who could not offer you a tithe of what he considered fit for the peerless woman. Peerless, I admit. There he was not wrong. But if he had valued you half a grain less, he might have won you. You talk much of chivalry; you conceive a superhuman ideal, to which you fit a very indifferent wooden model, while the man of all the world the most chivalrous! . . . He is a man quite other from what you think him: anything but a "Cuthbert Dering" or a "Man of Two Minds." He was in the drawing-room below, on the day I received your last maiden letter from The Crossways—now his property, in the hope of making it yours.'

'I behaved abominably there!' interposed Tony, with a gasp.

'Let it pass. At any rate, that was the prick of a needle, not the blow of a sword.'

'But marriage, dear Emmy! marriage! Is marriage to be the end of me?'

'What amazing apotheosis have you in prospect? And are you steering so particularly well by yourself?'

'Miserably! But I can dream. And the thought of a husband cuts me from any dreaming. It's all dead flat earth at once!'

Page 47

'Would, you have rejected him when you were a girl?'

'I think so.'

'The superior merits of another . . .?'

'Oh, no, no, no, no! I might have accepted him: and I might not have made him happy. I wanted a hero, and the jewelled garb and the feather did not suit him.'

'No; he is not that description of lay-figure. You have dressed it, and gemmed it, and—made your discovery. Here is a true man; and if you can find me any of your heroes to match him, I will thank you. He came on the day I speak of, to consult me as to whether, with the income he then had . . . Well, I had to tell him you were engaged. The man has never wavered in his love of you since that day. He has had to bear something.'

This was an electrical bolt into Tony's bosom, shaking her from self-pity and shame to remorseful pity of the suffering lover; and the tears ran in streams, as she said:

'He bore it, Emmy, he bore it.' She sobbed out: 'And he went on building a fortune and battling! Whatever he undertakes he does perfectly—approve of the pattern or not. Oh! I have no doubt he had his nest of wish piping to him all the while: only it seems quaint, dear, quaint, and against everything we've been reading of lovers! Love was his bread and butter!' Her dark eyes showered. 'And to tell you what you do not know of him, his way of making love is really,' she sobbed, 'pretty. It . . . it took me by surprise; I was expecting a bellow and an assault of horns; and if, dear:—you will say, what boarding-school girl have you got with you! and I feel myself getting childish:—if Sol in his glory had not been so m . . . majestically m . . . magnificent, nor seemed to show me the king . . . kingdom of my dreams, I might have stammered the opposite word to the one he heard. Last night, when he took my hand kindly before going to bed I had a fit for dropping on my knees to him. I saw him bleed, and he held himself right royally. I told you he did; —Sol in his moral grandeur! How infinitely above the physical monarch— is he not, Emmy? What one dislikes, is the devotion of all that grandeur to win a widow. It should be a maiden princess. You feel it so, I am sure. And here am I, as if a maiden princess were I, demanding romantic accessories of rubious vapour in the man condescending to implore the widow to wed him. But, tell me, does he know everything of his widow— everything? I shall not have to go through the frightful chapter?'

'He is a man with his eyes awake; he knows as much as any husband could require to know,' said Emma; adding: 'My darling! he trusts you. It is the soul of the man that loves you, as it is mine. You will not tease him? Promise me. Give yourself frankly. You see it clearly before you.'

'I see compulsion, my dear. What I see, is a regiment of Proverbs, bearing placards instead of guns, and each one a taunt at women, especially at widows. They march; they form square; they enclose me in the middle, and I have their inscriptions to digest. Read that crazy letter from Mary Paynham while I am putting on my bonnet. I perceive I have been crying like a raw creature in her teens. I don't know myself. An advantage of the darker complexions is our speedier concealment of the traces.'

Page 48

Emma read Miss Paynham's letter, and returned it with the comment: 'Utterly crazy.' Tony said: 'Is it not? I am to "Pause before I trifle with a noble heart too long." She is to "have her happiness in the constant prayer for ours"; and she is "warned by one of those intimations never failing her, that he runs a serious danger." It reads like a Wizard's Almanack. And here "Homogeneity of sentiment the most perfect, is unable to contend with the fatal charm, which exercised by an indifferent person, must be ascribed to original predestination." She should be under the wing of Lady Wathin. There is the mother for such chicks! But I'll own to you, Emmy, that after the perusal, I did ask myself a question as to my likeness of late to the writer. I have drivelled . . . I was shuddering over it when you came in. I have sentimentalized up to thin smoke. And she tells a truth when she says I am not to "count social cleverness"—she means volubility—"as a warrant for domineering a capacious intelligence": because of the gentleman's modesty. Agreed: I have done it; I am contrite. I am going into slavery to make amends for presumption. Banality, thy name is marriage!"

'Your business is to accept life as we have it,' said Emma; and Tony shrugged. She was precipitate in going forth to her commonplace fate, and scarcely looked at the man requested by Emma to escort her to her cottage. After their departure, Emma fell into laughter at the last words with the kiss of her cheeks: 'Here goes old Ireland!' But, from her look and from what she had said upstairs, Emma could believe that the singular sprite of girlishness invading and governing her latterly, had yielded place to the woman she loved.

CHAPTER XLIII

Nuptial chapter; and of how A barely Willing woman was led to bloom with the nuptial sentiment

Emma watched them on their way through the park, till they rounded the beechwood, talking, it could be surmised, of ordinary matters; the face of the gentleman turning at times to his companion's, which steadily fronted the gale. She left the ensuing to a prayer for their good direction, with a chuckle at Tony's evident feeling of a ludicrous posture, and the desperate rush of her agile limbs to have it over. But her prayer throbbed almost to a supplication that the wrong done to her beloved by Dacier—the wound to her own sisterly pride rankling as an injury to her sex, might be cancelled through the union of the woman noble in the sight of God with a more manlike man.

Meanwhile the feet of the couple were going faster than their heads to the end of the journey. Diana knew she would have to hoist the signal—and how? The prospect was dumb-foundering. She had to think of appeasing her Emma. Redworth, for his part; actually supposed she had accepted his escorting in proof of the plain friendship offered him overnight.

Page 49

'What do your "birds" do in weather like this?' she said.

'Cling to their perches and wait patiently. It's the bad time with them when you don't hear them chirp.'

'Of course you foretold the gale.'

'Oh, well, it did not require a shepherd or a skipper for that.'

'Your grand gift will be useful to a yachtsman.'

'You like yachting. When I have tried my new schooner in the Channel, she is at your command for as long as you and Lady Dunstane please.'

'So you acknowledge that birds—things of nature—have their bad time?'

'They profit ultimately by the deluge and the wreck. Nothing on earth is "tucked-up" in perpetuity.'

'Except the dead. But why should the schooner be at our command?'

'I shall be in Ireland.'

He could not have said sweeter to her ears or more touching.

'We shall hardly feel safe without the weatherwise on board.'

'You may count on my man Barnes; I have proved him. He is up to his work even when he's bilious: only, in that case, occurring about once a fortnight, you must leave him to fight it out with the elements.'

'I rather like men of action to have a temper.'

'I can't say much for a bilious temper.'

The weather to-day really seemed of that kind, she remarked. He assented, in the shrug manner—not to dissent: she might say what she would. He helped nowhere to a lead; and so quick are the changes of mood at such moments that she was now far from him under the failure of an effort to come near. But thoughts of Emma pressed.

'The name of the new schooner? Her name is her picture to me.'

'I wanted you to christen her.'

'Launched without a name?'

'I took a liberty.'

Needless to ask, but she did. 'With whom?'

'I named her Diana.'

'May the Goddess of the silver bow and crescent protect her! To me the name is ominous of mischance.'

'I would commit my fortunes and life . . . !' He checked his tongue, ejaculating: 'Omens!'

She had veered straight away from her romantic aspirations to the blunt extreme of thinking that a widow should be wooed in unornamented matter-of-fact, as she is wedded, with a 'wilt thou,' and 'I will,' and no decorative illusions. Downright, for the unpoetic creature, if you please! So she rejected the accompaniment of the silver Goddess and high seas for an introduction of the crisis.

'This would be a thunderer on our coasts. I had a trial of my sailing powers in the Mediterranean.'

As she said it, her musings on him then, with the contract of her position toward him now, fierily brushed her cheeks; and she wished him the man to make one snatch at her poor lost small butterfly bit of freedom, so that she might suddenly feel in haven, at peace with her expectant Emma. He could have seen the inviting consciousness, but he was absurdly watchful lest the flying sprays of border trees should strike her. He mentioned his fear, and it became an excuse for her seeking protection of her veil. 'It is our natural guardian,' she said.

Page 50

'Not much against timber,' said he.

The worthy creature's anxiety was of the pattern of cavaliers escorting dames—an exaggeration of honest zeal; a present example of clownish goodness, it might seem; until entering the larch and firwood along the beaten heights, there was a rocking and straining of the shallow-rooted trees in a tremendous gust that quite pardoned him for curving his arm in a hoop about her and holding a shoulder in front. The veil did her positive service.

He was honourably scrupulous not to presume. A right good unimpulsive gentleman: the same that she had always taken him for and liked.

'These firs are not taproots,' he observed, by way of apology.

Her dress volumed and her ribands rattled and chirruped on the verge of the slope. 'I will take your arm here,' she said.

Redworth received the little hand, saying: 'Lean to me.'

They descended upon great surges of wind piping and driving every light surface-atom as foam; and they blinked and shook; even the man was shaken. But their arms were interlinked and they grappled; the battering enemy made them one. It might mean nothing, or everything: to him it meant the sheer blissful instant.

At the foot of the hill, he said: 'It's harder to keep to, the terms of yesterday.'

'What were they?' said she, and took his breath more than the fury of the storm had done.

'Raise the veil, I beg.'

'Widows do not wear it.'

The look revealed to him was a fugitive of the wilds, no longer the glittering shooter of arrows.

'Have you . . .?' changed to me, was the signification understood. 'Can you?—for life'. Do you think you can?'

His poverty in the pleading language melted her.

'What I cannot do, my best of friends, is to submit to be seated on a throne, with you petitioning. Yes, as far as concerns this hand of mine, if you hold it worthy of you. We will speak of that. Now tell me the name of the weed trailing along the hedge there!

He knew it well; a common hedgerow weed; but the placid diversion baffled him. It was clematis, he said.

'It drags in the dust when it has no firm arm to cling to. I passed it beside you yesterday with a flaunting mind and not a suspicion of a likeness. How foolish I was! I could volubly sermonize; only it should be a young maid to listen. Forgive me the yesterday.'

'You have never to ask. You withdraw your hand—was I rough?'

'No,' she smiled demurely; 'it must get used to the shackles: but my cottage is in sight. I have a growing love for the place. We will enter it like plain people—if you think of coming in.'

Page 51

As she said it she had a slight shock of cowering under eyes tolerably hawkish in their male glitter; but her coolness was not disturbed; and without any apprehensions she reflected on what has been written of the silly division and war of the sexes:—which two might surely enter on an engagement to live together amiably, unvexed by that barbarous old fowl and falcon interlude. Cool herself, she imagined the same of him, having good grounds for the delusion; so they passed through the cottage-garden and beneath the low porchway, into her little sitting-room, where she was proceeding to speak composedly of her preference for cottages, while untying her bonnet-strings:—‘If I had begun my life in a cottage!’—when really a big storm-wave caught her from shore and whirled her to mid-sea, out of every sensibility but the swimming one of her loss of self in the man.

‘You would not have been here!’ was all he said. She was up at his heart, fast-locked, undergoing a change greater than the sea works; her thoughts one blush, her brain a fire-fount. This was not like being seated on a throne.

‘There,’ said he, loosening his hug, ‘now you belong to me! I know you from head to foot. After that, my darling, I could leave you for years, and call you wife, and be sure of you. I could swear it for you—my life on it! That’s what I think of you. Don’t wonder that I took my chance—the first:—I have waited!’

Truer word was never uttered, she owned, coming into some harmony with man’s kiss on her mouth: the man violently metamorphosed to a stranger, acting on rights she had given him. And who was she to dream of denying them? Not an idea in her head! Bound verily to be thankful for such love, on hearing that it dated from the night in Ireland ‘So in love with you that, on my soul, your happiness was my marrow—whatever you wished; anything you chose. It’s reckoned a fool’s part. No, it’s love: the love of a woman—the one woman! I was like the hand of a clock to the springs. I taught this old watch-dog of a heart to keep guard and bury the bones you tossed him.’

‘Ignorantly, admit,’ said she, and could have bitten her tongue for the empty words that provoked: ‘Would you have flung him nothing?’ and caused a lowering of her eyelids and shamed glimpses of recollections. ‘I hear you have again been defending me. I told you, I think, I wished I had begun my girl’s life in a cottage. All that I have had to endure! . . or so it seems to me: it may be my way of excusing myself:—I know my cunning in that peculiar art. I would take my chance of mixing among the highest and the brightest.’

‘Naturally.’

‘Culpably.’

‘It brings you to me.’

‘Through a muddy channel.’

‘Your husband has full faith in you, my own.’

‘The faith has to be summoned and is buffeted, as we were just now on the hill. I wish he had taken me from a cottage.’

Page 52

'You pushed for the best society, like a fish to its native sea.'

'Pray say, a salmon to the riverheads.'

'Better,' Redworth laughed joyfully, between admiration of the tongue that always outflowed him, and of the face he reddened.

By degrees her apter and neater terms of speech helped her to a notion of regaining some steps of her sunken ascendancy, under the weight of the novel masculine pressure on her throbbing blood; and when he bent to her to take her lord's farewell of her, after agreeing to go and delight Emma with a message, her submission and her personal pride were not so much at variance: perhaps because her buzzing head had no ideas. 'Tell Emma you have undertaken to wash the blackamoor as white as she can be,' she said perversely, in her spite at herself for not coming, as it were, out of the dawn to the man she could consent to wed: and he replied: 'I shall tell her my dark girl pleads for a fortnight's grace before she and I set sail for the West coast of Ireland': conjuring a picture that checked any protest against the shortness of time:—and Emma would surely be his ally.

They talked of the Dublin Ball: painfully to some of her thoughts. But Redworth kissed that distant brilliant night as freshly as if no belabouring years rolled in the chasm: which led her to conceive partly, and wonderingly, the nature of a strong man's passion; and it subjugated the woman knowing of a contrast. The smart of the blow dealt her by him who had fired the passion in her became a burning regret for the loss of that fair fame she had sacrificed to him, and could not bring to her truer lover: though it was but the outer view of herself—the world's view; only she was generous and of honest conscience, and but for the sake of her truer lover, she would mentally have allowed the world to lash and abuse her, without a plea of material purity. Could it be named? The naming of it in her clear mind lessened it to accidental:—By good fortune, she was no worse!—She said to Redworth, when finally dismissing him; 'I bring no real disgrace to you, my friend.'—To have had this sharp spiritual battle at such a time, was proof of honest conscience, rarer among women, as the world has fashioned them yet, than the purity demanded of them.—His answer: 'You are my wife!' rang in her hearing.

When she sat alone at last, she was incapable, despite her nature's imaginative leap to brightness, of choosing any single period, auspicious or luminous or flattering, since the hour of her first meeting this man, rather than the grey light he cast on her, promising helpfulness, and inspiring a belief in her capacity to help. Not the Salvatore high raptures nor the nights of social applause could appear preferable: she strained her shattered wits to try them. As for her superlunary sphere, it was in fragments; and she mused on the singularity, considering that she was not deeply enamoured. Was she so at all?

Page 53

The question drove her to embrace the dignity of being reasonable—under Emmy's guidance. For she did not stand firmly alone; her story confessed it. Marriage might be the archway to the road of good service, even as our passage through the flesh may lead to the better state. She had thoughts of the kind, and had them while encouraging herself to deplore the adieu to her little musk-scented sitting-room, where a modest freedom breathed, and her individuality had seemed pointing to a straighter growth.

She nodded subsequently to the truth of her happy Emma's remark: 'You were created for the world, Tony.' A woman of blood and imagination in the warring world, without a mate whom she can revere, subscribes to a likeness with those independent minor realms between greedy mighty neighbours, which conspire and undermine when they do not openly threaten to devour. So, then, this union, the return to the wedding yoke, received sanction of grey-toned reason. She was not enamoured she could say it to herself. She had, however, been surprised, both by the man and her unprotesting submission; surprised and warmed, unaccountably warmed. Clearness of mind in the woman chaste by nature, however little ignorant it allowed her to be in the general review of herself, could not compass the immediately personal, with its acknowledgement of her subserviency to touch and pressure—and more, stranger, her readiness to kindle. She left it unexplained. Unconsciously the image of Dacier was effaced. Looking backward, her heart was moved to her long-constant lover with most pitying tender wonderment—stormy man, as her threatened senses told her that he was. Looking at him, she had to mask her being abashed and mastered. And looking forward, her soul fell in prayer for this true man's never repenting of his choice. Sure of her now, Mr. Thomas Redworth had returned to the station of the courtier, and her feminine sovereignty was not ruffled to make her feel too feminine. Another revelation was his playful talk when they were more closely intimate. He had his humour as well as his hearty relish of hers.

'If all Englishmen were like him!' she chimed with Emma Dunstane's eulogies, under the influence.

'My dear,' the latter replied, 'we should simply march over the Four Quarters and be blessed by the nations! Only, avoid your trick of dashing headlong to the other extreme. He has his faults.'

'Tell me of them,' Diana cooed for an answer. 'Do. I want the flavour. A girl would be satisfied with superhuman excellence. A widow asks for feature.'

'To my thinking, the case is, that if it is a widow who sees the superhuman excellence in a man, she may be very well contented to cross the bridge with him,' rejoined Emma. . . .

'Suppose the bridge to break, and for her to fall into the water, he rescuing her—then perhaps!'

'But it has been happening!'

Page 54

'But piecemeal, in extension, so slowly. I go to him a derelict, bearing a story of the sea; empty of ideas. I remember sailing out of harbour passably well freighted for commerce.'

'When Tom Redworth has had command of the "derelict" a week, I should like to see her!'

The mention of that positive captaincy drowned Diana in morning colours. She was dominated, physically and morally, submissively too. What she craved, in the absence of the public whiteness which could have caused her to rejoice in herself as a noble gift, was the spring of enthusiasm. Emma touched a quivering chord of pride with her hint at the good augury, and foreshadowing of the larger Union, in the Irishwoman's bestowal of her hand on the open-minded Englishman she had learned to trust. The aureole glimmered transiently: she could neither think highly of the woman about to be wedded, nor poetically of the man; nor, therefore, rosily of the ceremony, nor other than vacuously of life. And yet, as she avowed to Emma, she had gathered the three rarest good things of life: a faithful friend, a faithful lover, a faithful servant: the two latter exposing an unimagined quality of emotion. Danvers, on the night of the great day for Redworth, had undressed her with trembling fingers, and her mistress was led to the knowledge that the maid had always been all eye; and on reflection to admit that it came of a sympathy she did not share.

But when Celtic brains are reflective on their emotional vessel they shoot direct as the arrow of logic. Diana's glance at the years behind lighted every moving figure to a shrewd transparency, herself among them. She was driven to the conclusion that the granting of any of her heart's wild wishes in those days would have lowered her—or frozen. Dacier was a coldly luminous image; still a tolling name; no longer conceivably her mate. Recollection rocked, not she. The politician and citizen was admired: she read the man;—more to her own discredit than to his, but she read him, and if that is done by the one of two lovers who was true to love, it is the God of the passion pronouncing a final release from the shadow of his chains.

Three days antecedent to her marriage, she went down the hill over her cottage chimneys with Redworth, after hearing him praise and cite to Emma Dunstane sentences of a morning's report of a speech delivered by Dacier to his constituents. She alluded to it, that she might air her power of speaking of the man coolly to him, or else for the sake of stirring afresh some sentiment he had roused; and he repeated his high opinion of the orator's political wisdom: whereby was revived in her memory a certain reprehensible view, belonging to her period of mock-girlish naughtiness—too vile!—as to his paternal benevolence, now to clear vision the loftiest manliness. What did she do? She was Irish; therefore intuitively decorous in amatory challenges and interchanges. But she was an impulsive woman, and foliage was thick around, only a few small birds and heaven seeing; and penitence and admiration sprang the impulse. It had to be this or a burst of weeping:—she put a kiss upon his arm.

Page 55

She had omitted to think that she was dealing with a lover a man of smothered fire, who would be electrically alive to the act through a coat-sleeve. Redworth had his impulse. He kept it under,—she felt the big breath he drew in. Imagination began busily building a nest for him, and enthusiasm was not sluggish to make a home of it. The impulse of each had wedded; in expression and repression; her sensibility told her of the stronger.

She rose on the morning of her marriage day with his favourite Planxy Kelly at her lips, a natural bubble of the notes. Emma drove down to the cottage to breakfast and superintend her bride's adornment, as to which, Diana had spoken slightly; as well as of the ceremony, and the institution, and this life itself:—she would be married out of her cottage, a widow, a cottager, a woman under a cloud; yes, a sober person taking at last a right practical step, to please her two best friends. The change was marked. She wished to hide it, wished to confide it. Emma was asked: 'How is he this morning?' and at the answer, describing his fresh and spirited looks, and his kind ways with Arthur Rhodes, and his fun with Sullivan Smith, and the satisfaction with the bridegroom declared by Lord Larrian (invalided from his Rock and unexpectedly informed of the wedding), Diana forgot that she had kissed her, and this time pressed her lips, in a manner to convey the secret bridally.

'He has a lovely day.'

'And bride,' said Emma.

'If you two think so! I should like to agree with my dear old lord and bless him for the prize he takes, though it feels itself at present rather like a Christmas bon-bon—a piece of sugar in the wrap of a rhymed motto. He is kind to Arthur, you say?'

'Like a cordial elder brother.'

'Dear love, I have it at heart that I was harsh upon Mary Paynham for her letter. She meant well—and I fear she suffers. And it may have been a bit my fault. Blind that I was! When you say "cordial elder brother," you make him appear beautiful to me. The worst of that is, one becomes aware of the inability to match him.'

'Read with his eyes when you meet him this morning, my Tony.'

The secret was being clearly perceived by Emma, whose pride in assisting to dress the beautiful creature for her marriage—with the man of men had a tinge from the hymenaeal brand, exulting over Dacier, and in the compensation coming to her beloved for her first luckless footing on this road.

'How does he go down to the church?' said Diana.

'He walks down. Lukin and his Chief drive. He walks, with your Arthur and Mr. Sullivan Smith. He is on his way now.'

Diana looked through the window in the direction of the hill. 'That is so like him, to walk to his wedding!'

Page 56

Emma took the place of Danvers in the office of the robing, for the maid, as her mistress managed to hint, was too steeped 'in the colour of the occasion' to be exactly tasteful, and had the art, no doubt through sympathy, of charging permissible common words with explosive meanings:— she was in an amorous palpitation, of the reflected state. After several knockings and enterings of the bedchamber-door, she came hurriedly to say: 'And your pillow, ma'am? I had almost forgotten it!' A question that caused her mistress to drop the gaze of a moan on Emma, with patience trembling. Diana preferred a hard pillow, and usually carried her own about. 'Take it,' she had to reply.

The friends embraced before descending to step into the fateful carriage. 'And tell me,' Emma said, 'are not your views of life brighter to-day?'

'Too dazzled to know! It may be a lamp close to the eyes or a radiance of sun. I hope they are.'

'You are beginning to think hopefully again?'

'Who can really think, and not think hopefully? You were in my mind last night, and you brought a little boat to sail me past despondency of life and the fear of extinction. When we despair or discolour things, it is our senses in revolt, and they have made the sovereign brain their drudge. I heard you whisper; with your very breath in my ear: "There is nothing the body suffers that the soul may not profit by." That is Emma's history. With that I sail into the dark; it is my promise of the immortal: teaches me to see immortality for us. It comes from you, my Emmy.'

If not a great saying, it was in the heart of deep thoughts: proof to Emma that her Tony's mind had resumed its old clear high-aiming activity; therefore that her nature was working sanely, and that she accepted her happiness, and bore love for a dower to her husband. No blushing confession of the woman's love of the man would have told her so much as the return to mental harmony with the laws of life shown in her darling's pellucid little sentence.

She revolved it long after the day of the wedding. To Emma, constantly on the dark decline of the unilluminated verge, between the two worlds, those words were a radiance and a nourishment. Had they waned she would have trimmed them to feed her during her soul-sister's absence. They shone to her of their vitality. She was lying along her sofa, facing her South-western window, one afternoon of late November, expecting Tony from her lengthened honeymoon trip, while a sunset in the van of frost, not without celestial musical reminders of Tony's husband, began to deepen; and as her friend was coming, she mused on the scenes of her friend's departure, and how Tony, issuing from her cottage porch had betrayed her feelings in the language of her sex by stooping to lift above her head and kiss the smallest of her landlady's children ranged up the garden-path to bid her farewell over their strewing of flowers;—and of her

Page 57

murmur to Tony, entering the churchyard, among the grave-mounds: 'Old Ireland won't repent it!' and Tony's rejoinder, at the sight of the bridegroom advancing, beaming: 'A singular transformation of Old England!'—and how, having numberless ready sources of laughter and tears down the run of their heart-in-heart intimacy, all spouting up for a word in the happy tremour of the moment, they had both bitten their lips and blinked on a moisture of the eyelids. Now the dear woman was really wedded, wedded and mated. Her letters breathed, in their own lively or thoughtful flow, of the perfect mating. Emma gazed into the depths of the waves of crimson, where brilliancy of colour came out of central heaven preternaturally near on earth, till one shade less brilliant seemed an ebbing away to boundless remoteness. Angelical and mortal mixed, making the glory overhead a sign of the close union of our human conditions with the ethereal and psychically divined. Thence it grew that one thought in her breast became a desire for such extension of days as would give her the blessedness to clasp in her lap—if those kind heavens would grant it!—a child of the marriage of the two noblest of human souls, one the dearest; and so have proof at heart that her country and our earth are fruitful in the good, for a glowing future. She was deeply a woman, dumbly a poet. True poets and true women have the native sense of the divineness of what the world deems gross material substance. Emma's exaltation in fervour had not subsided when she held her beloved in her arms under the dusk of the withdrawing redness. They sat embraced, with hands locked, in the unlighted room, and Tony spoke of the splendid sky. 'You watched it knowing I was on my way to you?'

'Praying, dear.'

'For me?'

'That I might live long enough to be a godmother.'

There was no reply: there was an involuntary little twitch of Tony's fingers.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Accidents are the specific for averting the maladies of age
Accounting for it, is not the same as excusing
Assist in our small sphere; not come mouthing to the footlights
Avoid the position that enforces publishing
Capacity for thinking should precede the act of writing
Chaste are wattled in formalism and throned in sourness
Could the best of men be simply—a woman's friend?
Enthusiasm has the privilege of not knowing monotony
Envy of the man of positive knowledge



Expectations dupe us, not trust
Externally soft and polished, internally hard and relentless
Fiddle harmonics on the sensual strings
Heart to keep guard and bury the bones you tossed him
Holding to the refusal, for the sake of consistency
I don't count them against women (moods)
I never knew till this morning the force of No in earnest
I wanted a hero
I'm in love with everything she wishes!

Page 58

I've got the habit
If he had valued you half a grain less, he might have won you
Infatuated men argue likewise, and scandal does not move them
It is the devil's masterstroke to get us to accuse him
Let never Necessity draw the bow of our weakness
Literature is a good stick and a bad horse
Material good reverses its benefits the more nearly we clasp it
Mistake of the world is to think happiness possible to the sense
Nothing is a secret that has been spoken
Nothing the body suffers that the soul may not profit by
Now far from him under the failure of an effort to come near
Our weakness is the swiftest dog to hunt us
Question the gain of such an expenditure of energy
Rare men of honour who can command their passion
Read with his eyes when you meet him this morning
Sham spiritualism
She had sunk her intelligence in her sensations
Sympathy is for proving, not prating
The debts we owe ourselves are the hardest to pay
Trial of her beauty of a woman in a temper
We don't know we are in halves
We're a peaceful people, but 'ware who touches us
Weighty little word—woman's native watchdog and guardian (No!)
When we despair or discolour things, it is our senses in revolt
Who can really think, and not think hopefully?
Who venerate when they love
With that I sail into the dark
Women with brains, moreover, are all heartless

[The End]

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