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THE AMAZING MARRIAGE

By George Meredith

1895

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THE AMAZING MARRIAGE

BOOK 1.

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CHAPTER I

ENTER DAME GOSSIP AS CHORUS

Everybody has heard of the beautiful Countess of Cressett, who was one of the lights of this country at the time when crowned heads were running over Europe, crying out for charity's sake to be amused after their tiresome work of slaughter: and you know what a dread they have of moping. She was famous for her fun and high spirits besides her good looks, which you may judge of for yourself on a walk down most of our great noblemen's collections of pictures in England, where you will behold her as the goddess Diana fitting an arrow to a bow; and elsewhere an Amazon holding a spear; or a lady with dogs, in the costume of the day; and in one place she is a nymph, if not Diana herself, gazing at her naked feet before her attendants loosen her tunic for her to take the bath, and her hounds are pricking their ears, and you see antlers of a stag behind a block of stone. She was a wonderful swimmer, among other things, and one early morning, when she was a girl, she did really swim, they say, across the Shannon and back to win a bet for her brother Lord

Levellier, the colonel of cavalry, who left an arm in Egypt, and changed his way of life to become a wizard, as the common people about his neighbourhood supposed, because he foretold the weather and had cures for aches and pains without a doctor's diploma. But we know now that he was only a mathematician and astronomer, all for inventing military engines. The brother and sister were great friends in their youth, when he had his right arm to defend her reputation with; and she would have done anything on earth to please him.

There is a picture of her in an immense flat white silk hat trimmed with pale blue, like a pavilion, the broadest brim ever seen, and she simply sits on a chair; and Venus the Queen of Beauty would have been extinguished under that hat, I am sure; and only to look at Countess Fanny's eye beneath the brim she has tipped ever so slightly in her artfulness makes the absurd thing graceful and suitable. Oh! she was a cunning one. But you must be on your guard against the scandalmongers and collectors of anecdotes, and worst of any, the critic, of our Galleries of Art; for she being in almost all of them (the principal painters of the day were on their knees for the favour of a sitting), they have to speak of her pretty frequently, and they season their dish, the coxcombs do, by hinting a knowledge of her history.

'Here we come to another portrait of the beautiful but, we fear, naughty Countess of Cressett.'

You are to imagine that they know everything, and they are so indulgent when they drop their blot on a lady's character.

They can boast of nothing more than having read Nymriey's Letters and Correspondence, published, fortunately for him, when he was no longer to be called to account below for his malicious insinuations, pretending to decency in initials and dashes: That man was a hater of women and the clergy. He was one of the horrid creatures who write with a wink at you, which sets the wicked part of us on fire: I have known it myself, and I own it to my shame; and if I happened to be ignorant of the history of Countess Fanny, I could not refute his wantonness. He has just the same benevolent leer for a bishop. Give me, if we are to make a choice, the beggar's breech for decency, I say: I like it vastly in preference to a Nymney, who leads you up to the curtain and agitates it, and bids you to retire on tiptoe. You cannot help being angry with the man for both reasons. But he is the writer society delights in, to show what it is composed of. A man brazen enough to declare that he could hold us in suspense about the adventures of a broomstick, with the aid of a yashmak and an ankle, may know the world; you had better not know him--that is my remark; and do not trust him.

He tells the story of the Old Buccaneer in fear of the public, for it was general property, but of course he finishes with a Nymney touch: 'So the Old Buccaneer is the doubloon she takes in exchange for a handful of silver pieces.' There is no such handful to exchange--not of the kind he sickeningly nudges at you. I will prove to you it was not Countess Fanny's naughtiness, though she was indeed very blamable. Women should walk in armour as if they were born to it; for these cold sneerers will

never waste their darts on cuirasses. An independent brave young creature, exposing herself thoughtlessly in her reckless innocence, is the victim for them. They will bring all society down on her with one of their explosive sly words appearing so careless, the cowards. I say without hesitation, her conduct with regard to Kirby, the Old Buccaneer, as he was called, however indefensible in itself, warrants her at heart an innocent young woman, much to be pitied. Only to think of her, I could sometimes drop into a chair for a good cry. And of him too! and their daughter Carinthia Jane was the pair of them, as to that, and so was Chillon John, the son.

Those critics quoting Nymney should look at the portrait of her in the Long Saloon of Cresset Castle, where she stands in blue and white, completely dressed, near a table supporting a couple of holster pistols, and then let them ask themselves whether they would speak of her so if her little hand could move.

Well, and so the tale of her swim across the Shannon river and back drove the young Earl of Cresset straight over to Ireland to propose for her, he saying; that she was the girl to suit his book; not allowing her time to think of how much he might be the man to suit hers. The marriage was what is called a good one: both full of frolic, and he wealthy and rather handsome, and she quite lovely and spirited.

No wonder the whole town was very soon agog about the couple, until at the end of a year people began to talk of them separately, she going her way, and he his. She could not always be on the top of a coach, which was his throne of happiness.

Plenty of stories are current still of his fame as a four-in-hand coachman. They say he once drove an Emperor and a King, a Prince Chancellor and a pair of Field Marshals, and some ladies of the day, from the metropolis to Richmond Hill in fifty or sixty odd minutes, having the ground cleared all the way by bell and summons, and only a donkey-cart and man, and a deaf old woman, to pay for; and went, as you can imagine, at such a tearing gallop, that those Grand Highnesses had to hold on for their lives and lost their hats along the road; and a publican at Kew exhibits one above his bar to the present hour. And Countess Fanny was up among them, they say. She was equal to it. And some say, that was the occasion of her meeting the Old Buccaneer.

She met him at Richmond in Surrey we know for certain. It was on Richmond Hill, where the old King met his Lass. They say Countess Fanny was parading the hill to behold the splendid view, always admired so much by foreigners, with their Achs and Hechs! and surrounded by her crowned courtiers in frogged uniforms and moustachioed like sea-horses, a little before dinner time, when Kirby passed her, and the Emperor made a remark on him, for Kirby was a magnificent figure of a man, and used to be compared to a three-decker entering harbour after a victory. He stood six feet four, and was broad-shouldered and deep-chested to match, and walked like a king who has humbled his enemy. You have seen big dogs. And so Countess Fanny looked round. Kirby was doing the same. But he had turned right about, and appeared transfixed and like a royal beast

angry, with his wound. If ever there was love at first sight, and a dreadful love, like a runaway mail-coach in a storm of wind and lightning at black midnight by the banks of a flooded river, which was formerly our comparison for terrible situations, it was when those two met.

And, what! you exclaim, Buccaneer Kirby full sixty-five, and Countess Fanny no more than three and twenty, a young beauty of the world of fashion, courted by the highest, and she in love with him! Go and gaze at one of our big ships coming out of an engagement home with all her flags flying and her crew manning the yards. That will give you an idea of a young woman's feelings for an old warrior never beaten down an inch by anything he had to endure; matching him, I dare say, in her woman's heart, with the Mighty Highnesses who had only smelt the outside edge of battle. She did rarely admire a valiant man. Old as Methuselah, he would have made her kneel to him. She was all heart for a real hero.

The story goes, that Countess Fanny sent her husband to Captain Kirby, at the emperor's request, to inquire his name; and on hearing it, she struck her hands on her bosom, telling his Majesty he saw there the bravest man in the king's dominions; which the emperor scarce crediting, and observing that the man must be, then, a superhuman being to be so distinguished in a nation of the brave, Countess Fanny related the well-known tale of Captain Kirby and the shipful of mutineers; and how when not a man of them stood by him, and he in the service of the first insurgent State of Spanish America, to save his ship from being taken over to the enemy,--he blew her up, fifteen miles from land: and so he got to shore swimming and floating alternately, and was called Old Sky-high by English sailors, any number of whom could always be had to sail under Buccaneer Kirby. He fought on shore as well; and once he came down from the tops of the Andes with a black beard turned white, and went into action with the title of Kirby's Ghost.

But his heart was on salt water; he was never so much at home as in a ship foundering or splitting into the clouds. We are told that he never forgave the Admiralty for striking him off the list of English naval captains: which is no doubt why in his old age he nursed a grudge against his country.

Ours, I am sure, was the loss; and many have thought so since. He was a mechanician, a master of stratagems; and would say, that brains will beat Grim Death if we have enough of them. He was a standing example of the lessons of his own MAXIMS FOR MEN, a very curious book, that fetches a rare price now wherever a copy is put up for auction. I shudder at them as if they were muzzles of firearms pointed at me; but they were not addressed to my sex; and still they give me an interest in the writer who would declare, that 'he had never failed in an undertaking without stripping bare to expose to himself where he had been wanting in Intention and Determination.'

There you may see a truly terrible man.

So the emperor being immensely taken with Kirby's method of preserving discipline on board ship, because (as we say to the madman, 'Your strait-

waistcoat is my easy-chair') monarchs have a great love of discipline, he begged Countess Fanny's permission that he might invite Captain Kirby to his table; and Countess Fanny (she had the name from the ballad

'I am the star of Prince and Czar,
My light is shed on many,
But I wait here till my bold Buccaneer
Makes prize of Countess Fanny':--

for the popular imagination was extraordinarily roused by the elopement, and there were songs and ballads out of number), Countess Fanny despatched her husband to Captain Kirby again, meaning no harm, though the poor man is laughed at in the songs for going twice upon his mission.

None of the mighty people repented of having the Old Buccaneer--for that night, at all events. He sat in the midst of them, you may believe, like the lord of that table, with his great white beard and hair--not a lock of it shed--and his bronze lion-face, and a resolute but a merry eye that he had. He was no deep drinker of wine, but when he did drink, and the wine champagne, he drank to show his disdain of its powers; and the emperor wishing for a narrative of some of his exploits, particularly the blowing up of his ship, Kirby paid his Majesty the compliment of giving it him as baldly as an official report to the Admiralty. So disengaged and calm was he, with his bottles of champagne in him, where another would have been sparkling and laying on the colours, that he was then and there offered Admiral's rank in the Imperial navy; and the Old Buccaneer, like a courtier of our best days, bows to Countess Fanny, and asks her, if he is a free man to go: and, No, says she, we cannot spare you! And there was a pretty wrangle between Countess Fanny and the emperor, each pulling at the Old Buccaneer to have possession of him.

He was rarely out of her sight after their first meeting, and the ridiculous excuse she gave to her husband's family was, she feared he would be kidnapped and made a Cossack of! And young Lord Cressett, her husband, began to grumble concerning her intimacy with a man old enough to be her grandfather. As if the age were the injury! He seemed to think it so, and vowed he would shoot the old depredator dead, if he found him on the grounds of Cressett: 'like vermin,' he said, and it was considered that he had the right, and no jury would have convicted him. You know what those days were.

He had his opportunity one moonlight night, not far from the castle, and peppered Kirby with shot from a fowling-piece at, some say, five paces' distance, if not point-blank.

But Kirby had a maxim, Steady shakes them, and he acted on it to receive his enemy's fire; and the young lord's hand shook, and the Old Buccaneer stood out of the smoke not much injured, except in the coat-collar, with a pistol cocked in his hand, and he said:

'Many would take that for a declaration of war, but I know it 's only your lordship's diplomacy'; and then he let loose to his mad fun, astounding Lord Cressett and his gamekeeper, and vowed, as the young lord

tried to relate subsequently, as well as he could recollect the words-- here I have it in print:--'that he was a man pickled in saltpetre when an infant, like Achilles, and proof against powder and shot not marked with cross and key, and fetched up from the square magazine in the central depot of the infernal factory, third turning to the right off the grand arcade in Kingdom-come, where the night-porter has to wear wet petticoats, like a Highland chief, to make short work of the sparks flying about, otherwise this world and many another would not have to wait long for combustion.'

Kirby had the wildest way of talking when he was not issuing orders under fire, best understood by sailors. I give it you as it stands here printed. I do not profess to understand.

So Lord Cressett said: 'Diplomacy and infernal factories be hanged! Have your shot at me; it's only fair.' And Kirby discharged his pistol at the top twigs of an old oak tree, and called the young lord a Briton, and proposed to take him in hand and make a man of him, as nigh worthy of his wife as any one not an Alexander of Macedon could be.

So they became friendly, and the young lord confessed it was his family that had urged him to the attack; and Kirby abode at the castle, and all three were happy, in perfect honour, I am convinced: but such was not the opinion of the Cressetts and Levellers. Down they trooped to Cressett Castle with a rush and a roar, crying on the disgrace of an old desperado like Kirby living there; Dukes, Marchionesses, Cabinet Ministers, leaders of fashion, and fire-eating colonels of the King's body-guard, one of whom Captain John Peter Kirby laid on his heels at ten paces on an April morning, when the duel was fought, as early as the blessed heavens had given them light to see to do it. Such days those were!

There was talk of shutting up the infatuated lady. If not incarcerated, she was rigidly watched. The earl her husband fell altogether to drinking and coaching, and other things. The ballad makes her say:

'My family my gaolers be,
My husband is a zany;
Naught see I clear save my bold Buccaneer
To rescue Countess Fanny!'

and it goes on:

'O little lass, at play on the grass,

Come earn a silver penny,
And you'll be dear to my bold Buccaneer
For news of his Countess Fanny.'

In spite of her bravery, that poor woman suffered!

We used to learn by heart the ballads and songs upon famous events in those old days when poetry was worshipped.

But Captain Kirby gave provocation enough to both families when he went among the taverns and clubs, and vowed before Providence over his big fist that they should rue their interference, and he would carry off the lady on a day he named; he named the hour as well, they say, and that was midnight of the month of June. The Levellers and Cressetts foamed at the mouth in speaking of him, so enraged they were on account of his age and his passion for a young woman. As to blood, the Kirbys of Lincolnshire were quite equal to the Cressetts of Warwick. The Old Buccaneer seems to have had money too. But you can see what her people had to complain of: his insolent contempt of them was unexampled. And their tyranny had roused my lady's high spirit not a bit less; and she said right out: 'When he comes, I am ready and will go with him.'

There was boldness for you on both sides! All the town was laughing and betting on the event of the night in June: and the odds were in favour of Kirby; for though, Lord Cressett was quite the popular young English nobleman, being a capital whip and free of his coin, in those days men who had smelt powder were often prized above titles, and the feeling, out of society, was very strong for Kirby, even previous to the fight on the heath. And the age of the indomitable adventurer must have contributed to his popularity. He was the hero of every song.

"What's age to me!" cries Kirby;
"Why, young and fresh let her be,
But it 's mighty better reasoned
For a man to be well seasoned,
And a man she has in me," cries Kirby.'

As to his exact age:

"Write me down sixty-three," cries Kirby.'

I have always maintained that it was an understatement. We must remember, it was not Kirby speaking, but the song-writer. Kirby would not, in my opinion, have numbered years he was proud of below their due quantity. He was more, if he died at ninety-one; and Chillon Switzer John Kirby, born eleven months after the elopement, was, we know, twenty-three years old when the old man gave up the ghost and bequeathed him little besides a law-suit with the Austrian Government, and the care of Carinthia Jane, the second child of this extraordinary union; both children born in wedlock, as you will hear. Sixty-three, or sixty-seven, near upon seventy, when most men are reaping and stacking their sins with groans and weak knees, Kirby was a match for his juniors, which they discovered.

Captain John Peter Avason Kirby, son of a Lincolnshire squire of an ancient stock, was proud of his blood, and claimed descent from a chief of the Danish rovers.

"What's rank to me!" cries Kirby;
"A titled lass let her be,
But unless my plans miscarry,
I'll show her when we marry;

As brave a pedigree," cries Kirby.'

That was the song-writer's answer to the charge that the countess had stooped to a degrading alliance.

John Peter was fourth of a family of seven children, all males, and hard at the bottle early in life: 'for want of proper occupation,' he says in his Memoirs, and applauds his brother Stanson, the clergyman, for being ahead of him in renouncing strong drinks, because he found that he 'curst better upon water.' Water, however, helped Stanson Kirby to outlive his brothers and inherit the Lincolnshire property, and at the period of the great scandal in London he was palsied, and waited on by his grandson and heir Ralph Thorkill Kirby, the hero of an adventure celebrated in our Law courts and on the English stage; for he took possession of his coachman's wife, and was accused of compassing the death of the husband. He was not hanged for it, so we are bound to think him not guilty.

The stage-piece is called 'Saturday Night', and it had an astonishing run, but is only remembered now for the song of 'Saturday,' sung by the poor coachman and labourers at the village ale-house before he starts to capture his wife from the clutches of her seducer and meets his fate. Never was there a more popular song: you heard it everywhere. I recollect one verse:

'O Saturday money is slippery metal,
And Saturday ale it is tipsy stuff
At home the old woman is boiling her kettle,
She thinks we don't know when we've tippled enough.
We drink, and of never a man are we jealous,
And never a man against us will he speak
For who can be hard on a set of poor fellows
Who only see Saturday once a week!

You chorus the last two lines.

That was the very song the unfortunate coachman of Kirby Hall joined in singing before he went out to face his end for the woman he loved. He believed in her virtue to the very last.

'The ravished wife of my bosom,' he calls her all through the latter half of the play. It is a real tragedy. The songs of that day have lost their effect now, I suppose. They will ever remain pathetic to me; and to hear the poor coachman William Martin invoking the name of his dear stolen wife Elizabeth, jug in hand, so tearfully, while he joins the song of Saturday, was a most moving thing. You saw nothing but handkerchiefs out all over the theatre. What it is that has gone from our drama, I cannot tell: I am never affected now as I was then; and people in a low station of life could affect me then, without being flung at me, for I dislike an entire dish of them, I own. We were simpler in our habits and ways of thinking. Elizabeth Martin, according to report, was a woman to make better men than Ralph Thorkill act evilly--as to good looks, I mean. She was not entirely guiltless, I am afraid; though in the last scene, Mrs. Kempson, who played the part (as, alas, she could do to the very

life!), so threw herself into the pathos of it that there were few to hold out against her, and we felt that Elizabeth had been misled. So much for morality in those days!

And now for the elopement.

CHAPTER II

MISTRESS GOSSIP TELLS OF THE ELOPEMENT OF THE COUNTESS OF CRESSETT WITH THE OLD BUCCANEER, AND OF CHARLES DUMP THE POSTILLION CONDUCTING THEM, AND OF A GREAT COUNTY FAMILY

The twenty-first of June was the day appointed by Captain Kirby to carry off Countess Fanny, and the time midnight: and ten minutes to the stroke of twelve, Countess Fanny, as if she scorned to conceal that she was in a conspiracy with her grey-haired lover, notwithstanding that she was watched and guarded, left the Marchioness of Arpington's ball-room and was escorted downstairs by her brother Lord Levellier, sworn to baffle Kirby. Present with him in the street and witness to the shutting of the carriage-door on Countess Fanny, were brother officers of his, General Abrane, Colonel Jack Potts, and Sir Upton Tomber.

The door fast shut, Countess Fanny kissed her hand to them and drew up the window, seeming merry, and as they had expected indignation and perhaps resistance, for she could be a spitfire in a temper and had no fear whatever of firearms, they were glad to have her safe on such good terms; and so General Abrane jumped up on the box beside the coachman, Jack Potts jumped up between the footmen, and Sir Upton Tomber and the one-armed lord, as soon as the carriage was disengaged from the ruck two deep, walked on each side of it in the road all the way to Lord Cressett's town house. No one thought of asking where that silly young man was--probably under some table.

Their numbers were swelled by quite a host going along, for heavy bets were on the affair, dozens having backed Kirby; and it must have appeared serious to them, with the lady in custody, and constables on the lookout, and Kirby and his men nowhere in sight. They expected an onslaught at some point of the procession, and it may be believed they wished it, if only that they might see something for their money. A beautiful bright moonlight night it happened to be. Arm in arm among them were Lord Pitscrew and Russett, Earl of Fleetwood, a great friend of Kirby's; for it was a device of the Old Buccaneer's that helped the earl to win the great Welsh heiress who made him, even before he took to hoarding and buying,--one of the wealthiest noblemen in England; but she was crazed by her marriage or the wild scenes leading to it; she never presented herself in society. She would sit on the top of Estlemont towers--as they formerly spelt it--all day and half the night in midwinter, often, looking for the mountains down in her native West country, covered with an old white flannel cloak, and on her head a tall hat of her Welsh women-folk; and she died of it, leaving a son in her likeness, of whom

you will hear. Lord Fleetwood had lost none of his faith in Kirby, and went on booking bets giving him huge odds, thousands!

He accepted fifty to one when the carriage came to a stop at the steps of Lord Cressett's mansion; but he was anxious, and well he might be, seeing Countess Fanny alight and pass up between two lines of gentlemen all bowing low before her: not a sign of the Old Buccaneer anywhere to right or left! Heads were on the look out, and vows offered up for his appearance.

She was at the door and about to enter the house. Then it was; that with a shout of the name of some dreadful heathen god, Colonel Jack Potts roared out, 'She's half a foot short o' the mark!'

He was on the pavement, and it seems he measured her as she slipped by him, and one thing and another caused him to smell a cheat; and General Abrane, standing beside her near the door, cried: 'Where art flying now, Jack?' But Jack Potts grew more positive and bellowed, 'Peel her wig! we're done!'

And she did not speak a word, but stood huddled-up and hooded; and Lord Levellier caught her up by the arm as she was trying a dash into the hall, and Sir Upton Tomber plucked at her veil and raised it, and whistled:

'Phew!--which struck the rabble below with awe of the cunning of the Old Buccaneer; and there was no need for them to hear General Abrane say: 'Right! Jack, we've a dead one in hand,' or Jack Potts reply:

'It's ten thousand pounds clean winged away from my pocket, like a string of wild geese!'

The excitement of the varletry in the square, they say, was fearful to hear. So the principal noblemen and gentlemen concerned thought it prudent to hurry the young woman into the house and bar the door; and there she was very soon stripped of veil and blonde false wig with long curls, the whole framing of her artificial resemblance to Countess Fanny, and she proved to be a good-looking foreign maid, a dark one, powdered, trembling very much, but not so frightened upon hearing that her penalty for the share she had taken in the horrid imposture practised upon them was to receive and return a salute from each of the gentlemen in rotation; which the hussy did with proper submission; and Jack Potts remarked, that 'it was an honest buss, but dear at ten thousand!'

When you have been the victim of a deceit, the explanation of the simplicity of the trick turns all the wonder upon yourself, you know, and the backers of the Old Buccaneer and the wagers against him crowed and groaned in chorus at the maid's narrative of how the moment Countess Fanny had thrown up the window of her carriage, she sprang out to a carriage on the off side, containing Kirby, and how she, this little French jade, sprang in to take her place. One snap of the fingers and the transformation was accomplished. So for another kiss all round they let her go free, and she sat at the supper-table prepared for Countess

Fanny and the party by order of Lord Levellier, and amused the gentlemen with stories of the ladies she had served, English and foreign. And that is how men are taught to think they know our sex and may despise it! I could preach them a lesson. Those men might as well not believe in the steadfastness of the very stars because one or two are reported lost out of the firmament, and now and then we behold a whole shower of fragments descending. The truth is, they have taken a stain from the life they lead, and are troubled puddles, incapable of clear reflection. To listen to the tattle of a chatting little slut, and condemn the whole sex upon her testimony, is a nice idea of justice. Many of the gentlemen present became notorious as woman-scorners, whether owing to Countess Fanny or other things. Lord Levellier was, and Lord Fleetwood, the wicked man! And certainly the hearing of naughty stories of us by the light of a grievous and vexatious instance of our misconduct must produce an impression. Countess Fanny's desperate passion for a man of the age of Kirby struck them as out of nature. They talked of it as if they could have pardoned her a younger lover.

All that Lord Cressett said, on the announcement of the flight of his wife, was: 'Ah! Fan! she never would run in my ribbons.'

He positively declined to persue. Lord Levellier would not attempt to follow her up without him, as it would have cost money, and he wanted all that he could spare for his telescopes and experiments. Who, then, was the gentleman who stopped the chariot, with his three mounted attendants, on the road to the sea, on the heath by the great Punch-Bowl?

That has been the question for now longer than half a century, in fact approaching seventy mortal years. No one has ever been able to say for certain.

It occurred at six o'clock on the summer morning. Countess Fanny must have known him,--and not once did she open her mouth to breathe his name. Yet she had no objection to talk of the adventure and how Simon Fettle, Captain Kirby's old ship's steward in South America, seeing horsemen stationed on the ascent of the high road bordering the Bowl, which is miles round and deep, made the postillion cease jogging, and sang out to his master for orders, and Kirby sang back to him to look to his priming, and then the postillion was bidden proceed, and he did not like it, but he had to deal with pistols behind, where men feel weak, and he went bobbing on the saddle in dejection, as if upon his very heart he jogged; and soon the fray commenced. There was very little parleying between determined men.

Simon Fettle was a plain kindly creature without a thought of malice, who kept his master's accounts. He fired the first shot at the foremost man, as he related in after days, 'to reduce the odds.' Kirby said to Countess Fanny, just to comfort her, never so much as imagining she would be afraid, 'The worst will be a bloody shirt for Simon to mangle,' for they had been arranging to live cheaply in a cottage on the Continent, and Simon Fettle to do the washing. She could not help laughing outright. But when the Old Buccaneer was down striding in the battle, she took a pistol and descended likewise; and she used it, too, and

loaded again.

She had not to use it a second time. Kirby pulled the gentleman off his horse, wounded in the thigh, and while dragging him to Countess Fanny to crave her pardon, a shot intended for Kirby hit the poor gentleman in the breast, and Kirby stretched him at his length, and Simon and he disarmed the servant who had fired. One was insensible, one flying, and those two on the ground. All in broad daylight; but so lonely is that spot, nothing might have been heard of it, if at the end of the week the postillion who had been bribed and threatened with terrible threats to keep his tongue from wagging, had not begun to talk. So the scene of the encounter was examined, and on one spot, carefully earthed over, blood-marks were discovered in the green sand. People in the huts on the hill-top, a quarter of a mile distant, spoke of having heard sounds of firing while they were at breakfast, and a little boy named Tommy Wedger said he saw a dead body go by in an open coach that morning; all bloody and mournful. He had to appear before the magistrates, crying terribly, but did not know the nature of an oath, and was dismissed. Time came when the boy learned to swear, and he did, and that he had seen a beautiful lady firing and killing men like pigeons and partridges; but that was after Charles Dump, the postillion, had been telling the story.

Those who credited Charles Dump's veracity speculated on dozens of great noblemen--and gentlemen known to be dying in love with Countess Fanny. And this brings us to another family.

I do not say I know anything; I do but lay before you the evidence we have to fix suspicion upon a notorious character, perfectly capable of trying to thwart a man like Kirby, and with good reason to try, if she had bewitched him to a consuming passion, as we are told.

About eleven miles distant, as the crow flies and a bold huntsman will ride in that heath country, from the Punch-Bowl, right across the mounds and the broad water, lies the estate of the Fakenhams, who intermarried with the Coplestones of the iron mines, and were the wealthiest of the old county families until Curtis Fakenham entered upon his inheritance. Money with him was like the farm-wife's dish of grain she tosses in showers to her fowls. He was more than what you call a lady-killer, he was a woman-eater. His pride was in it as well as his taste, and when men are like that, indeed they are devourers!

Curtis was the elder brother of Commodore Baldwin Fakenham, whose offspring, like his own, were so strangely mixed up with Captain Kirby's children by Countess Fanny, as you will hear. And these two brothers were sons of Geoffrey Fakenham, celebrated for his devotion to the French Countess Jules d'Andreuze, or some such name, a courtly gentleman, who turned Papist on his death-bed in France, in Brittany somewhere, not to be separated from her in the next world, as he solemnly left word; wickedly, many think.

To show the oddness of things and how opposite to one another brothers may be, his elder, the uncle of Curtis, and Baldwin, was the renowned old Admiral Fakenham, better known along our sea-coasts and ports among

sailors as 'Old Showery,' because of a remark he once made to his flag-captain, when cannon-balls were coming thick on them in a hard-fought action. 'Hot work, sir,' his captain said. 'Showery,' replied the admiral, as his cocked-hat was knocked off by the wind of a cannon-ball. He lost both legs before the war was over, and said merrily, 'Stumps for life' while they were carrying him below to the cockpit. In my girlhood the boys were always bringing home anecdotes of old Admiral Showery: not all of them true ones, perhaps, but they fitted him. He was a rough seaman, fond, as they say, of his glass and his girl, and utterly despising his brother Geoffrey for the airs he gave himself, and crawling on his knees to a female Parleyvoo; and when Geoffrey died, the admiral drank to his rest in the grave: 'There's to my brother Jeff,' he said, and flinging away the dregs of his glass: 'There 's to the Frog!' and flinging away the glass to shivers: 'There's to the Turncoat!'

He salted his language in a manner I cannot repeat; no epithet ever stood by itself. When I was young the boys relished these dreadful words because they seemed to smell of tar and battle-smoke, when every English boy was for being a sailor and daring the Black Gentleman below. In all truth, the bad words came from him; though an excellent scholar has assured me they should be taken for aspirates, and mean no harm; and so it may be, but heartily do I rejoice that aspirates, have been dropped by people of birth; for you might once hear titled ladies guilty of them in polite society, I do assure you.

We have greatly improved in that respect. They say the admiral's reputation as a British sailor of the old school made him, rather his name, a great favourite at Court; but to Court he could not be got to go, and if the tale be true, their Majesties paid him a visit on board his ship, in harbour one day, and sailors tell you that Old Showery gave his liege lord and lady a common dish of boiled beef with carrots and turnips, and a plain dumpling, for their dinner, with ale and port wine, the merit of which he swore to; and he became so elate, that after the cloth was removed, he danced them a hornpipe on his pair of wooden legs, whistling his tune, and holding his full tumbler of hot grog in his hand all the while, without so much as the spilling of a drop!--so earnest was he in everything he did. They say his limit was two bottles of port wine at a sitting, with his glass of hot grog to follow, and not a soul could induce him to go beyond that. In addition to being a great seaman, he was a very religious man and a stout churchman.

Well, now, the Curtis Fakenham of Captain Kirby's day had a good deal of his uncle as well as his father in him, the spirit of one and the outside, of the other; and, favoured or not, he had been distinguished among Countess Fanny's adorers: she certainly chose to be silent about the name of the assailant. And it has been attested on oath that two days and a night subsequent to the date furnished by Charles Dump, Curtis Fakenham was brought to his house, Hollis Grange, lame of a leg, with a shot in his breast, that he carried to the family vault; and his head gamekeeper, John Wiltshire, a resolute fellow, was missing from that hour. Some said they had a quarrel, and Curtis was wounded and John Wiltshire killed. Curtis was known to have been extremely attached to the man. Yet when Wiltshire was inquired for, he let fall a word of

'having more of Wiltshire than was agreeable to Hampshire'--his county. People asked what that meant. Yet, according to the tale, it was the surviving servant, by whom he, or whoever it may have been, was accidentally shot.

We are in a perfect tangle. On the other hand, it was never denied that Curtis and John Wiltshire were in London together at the time of Countess Fanny's flight: and Curtis Fakenham was one of the procession of armed gentleman conducting her in her carriage, as they supposed; and he was known to have started off, on the discovery of the cheat, with horrible imprecations against Frenchwomen. It became known, too; that horses of his were standing saddled in his innyard at midnight. And more, Charles Dump the postillion was taken secretly to set eyes on him as they wheeled him in his garden-walk, and he vowed it was the identical gentleman. But this coming by and by to the ear of Curtis, he had Charles Dump fetched over to confront him; and then the man made oath that he had never seen Mr. Curtis Fakenham anywhere but there, in his own house at Hollis! One does not really know what, to think of it.

This postillion made a small fortune. He was everywhere in request. People were never tired of asking him how he behaved while the fight was going on, and he always answered that he sat as close to his horse as he could, and did not dream of dismounting; for, he said, 'he was a figure on a horse, and naught when off it.' His repetition of the story, with some adornments, and that same remark, made him the popular man of the county; people said he might enter Parliament, and I think at one time it was possible. But a great success is full of temptations. After being hired at inns to fill them with his account of the battle, and tipped by travellers from London to show the spot, he set up for himself as innkeeper, and would have flourished, only he had contracted habits on his rounds, and he fell to contradicting himself, so that he came to be called Lying Charley; and the people of the country said it was 'he who drained the Punch-Bowl, for though he helped to put the capital into it, he took all the interest out of it.'

Yet we have the doctor of the village of Ipley, Dr. Cawthorne, a noted botanist, assuring us of the absolute credibility of Charles Dump, whom he attended in the poor creature's last illness, when Charles Dump confessed he had lived in mortal terror of Squire Curtis, and had got the trick of lying, through fear of telling the truth. Hence his ruin.

So he died delirious and contrite. Cawthorne, the great Turf man, inherited a portrait of him from his father the doctor. It was often the occasion of the story being told over again, and used to hang in the patients' reception room, next to an oil-painting of the Punch-Bowl, an admired landscape picture by a local artist, highly-toned and true to every particular of the scene, with the bright yellow road winding uphill, and the banks of brilliant purple heath, and a white thorn in bloom quite beautiful, and the green fir trees, and the big Bowl black as a cauldron,--indeed a perfect feast of harmonious contrasts in colours.

And now you know how it is that the names of Captain Kirby and Curtis Fakenham are alive to the present moment in the district.

We lived a happy domestic life in those old coaching days, when county affairs and county people were the topics of firesides, and the country enclosed us to make us feel snug in our own importance. My opinion is, that men and women grow to their dimensions only where such is the case. We had our alarms from the outside now and again, but we soon relapsed to dwell upon our private business and our pleasant little hopes and excitements; the courtships and the crosses and the scandals, the tea-parties and the dances, and how the morning looked after the stormy night had passed, and the coach coming down the hill with a box of news and perhaps a curious passenger to drop at the inn. I do believe we had a liking for the very highwaymen, if they had any reputation for civility. What I call human events, things concerning you and me, instead of the deafening catastrophes now afflicting and taking all conversation out of us, had their natural interest then. We studied the face of each morning as it came, and speculated upon the secret of the thing it might have in store for us or our heroes and heroines; we thought of them more than of ourselves. Long after the adventures of the Punch-Bowl, our county was anxious about Countess Fanny and the Old Buccaneer, wondering where they were and whether they were prospering, whether they were just as much in love as ever, and which of them would bury the other, and what the foreign people abroad thought of that strange pair.

CHAPTER III

CONTINUATION OF THE INTRODUCTORY MEANDERINGS OF DAME GOSSIP, TOGETHER WITH HER SUDDEN EXTINCTION

I have still time before me, according to the terms of my agreement with the person to whom I have, I fear foolishly, entrusted the letters and documents of a story surpassing ancient as well as modern in the wonderment it causes, that would make the Law courts bless their hearts, judges no less than the barristers, to have it running through them day by day, with every particular to wrangle over, and many to serve as a text for the pulpit. So to proceed.

It should be mentioned that the postillion Charles Dump is not represented, and I have no conception of the reason why not, sitting on horseback, in the portrait in the possession of the Cawthorne family. I have not seen it, I am bound to admit. We had offended Dr. Cawthorne, by once in an urgent case calling in another doctor, who, he would have it, was a quack, that ought to have killed us, and we ceased to visit; but a gentleman who was an established patient of Dr. Cawthorne's and had frequent opportunities of judging the portrait, in the course of a chronic malady, describes Charles Dump on his legs as a small man looking diminished from a very much longer one by shrinkage in thickish wrinkles from the shoulders to the shanks. His hat is enormous and very gay. He is rather of sad countenance. An elevation of his collar behind the ears, and pointed at the neck, gives you notions of his having dropped from some hook. He stands with his forefinger extended, like a disused

semaphore-post, that seems tumbling and desponding on the hill by the highroad, in his attitude while telling the tale; if standing it may be called, where the whole figure appears imploring for a seat. That was his natural position, as one would suppose any artist must have thought, and a horse beneath him. But it has been suggested that the artist in question was no painter of animals. Then why did he not get a painter of animals to put in the horse? It is vain to ask, though it is notorious that artists combine without bickering to do these things; and one puts his name on the animal, the other on the human being or landscape.

My informant adds, that the prominent feature, telling a melancholy tale of its own, is of sanguine colour, and while plainly in the act of speaking, Charles Dump might be fancied about to drop off to sleep. He was impressed by the dreaminess of the face; and I must say I regard him as an interesting character. During my girlhood Napoleon Bonaparte alone would have been his rival for filling an inn along our roads. I have known our boys go to bed obediently and get up at night to run three miles to THE WHEATSHEAF, only to stand on the bench or traveller's-rest outside the window and look in at Charles Dump reciting, with just room enough in the crowd to point his finger, as his way was.

He left a child, Mary Dump, who grew up to become lady's maid to Livia Fakenham, daughter of Curtis, the beauty of Hampshire, equalled by no one save her cousin Henrietta Fakenham, the daughter of Commodore Baldwin; and they were two different kinds of beauties, not to be compared, and different were their fortunes; for this lady was likened to the sun going down on a cloudy noon, and that lady to the moon riding through a stormy night. Livia was the young widow of Lord Duffield when she accepted the Earl of Fleetwood, and was his third countess, and again a widow at eight-and-twenty, and stepmother to young Croesus, the Earl of Fleetwood of my story. Mary Dump testifies to her kindness of heart to her dependents. If we are to speak of goodness, I am afraid there are other witnesses.

I resent being warned that my time is short and that I have wasted much of it over 'the attractive Charles.' What I have done I have done with a purpose, and it must be a storyteller devoid of the rudiments of his art who can complain of my dwelling on Charles Dump, for the world to have a pause and pin its faith to him, which it would not do to a grander person--that is, as a peg. Wonderful events, however true they are, must be attached to something common and familiar, to make them credible. Charles Dump, I say, is like a front-page picture to a history of those old quiet yet exciting days in England, and when once you have seized him the whole period is alive to you, as it was to me in the delicious dulness I loved, that made us thirsty to hear of adventures and able to enjoy to the utmost every thing occurring. The man is no more attractive to me than a lump of clay. How could he be? But supposing I took up the lump and told you that there where I found it, that lump of clay had been rolled over and flung off by the left wheel of the prophet's Chariot of Fire before it mounted aloft and disappeared in the heavens above!-- you would examine it and cherish it and have the scene present with you, you may be sure; and magnificent descriptions would not be one-half so persuasive. And that is what we call, in my profession, Art, if you

please.

So to continue: the Earl of Cressett fell from his coach-box in a fit, and died of it, a fortnight after the flight of his wife; and the people said she might as well have waited. Kirby and Countess Fanny were at Lucerne or Lausanne, or some such place, in Switzerland when the news reached them, and Kirby, without losing an hour, laid hold of an English clergyman of the Established Church and put him through the ceremony of celebrating his lawful union with the beautiful young creature he adored. And this he did, he said, for the world to guard his Fan in a wider circle than his two arms could compass, if not quite so well.

So the Old Buccaneer was ever after that her lawful husband, and as his wedded wife, not wedded to a fool, she was an example to her sex, like many another woman who has begun badly with a light-headed mate. It is hard enough for a man to be married to a fool, but a man is only half-cancelled by that burden, it has been said; whereas a woman finds herself on board a rudderless vessel, and often the desperate thing she does is to avoid perishing! Ten months, or eleven, some say, following the proclamation of the marriage-tie, a son was born to Countess Fanny, close by the castle of Chillon-on-the-lake, and he had the name of Chillon Switzer John Kirby given to him to celebrate the fact.

Two years later the girl was born, and for the reason of her first seeing the light in that Austrian province, she was christened Carinthia Jane. She was her old father's pet; but Countess Fanny gloried in the boy. She had fancied she would be a childless woman before he gave sign of coming; and they say she wrote a little volume of Meditations in Prospect of Approaching Motherhood, for the guidance of others in a similar situation.

I have never been able to procure the book or pamphlet, but I know she was the best of mothers, and of wives too. And she, with her old husband, growing like a rose out of a weather-beaten rock, proved she was that, among those handsome foreign officers poorly remarkable for their morals. Not once had the Old Buccaneer to teach them a lesson. Think of it and you will know that her feet did not stray--nor did her pretty eyes. Her heart was too full for the cravings of vanity. Innocent ladies who get their husbands into scrapes are innocent, perhaps; but knock you next door in their bosoms, where the soul resides, and ask for information of how innocence and uncleanness may go together. Kirby purchased a mine in Carinthia, on the borders of Styria, and worked it himself. His native land displeased him, so that he would not have been unwilling to see Chillon enter the Austrian service, which the young man was inclined for, subsequent to his return to his parents from one of the English public schools, notwithstanding his passionate love for Old England. But Lord Levellier explained the mystery in a letter to his half-forgiven sister, praising the boy for his defence of his mother's name at the school, where a big brutal fellow sneered at her, and Chillon challenged him to sword or pistol; and then he walked down to the boy's home in Staffordshire to force him to fight; and the father of the boy made him offer an apology. That was not much balm to Master Chillon's wound. He returned to his mother quite heavy, unlike a young man; and

the unhappy lady, though she knew, him to be bitterly sensitive on the point of honour, and especially as to everything relating to her, saw herself compelled to tell him the history of her life, to save him, as she thought, from these chivalrous vindications of her good name. She may have even painted herself worse than she was, both to excuse her brother's miserliness to her son and the world's evil speaking of her. Wisely or not, she chose this course devotedly to protect him from the perils she foresaw in connection with the name of the once famous Countess Fanny in the British Isles. And thus are we stricken by the days of our youth. It is impossible to moralize conveniently when one is being hurried by a person at one's elbow.

So the young man heard his mother out and kissed her, and then he went secretly to Vienna and enlisted and served for a year as a private in the regiment of Hussars, called, my papers tell me, Liechtenstein, and what with his good conduct and the help of Kirby's friends, he would have obtained a commission from the emperor, when, at the right moment to keep a sprig of Kirby's growth for his country, Lord Levellier sent word that he was down for a cornetcy in a British regiment of dragoons. Chillon came home from a garrison town, and there was a consultation about his future career. Shall it be England? Shall it be Austria? Countess Fanny's voice was for England, and she carried the vote, knowing though she did that it signified separation, and it might be alienation--where her son would chance to hear things he could not refute. She believed that her son by such a man as Kirby would be of use to his country, and her voice, against herself, was for England.

It broke her heart. If she failed to receive the regular letter, she pined and was disconsolate. He has heard more of me! was in her mind. Her husband sat looking at her with his old large grey glassy eyes. You would have fancied him awaiting her death as the signal for his own release. But she, poor mother, behind her weeping lids beheld her son's filial love of her wounded and bleeding. When there was anything to be done for her, old Kirby was astir. When it was nothing, either in physic or assistance, he was like a great corner of rock. You may indeed imagine grief in the very rock that sees its flower fading to the withered shred. On the last night of her life this old man of past ninety carried her in his arms up a flight of stairs to her bed.

A week after her burial, Kirby was found a corpse in the mountain forest. His having called the death of his darling his lightning-stroke must have been the origin of the report that he died of lightning. He touched not a morsel of food from the hour of the dropping of the sod on her coffin of ebony wood. An old crust of their mahogany bread, supposed at first to be a specimen of quartz, was found in one of his coat pockets. He kissed his girl Carinthia before going out on his last journey from home, and spoke some wandering words. The mine had not been worked for a year. She thought she would find him at the mouth of the shaft, where he would sometimes be sitting and staring, already dead at heart with the death he saw coming to the beloved woman. They had to let her down with ropes, that she might satisfy herself he was not below. She and her great dog and a faithful man-servant discovered the body in the forest. Chillon arrived from England to see the common grave of both his parents.

And now good-bye to sorrow for a while. Keep your tears for the living. And first I am going to describe to you the young Earl of Fleetwood, son of the strange Welsh lady, the richest nobleman of his time, and how he persued and shunned the lady who had fascinated him, Henrietta, the daughter of Commodore Baldwin Fakenham; and how he met Carinthia Jane; and concerning that lovely Henrietta and Chillon Kirby-Levellier; and of the young poet of ordinary parentage, and the giant Captain Abrane, and Livia the widowed Countess of Fleetwood, Henrietta's cousin, daughter of Curtis Fakenham; and numbers of others; Lord Levellier, Lord Brailstone, Lord Simon Pitscrew, Chumley Potts, young Ambrose Mallard; and the English pugilist, such a man of honour though he drank; and the adventures of Madge, Carinthia Jane's maid. Just a few touches. And then the marriage dividing Great Britain into halves, taking sides. After that, I trust you may go on, as I would carry you were we all twenty years younger, had I but sooner been in possession of these treasured papers. I promise you excitement enough, if justice is done to them. But I must and will describe the wedding. This young Earl of Fleetwood, you should know, was a very powder-magazine of ambition, and never would he break his word: which is right, if we are properly careful; and so he--

She ceases. According to the terms of the treaty, the venerable lady's time has passed. An extinguisher descends on her, giving her the likeness of one under condemnation of 'the Most Holy Inquisition, in the ranks of an 'auto da fe'; and singularly resembling that victim at the first sharp bite of the flames she will, be when she hears the version of her story.

CHAPTER IV

MORNING AND FAREWELL TO AN OLD HOME

Brother and sister were about to leave the mountainland for England. They had not gone to bed overnight, and from the windows of their deserted home, a little before dawn, they saw the dwindled moon, a late riser, break through droves of hunted cloud, directly topping their ancient guardian height, the triple peak and giant of the range, friendlier in his name than in aspect for the two young people clinging to the scene they were to quit. His name recalled old-days: the apparition of his head among the heavens drummed on their sense of banishment.

To the girl, this was a division of her life, and the dawn held the sword. She felt herself midswing across a gulf that was the grave of one half, without a light of promise for the other. Her passionate excess of attachment to her buried home robbed the future of any colours it might have worn to bid a young heart quicken. And England, though she was of British blood, was a foreign place to her, not alluring: her brother had twice come out of England reserved in speech; her mother's talk of

England had been unhappy; her father had suffered ill-treatment there from a brutal institution termed the Admiralty, and had never regretted the not seeing England again. The thought that she was bound thitherward enfolded her like a frosty mist. But these bare walls, these loud floors, chill rooms, dull windows, and the vault-sounding of the ghostly house, everywhere the absence of the faces in the house told her she had no choice, she must go. The appearance of her old friend the towering mountain-height, up a blue night-sky, compelled her swift mind to see herself far away, yearning to him out of exile, an exile that had no local features; she would not imagine them to give a centre of warmth, her wilful grief preferred the blank. It resembled death in seeming some hollowness behind a shroud, which we shudder at.

The room was lighted by a stable-lantern on a kitchen-table. Their seat near the window was a rickety garden-bench rejected in the headlong sale of the furniture; and when she rose, unable to continue motionless while the hosts of illuminated cloud flew fast, she had to warn her brother to preserve his balance. He tacitly did so, aware of the necessity.

She walked up and down the long seven-windowed saloon, haunted by her footfall, trying to think, chafing at his quietness and acknowledging that he did well to be quiet. They had finished their packing of boxes and of wearing-apparel for the journey. There was nothing to think of, nothing further to talk of, nothing for her to do save to sit and look, and deaden her throbs by counting them. She soon returned to her seat beside her brother, with the marvel in her breast that the house she desired so much to love should be cold and repel her now it was a vacant shell. Her memories could not hang within it anywhere. She shut her eyes to be with the images of the dead, conceiving the method as her brother's happy secret, and imitated his posture, elbows propped on knees to support the chin. His quietness breathed of a deeper love than her own.

Meanwhile the high wind had sunk; the moon, after pushing her withered half to the zenith, was climbing the dusky edge, revealed fitfully; threads and wisps of thin vapour travelled along a falling gale, and branched from the dome of the sky in migratory broken lines, like wild birds shifting the order of flight, north and east, where the dawn sat in a web, but as yet had done no more than shoot up a glow along the central heavens, in amid the waves of deepened aloud: a mirror for night to see her dark self in her own hue. A shiver between the silent couple pricked their wits, and she said:

'Chillon, shall we run out and call the morning?'

It was an old game of theirs, encouraged by their hearty father, to be out in the early hour on a rise of ground near the house and 'call the morning.' Her brother was glad of the challenge, and upon one of the yawns following a sleepless night, replied with a return to boyishness: 'Yes, if you like. It's the last time we shall do her the service here. Let's go.'

They sprang up together and the bench fell behind them. Swinging the

lantern he carried inconsiderately, the ring of it was left on his finger, and the end of candle rolled out of the crazy frame to the floor and was extinguished. Chillon had no match-box. He said to her:

'What do you think of the window?--we've done it before, Carin. Better than groping down stairs and passages blocked with lumber.'

'I'm ready,' she said, and caught at her skirts by instinct to prove her readiness on the spot.

A drop of a dozen feet or so from the French window to a flower-bed was not very difficult. Her father had taught her how to jump, besides the how of many other practical things. She leaped as lightly as her brother, never touching earth with her hands; and rising from the proper contraction of the legs in taking the descent, she quoted her father: 'Mean it when you're doing it.'

'For no enemy's shot is equal to a weak heart in the act,'

Chillon pursued the quotation, laying his hand on her shoulder for a sign of approval. She looked up at him.

They passed down the garden and a sloping meadow to a brook swollen by heavy rains; over the brook on a narrow plank, and up a steep and stony pathway, almost a watercourse, between rocks, to another meadow, level with the house, that led ascending through a firwood; and there the change to thicker darkness told them light was abroad, though whether of the clouded moon or of the first grey of the quiet revolution was uncertain. Metallic light of a subterranean realm, it might have been thought.

'You remember everything of father,' Carinthia said. 'We both do,' said Chillon.

She pressed her brother's arm. 'We will. We will never forget anything.'

Beyond the firwood light was visibly the dawn's. Half-way down the ravines it resembled the light cast off a torrent water. It lay on the grass like a sheet of unreflecting steel, and was a face without a smile above. Their childhood ran along the tracks to the forest by the light, which was neither dim nor cold, but grave; presenting tree and shrub and dwarf growth and grass austerely, not deepening or confusing them. They wound their way by borders of crag, seeing in a dell below the mouth of the idle mine begirt with weedy and shrub-hung rock, a dripping semi-circle. Farther up they came on the flat juniper and crossed a wet ground-thicket of whortleberry: their feet were in the moist moss among sprigs of heath; and a great fir-tree stretched his length, a peeled multitude of his dead fellows leaned and stood upright in the midst of scattered fire-stained members, and through their skeleton limbs the sheer precipice of slate-rock of the bulk across the chasm, nursery of hawk and eagle; wore a thin blue tinge, the sign of warmer light abroad.

'This way, my brother!' cried Carinthia, shuddering at a path he was about to follow.

Dawn in the mountain-land is a meeting of many friends. The pinnacle, the forest-head, the latschen-tufted mound, rock-bastion and defiant cliff and giant of the triple peak, were in view, clearly lined for a common recognition, but all were figures of solid gloom, unfeatured and bloomless. Another minute and they had flung off their mail, and changed to various, indented, intricate, succinct in ridge, scar and channel; and they had all a look of watchfulness that made them one company. The smell of rock-waters and roots of herb and moss grew keen; air became a wine that raised the breast high to breathe it; an uplifting coolness pervaded the heights. What wonder that the mountain-bred girl should let fly her voice. The natural carol woke an echo. She did not repeat it.

'And we will not forget our home, Chillon,' she said, touching him gently to comfort some saddened feeling.

The plumes of cloud now slowly entered into the lofty arch of dawn and melted from brown to purpleblack. The upper sky swam with violet; and in a moment each stray cloud-feather was edged with rose, and then suffused. It seemed that the heights fronted East to eye the interflooding of colours, and it was imaginable that all turned to the giant whose forehead first kindled to the sun: a greeting of god and king.

On the morning of a farewell we fluctuate sharply between the very distant and the close and homely: and even in memory the fluctuation occurs, the grander scene casting us back on the modestly nestling, and that, when it has refreshed us, conjuring imagination to embrace the splendour and wonder. But the wrench of an immediate division from what we love makes the things within us reach the dearest, we put out our hands for them, as violently-parted lovers do, though the soul in days to come would know a craving, and imagination flap a leaden wing, if we had not looked beyond them.

'Shall we go down?' said Carinthia, for she knew a little cascade near the house, showering on rock and fern, and longed to have it round her.

They descended, Chillon saying that they would soon have the mists rising, and must not delay to start on their journey.

The armies of the young sunrise in mountain-lands neighbouring the plains, vast shadows, were marching over woods and meads, black against the edge of golden; and great heights were cut with them, and bounding waters took the leap in a silvery radiance to gloom; the bright and dark-banded valleys were like night and morning taking hands down the sweep of their rivers. Immense was the range of vision scudding the peaks and over the illimitable Eastward plains flat to the very East and sources of the sun.

Carinthia said: 'When I marry I shall come here to live and die.'

Her brother glanced at her. He was fond of her, and personally he liked

her face; but such a confident anticipation of marriage on the part of a portionless girl set him thinking of the character of her charms and the attraction they would present to the world of men. They were expressive enough; at times he had thought them marvellous in their clear cut of the animating mind.--No one could fancy her handsome; and just now her hair was in some disorder, a night without sleep had an effect on her complexion.

'It's not usually the wife who decides where to live,' said he.

Her ideas were anywhere but with the dream of a husband. 'Could we stay on another day?--'

'My dear girl! Another night on that crazy stool! 'Besides, Mariandl is bound to go to-day to her new place, and who's to cook for us? Do you propose fasting as well as watching?'

'Could I cook?' she asked him humbly.

'No, you couldn't; not for a starving regiment! Your accomplishments are of a different sort. No, it's better to get over the pain at once, if we can't escape it.

'That I think too,' said she, 'and we should have to buy provisions. Then, brother, instantly after breakfast. Only, let us walk it. I know the whole way, and it is not more than a two days' walk for you and me. Consent. Driving would be like going gladly. I could never bear to remember that I was driven away.

And walking will save money; we are not rich, you tell me, brother.'

'A few florins more or less!' he rejoined, rather frowning. 'You have good Styrian boots, I see. But I want to be over at the Baths there soon; not later than to-morrow.'

'But, brother, if they know we are coming they will wait for us. And we can be there to-morrow night or the next morning!'

He considered it. He wanted exercise and loved this mountain-land; his inclinations melted into hers; though he had reasons for hesitating.

'Well, we'll send on my portmanteau and your boxes in the cart; we'll walk it. You're a capital walker, you're a gallant comrade; I wouldn't wish for a better.' He wondered, as he spoke, whether any true-hearted gentleman besides himself would ever think the same of this lonely girl.

Her eyes looked a delighted 'No-really?' for the sweetest on earth to her was to be prized by her brother.

She hastened forward. 'We will go down and have our last meal at home,' she said in the dialect of the country. 'We have five eggs. No meat for you, dear, but enough bread and butter, some honey left, and plenty of coffee. I should like to have left old Mariandl more, but we are unable to do very much for poor people now. Milk, I cannot say. She is just

the kind soul to be up and out to fetch us milk for an early first breakfast; but she may have overslept herself.'

Chillon smiled. 'You were right, Janet', about not going to bed last night; we might have missed the morning.'

'I hate sleep: I hate anything that robs me of my will,' she replied.

'You'd be glad of your doses of sleep if you had to work and study.'

'To fall down by the wayside tired out--yes, brother, a dead sleep is good. Then you are in the hands of God. Father used to say, four hours for a man, six for a woman.'

'And four and twenty for a lord,' added Chillon. 'I remember.'

'A lord of that Admiralty,' she appealed to his closer recollection.

'But I mean, brother, dreaming is what I detest so.'

'Don't be detesting, my dear; reserve your strength,' said he. 'I suppose dreams are of some use, now and then.'

'I shall never think them useful.'

'When we can't get what we want, my good Carin.'

'Then we should not waste ourselves in dreams.'

'They promise falsely sometimes. That's no reason why we should reject the consolation when we can't get what we want, my little sister.'

'I would not be denied.'

'There's the impossible.'

'Not for you, brother.'

Perhaps a half-minute after she had spoken, he said, 'pursuing a dialogue within himself aloud rather than revealing a secret: 'You don't know her position.'

Carinthia's heart stopped beating. Who was this person suddenly conjured up?

She fancied she might not have heard correctly; she feared to ask and yet she perceived a novel softness in him that would have answered. Pain of an unknown kind made her love of her brother conscious that if she asked she would suffer greater pain.

The house was in sight, a long white building with blinds down at some of the windows, and some wide open, some showing unclean glass: the three aspects and signs of a house's emptiness when they are seen together.

Carinthia remarked on their having met nobody. It had a serious meaning for them. Formerly they were proud of outstripping the busy population of the mine, coming down on them with wild wavings and shouts of sunrise. They felt the death again, a whole field laid low by one stroke, and wintriness in the season of glad life. A wind had blown and all had vanished.

The second green of the year shot lively sparkles off the meadows, from a fringe of coloured glovelets to a warm silver lake of dews. The firwood was already breathing rich and sweet in the sun. The half-moon fell rayless and paler than the fan of fleeces pushed up Westward, high overhead, themselves dispersing on the blue in downy feathers, like the mottled grey of an eagle's breast: the smaller of them bluish like traces of the beaked wood-pigeon.

She looked above, then below on the slim and straightgrown flocks of naked purple crocuses in bud and blow abounding over the meadow that rolled to the level of the house, and two of these she gathered.

CHAPTER V

A MOUNTAIN WALK IN MIST AND SUNSHINE

Chillon was right in his forecast of the mists. An over-moistened earth steaming to the sun obscured it before the two had finished breakfast, which was a finish to everything eatable in the ravaged dwelling, with the exception of a sly store for the midday meal, that old Mariandl had stuffed into Chillon's leather sack--the fruit of secret begging on their behalf about the neighbourhood. He found the sack heavy and bulky as he slung it over his shoulders; but she bade him make nothing of such a trifle till he had it inside him. 'And you that love tea so, my pretty one, so that you always laughed and sang after drinking a cup with your mother,' she said to Carinthia, 'you will find one pinch of it in your bag at the end of the left-foot slipper, to remember your home by when you are out in the world.'

She crossed the strap of the bag on her mistress's bosom, and was embraced by Carinthia and Chillon in turns, Carinthia telling her to dry her eyes, for that she would certainly come back and perhaps occupy the house one day or other. The old soul moaned of eyes that would not be awake to behold her; she begged a visit at her grave, though it was to be in a Catholic burial-place and the priests had used her dear master and mistress ill, not allowing them to lie in consecrated ground; affection made her a champion of religious tolerance and a little afraid of retribution. Carinthia soothed her, kissed her, gave the promise, and the parting was over.

She and Chillon had on the previous day accomplished a pilgrimage to the resting-place of their father and mother among humble Protestants, iron-smelters, in a valley out of the way of their present line of march to

the glacier of the great snow-mountain marking the junction of three Alpine provinces of Austria. Josef, the cart-driver with the boxes, who was to pass the valley, vowed of his own accord to hang a fresh day's wreath on the rails. He would not hear of money for the purchase, and they humoured him. The family had been beloved. There was an offer of a home for Carinthia in the castle of Count Lebern, a friend of her parents, much taken with her, and she would have accepted it had not Chillon overruled her choice, determined that, as she was English, she must come to England and live under the guardianship of her uncle, Lord Levellier, of whose character he did not speak.

The girl's cheeks were drawn thin and her lips shut as they departed; she was tearless. A phantom ring of mist accompanied her from her first footing outside the house. She did not look back. The house came swimming and plunging after her, like a spectral ship on big seas, and her father and mother lived and died in her breast; and now they were strong, consulting, chatting, laughing, caressing; now still and white, caught by a vapour that dived away with them either to right or left, but always with the same suddenness, leaving her to question herself whether she existed, for more of life seemed to be with their mystery than with her speculations. The phantom ring of mist enclosing for miles the invariable low-sweeping dark spruce-fir kept her thoughts on them as close as the shroud. She walked fast, but scarcely felt that she was moving. Near midday the haunted circle widened; rocks were loosely folded in it, and heads of trees, whose round interlocking roots grasped the yellow roadside soil; the mists shook like a curtain, and partly opened and displayed a tapestry-landscape, roughly worked, of woollen crag and castle and suggested glen, threaded waters, very prominent foreground, Autumn flowers on banks; a predominant atmospheric greyness. The sun threw a shaft, liquid instead of burning, as we see his beams beneath a wave; and then the mists narrowed again, boiled up the valleys and streams above the mountain, curled and flew, and were Python coils pierced by brighter arrows of the sun. A spot of blue signalled his victory above.

To look at it was to fancy they had been walking under water and had now risen to the surface. Carinthia's mind stepped out of the chamber of death. The different air and scene breathed into her a timid warmth toward the future, and between her naming of the lesser mountains on their side of the pass, she asked questions relating to England, and especially the ladies she was to see at the Baths beyond the glacier-pass. She had heard of a party of his friends awaiting him there, without much encouragement from him to ask particulars of them, and she had hitherto abstained, as she was rather shy of meeting her countrywomen. The ladies, Chillon said, were cousins; one was a young widow, the Countess of Fleetwood, and the other was Miss Fakenham, a younger lady.

Carinthia murmured in German: 'Poor soul!' Which one was she pitying? The widow, she said, in the tone implying, naturally.

Her brother assured her the widow was used to it, for this was her second widowhood.

'She marries again!' exclaimed the girl.

'You don't like that idea?' said he.

Carinthia betrayed a delicate shudder.

Her brother laughed to himself at her expressive present tense. 'And marries again!' he said. 'There will certainly be a third.'

'Husband?' said she, as at the incredible.

'Husband, let's hope,' he answered.

She dropped from her contemplation of the lady, and her look at her brother signified: It will not be you!

Chillon was engaged in spying for a place where he could spread out the contents of his bag. Sharp hunger beset them both at the mention of eating. A bank of sloping green shaded by a chestnut proposed the seat, and here he relieved the bag of a bottle of wine, slices of, meat, bread, hard eggs, and lettuce, a chipped cup to fling away after drinking the wine, and a supply of small butler-cakes known to be favourites with Carinthia. She reversed the order of the feast by commencing upon one of the cakes, to do honour to Mariandl's thoughtfulness. As at their breakfast, they shared the last morsel.

'But we would have made it enough for our dear old dog Pluto as well, if he had lived,' said Carinthia, sighing with her thankfulness and compassionate regrets, a mixture often inspiring a tender babbling melancholy. 'Dogs' eyes have such a sick look of love. He might have lived longer, though he was very old, only he could not survive the loss of father. I know the finding of the body broke his heart. He sprang forward, he stopped and threw up his head. It was human language to hear him, Chillon. He lay in the yard, trying to lift his eyes when I came to him, they were so heavy; and he had not strength to move his poor old tail more than once. He died with his head on my lap. He seemed to beg me, and I took him, and he breathed twice, and that was his end. Pluto! old dog! Well, for you or for me, brother, we could not have a better wish. As for me, death! . . . When we know we are to die! Only let my darling live! that is my prayer, and that we two may not be separated till I am taken to their grave. Father bought ground for four--his wife and himself and his two children. It does not oblige us to be buried there, but could we have any other desire?'

She stretched her hand to her brother. He kissed it spiritedly.

'Look ahead, my dear girl. Help me to finish this wine. There 's nothing like good hard walking to give common wine of the country a flavour--and out of broken crockery.'

'I think it so good,' Carinthia replied, after drinking from the cup. 'In England they, do not grow wine. Are the people there kind?'

'They're civilized people, of course.'

'Kind--warm to you, Chillon?'

'Some of them, when you know them. "Warm," is hardly the word. Winter's warm on skates. You must do a great deal for yourself. They don't boil over. By the way, don't expect much of your uncle.'

'Will he not love me?'

'He gives you a lodging in his house, and food enough, we'll hope. You won't see company or much of him.'

'I cannot exist without being loved. I do not care for company. He must love me a little.'

'He is one of the warm-hearted race--he's mother's brother; but where his heart is, I've not discovered.'

'Bear with him just for the present, my dear, till I am able to support you.'

'I will,' she said.

The dreary vision of a home with an unloving uncle was not brightened by the alternative of her brother's having to support her. She spoke of money. 'Have we none, Chillon?'

'We have no debts,' he answered. 'We have a claim on the Government here for indemnification for property taken to build a fortress upon one of the passes into Italy. Father bought the land, thinking there would be a yield of ore thereabout; and they have seized it, rightly enough, but they dispute our claim for the valuation we put on it. A small sum they would consent to pay. It would be a very small sum, and I'm father's son, I will have justice.'

'Yes!' Carthina joined with him to show the same stout nature.

'We have nothing else except a bit to toss up for luck.'

'And how can I help being a burden on my brother?' she inquired, in distress.

'Marry, and be a blessing to a husband,' he said lightly.

They performed a sacrifice of the empty bottle and cracked cup on the site of their meal, as if it had been a ceremony demanded from travellers, and leaving them in fragments, proceeded on their journey refreshed.

Walking was now high enjoyment, notwithstanding the force of the sun, for they were a hardy couple, requiring no more than sufficient nourishment

to combat the elements with an exulting blood. Besides they loved mountain air and scenery, and each step to the ridge of the pass they climbed was an advance in splendour. Peaks of ashen hue and pale dry red and pale sulphur pushed up, straight, forked, twisted, naked, striking their minds with an indeterminate ghostliness of Indian, so strange they were in shape and colouring. These sharp points were the first to greet them between the blue and green. A depression of the pass to the left gave sight of the points of black fir forest below, round the girths of the barren shafts. Mountain blocks appeared pushing up in front, and a mountain wall and woods on it, and mountains in the distance, and cliffs riven with falls of water that were silver skeins, down lower to meadows, villages and spires, and lower finally to the whole valley of the foaming river, field and river seeming in imagination rolled out from the hand of the heading mountain.

'But see this in winter, as I did with father, Chillon!' said Carinthia.

She said it upon love's instinct to halo the scene with something beyond present vision, and to sanctify it for her brother, so that this walk of theirs together should never be forgotten.

A smooth fold of cloud, moveless along one of the upper pastures, and still dense enough to be luminous in sunlight, was the last of the mist.

They watched it lying in the form of a fish, leviathan diminished, as they descended their path; and the head was lost, the tail spread peacockwise, and evaporated slowly in that likeness; and soft to a breath of air as gossamer down, the body became a ball, a cock, a little lizard, nothingness.

The bluest bright day of the year was shining. Chillon led the descent. With his trim and handsome figure before her, Carinthia remembered the current saying, that he should have been the girl and she the boy. That was because he resembled their mother in face. But the build of his limbs and shoulders was not feminine.

To her admiring eyes, he had a look superior to simple strength and grace; the look of a great sky-bird about to mount, a fountain-like energy of stature, delightful to her contemplation. And he had the mouth women put faith in for decision and fixedness. She did, most fully; and reflecting how entirely she did so, the thought assailed her: some one must be loving him!

She allowed it to surprise her, not choosing to revert to an uneasy sensation of the morning.

That some one, her process of reasoning informed her, was necessarily an English young lady. She reserved her questions till they should cease this hopping and heeling down the zigzag of the slippery path-track. When children they had been collectors of beetles and butterflies, and the flying by of a 'royal-mantle,' the purple butterfly grandly fringed, could still remind Carinthia of the event it was of old to spy and chase one. Chillon himself was not above the sentiment of their "very early

days"; he stopped to ask if she had been that lustrous blue-wing, a rarer species, prized by youngsters, shoot through the chestnut trees: and they both paused for a moment, gazing into the fairyland of infancy, she seeing with her brother's eyes, this prince of the realm having escaped her. He owned he might have been mistaken, as the brilliant fellow flew swift and high between leaves, like an ordinary fritillary. Not the less did they get their glimpse of the wonders in the sunny eternity of a child's afternoon.

'An Auerhahn, Chillon!' she said, picturing the maturer day when she had scaled perilous heights with him at night to stalk the blackcock in the prime of the morning. She wished they could have had another such adventure to stamp the old home on his heart freshly, to the exclusion of beautiful English faces.

On the level of the valley, where they met the torrent-river, walking side by side with him, she ventured an inquiry: 'English girls are fair girls, are they not?'

'There are some dark also,' he replied.

'But the best-looking are fair?'

'Perhaps they are, with us.'

'Mother was fair.'

'She was.'

'I have only seen a few of them, once at Vies and at Venice, and those Baths we are going to; and at Meran, I think.'

'You considered them charming?'

'Not all.'

It was touching that she should be such a stranger to her countrywomen! He drew a portrait-case from his breast-pocket, pressing the spring, and handed it to her, saying: 'There is one.' He spoke indifferently, but as soon as she had seen the face inside it, with a look at him and a deep breath; she understood that he was an altered brother, and that they were three instead of two.

She handed it back to him, saying hushedly and only 'Yes.'

He did not ask an opinion upon the beauty she had seen. His pace increased, and she hastened her steps beside him. She had not much to learn when some minutes later she said; 'Shall I see her, Chillon?'

'She is one of the ladies we are to meet.'

'What a pity!' Carinthia stepped faster, enlightened as to his wish to get to the Baths without delay; and her heart softened in reflecting how

readily he had yielded to her silly preference for going on foot.

Her cry of regret was equivocal; it produced no impression on him. They reached a village where her leader deemed it adviseable to drive for the remainder of the distance up the valley to the barrier snow-mountain. She assented instantly, she had no longer any active wishes of her own, save to make amends to her brother, who was and would ever be her brother: she could not be robbed of their relationship.

Something undefined in her feeling of possession she had been robbed of, she knew it by her spiritlessness; and she would fain have attributed it to the idle motion of the car, now and then stupidly jolting her on, after the valiant exercise of her limbs. They were in a land of waterfalls and busy mills, a narrowing vale where the runs of grass grew short and wild, and the glacier-river roared for the leap, more foam than water, and the savagery, naturally exciting to her, breathed of its lair among the rocks and ice-fields.

Her brother said: 'There he is.' She saw the whitecrowned king of the region, of whose near presence to her old home she had been accustomed to think proudly, and she looked at him without springing to him, and continued imaging her English home and her loveless uncle, merely admiring the scene, as if the fire of her soul had been extinguished.-- 'Marry, and be a blessing to a husband.' Chillon's words whispered of the means of escape from the den of her uncle.

But who would marry me! she thought. An unproved sensation of melting pervaded her; she knew her capacity for gratitude, and conjuring it up in her 'heart, there came with it the noble knightly gentleman who would really stoop to take a plain girl by the hand, release her, and say: 'Be mine!' His vizor was down, of course. She had no power of imagining the lineaments of that prodigy. Or was he a dream? He came and went. Her mother, not unkindly, sadly, had counted her poor girl's chances of winning attention and a husband. Her father had doated on her face; but, as she argued, her father had been attracted by her mother, a beautiful woman, and this was a circumstance that reflected the greater hopelessness on her prospects. She bore a likeness to her father, little to her mother, though he fancied the reverse and gave her the mother's lips and hair. Thinking of herself, however, was destructive to the form of her mirror of knightliness: he wavered, he fled for good, as the rosy vapour born of our sensibility must do when we relapse to coldness, and the more completely when we try to command it. No, she thought, a plain girl should think of work, to earn her independence.

'Women are not permitted to follow armies, Chillon?' she said.

He laughed out. 'What 's in your head?'

The laugh abashed her; she murmured of women being good nurses for wounded soldiers, if they were good walkers to march with the army; and, as evidently it sounded witless to him, she added, to seem reasonable: 'You have not told me the Christian names of those ladies.'

He made queer eyes over the puzzle to connect the foregoing and the succeeding in her remarks, but answered straightforwardly: 'Livia is one, and Henrietta!

Her ear seized on the stress of his voice. 'Henrietta!' She chose that name for the name of the person disturbing her; it fused best, she thought, with the new element she had been compelled to take into her system, to absorb it if she could.

'You're not scheming to have them serve as army hospital nurses, my dear?'

'No, Chillon.'

'You can't explain it, I suppose?'

'A sister could go too, when you go to war, Chillon.'

A sister could go, if it were permitted by the authorities, and be near her brother to nurse him in case of wounds; others would be unable to claim the privilege. That was her meaning, involved with the hazy project of earning an independence; but she could not explain it, and Chillon set her down for one of the inexplicable sex, which the simple adventurous girl had not previously seemed to be.

She was inwardly warned of having talked foolishly, and she held her tongue. Her humble and modest jealousy, scarce deserving the title, passed with a sigh or two. It was her first taste of life in the world.

A fit of heavy-mindedness ensued, that heightened the contrast her recent mood had bequeathed, between herself, ignorant as she was, and those ladies. Their names, Livia and Henrietta, soared above her and sang the music of the splendid spheres. Henrietta was closer to earth, for her features had been revealed; she was therefore the dearer, and the richer for him who loved her, being one of us, though an over-earthly one; and Carinthia gave her to Chillon, reserving for herself a handmaiden's place within the circle of their happiness.

This done, she sat straight in the car. It was toiling up the steep ascent of a glen to the mountain village, the last of her native province. Her proposal to walk was accepted, and the speeding of her blood, now that she had mastered a new element in it, soon restored her to her sisterly affinity with natural glories. The sunset was on yonder side of the snows. Here there was a feast of variously-tinted sunset shadows on snow, meadows, rock, river, serrated cliff. The peaked cap of the rushing rock-dotted sweeps of upward snow caught a scarlet illumination: one flank of the white in heaven was violetted wonderfully.

At nightfall, under a clear black sky, alive with wakeful fires round head and breast of the great Alp, Chillon and Carinthia strolled out of the village, and he told her some of his hopes. They referred to inventions of destructive weapons, which were primarily to place his country out of all danger from a world in arms; and also, it might be

mentioned, to bring him fortune. 'For I must have money!' he said, sighing it out like a deliberate oath. He and his uncle were associated in the inventions. They had an improved rocket that would force military chiefs to change their tactics: they had a new powder, a rifle, a model musket--the latter based on his own plans; and a scheme for fortress artillery likely to turn the preponderance in favour of the defensive once again. 'And that will be really doing good,' said Chillon, 'for where it's with the offensive, there's everlasting bullying and plundering.'

Carinthia warmly agreed with him, but begged him be sure his uncle divided the profits equally. She discerned what his need of money signified.

Tenderness urged her to say: 'Henrietta! Chillon.'

'Well?' he answered quickly.

'Will she wait?'

'Can she, you should ask.'

'Is she brave?'

'Who can tell, till she has been tried?'

'Is she quite free?'

'She has not yet been captured.'

'Brother, is there no one else . . . ?'

'There's a nobleman anxious to bestow his titles on her.'

'He is rich?'

'The first or second wealthiest in Great Britain, they say.'

'Is he young?'

'About the same age as mine.'

'Is he a handsome young man?'

'Handsome than your brother, my girl.'

'No, no, no!' said she. 'And what if he is, and your Henrietta does not choose him? Now let me think what I long to think. I have her close to me.'

She rocked a roseate image on her heart and went to bed with it by starlight.

By starlight they sprang to their feet and departed the next morning, in the steps of a guide carrying, Chillon said, 'a better lantern than we left behind us at the smithy.'

'Father!' exclaimed Carinthia on her swift inward breath, for this one of the names he had used to give to her old home revived him to her thoughts and senses fervently.

CHAPTER VI

THE NATURAL PHILOSOPHER

Three parts down a swift decline of shattered slate, where travelling stones loosened from rows of scree hurl away at a bound after one roll over, there sat a youth dusty and torn, nursing a bruised leg, not in the easiest of postures, on a sharp tooth of rock, that might at any moment have broken from the slanting slab at the end of which it formed a stump, and added him a second time to the general crumble of the mountain. He had done a portion of the descent in excellent imitation of the detached fragments, and had parted company with his alpenstock and plaid; preserving his hat and his knapsack. He was alone, disabled, and cheerful; in doubt of the arrival of succour before he could trust his left leg to do him further service unaided; but it was morning still, the sun was hot, the air was cool; just the tempering opposition to render existence pleasant as a piece of vegetation, especially when there has been a question of your ceasing to exist; and the view was of a sustaining sublimity of desolateness: crag and snow overhead; a gloomy vale below; no life either of bird or herd; a voiceless region where there had once been roars at the bowling of a hill from a mountain to the deep, and the third flank of the mountain spoke of it in the silence.

He would have enjoyed the scene unremittingly, like the philosopher he pretended to be, in a disdain of civilization and the ambitions of men, had not a contest with earth been forced on him from time to time to keep the heel of his right foot, dug in shallow shale, fixed and supporting. As long as it held he was happy and maintained the attitude of a guitar-player, thrumming the calf of the useless leg to accompany tuneful thoughts, but the inevitable lapse and slide of the foot recurred, and the philosopher was exhibited as an infant learning to crawl. The seat, moreover, not having been fashioned for him or for any soft purpose, resisted his pressure and became a thing of violence, that required to be humiliatingly coaxed. His last resource to propitiate it was counselled by nature turned mathematician: tenacious extension solved the problem; he lay back at his length, and with his hat over his eyes consented to see nothing for the sake of comfort. Thus he was perfectly rational, though when others beheld him he appeared the insanest of mortals.

A girl's voice gave out the mountain carol ringingly above. His heart and all his fancies were in motion at the sound. He leaned on an elbow to listen; the slide threatened him, and he resumed his full stretch,

determined to take her for a dream. He was of the class of youths who, in apprehension that their bright season may not be permanent, choose to fortify it by a systematic contempt of material realities unless they come in the fairest of shapes, and as he was quite sincere in this feeling and election of the right way to live, disappointment and sullenness overcame him on hearing men's shouts and steps; despite his helpless condition he refused to stir, for they had jarred on his dream. Perhaps his temper, unknown to himself, had been a little injured by his mishap, and he would not have been sorry to charge them with want of common humanity in passing him; or he did not think his plight so bad, else he would have bawled after them had they gone by: far the youths of his description are fools only upon system,--however earnestly they indulge the present self-punishing sentiment. The party did not pass; they stopped short, they consulted, and a feminine tongue more urgent than the others, and very musical, sweet to hear anywhere, put him in tune. She said, 'Brother! brother!' in German. Our philosopher flung off his hat.

'You see!' said the lady's brother.

'Ask him, Anton,' she said to their guide.

'And quick!' her brother added.

The guide scrambled along to him, and at a closer glance shouted: 'The Englishman!' wheeling his finger to indicate what had happened to the Tomnoddy islander.

His master called to know if there were broken bones, as if he could stop for nothing else.

The cripple was raised. The gentleman and lady made their way to him, and he tried his hardest to keep from tottering on the slope in her presence. No injury had been done to the leg; there was only a stiffness, and an idiotic doubling of the knee, as though at each step his leg pronounced a dogged negative to the act of walking. He said something equivalent to 'this donkey leg,' to divert her charitable eyes from a countenance dancing with ugly twitches. She was the Samaritan. A sufferer discerns his friend, though it be not the one who physically assists him: he is inclined by nature to put material aid at a lower mark than gentleness, and her brief words of encouragement, the tone of their delivery yet more, were medical to his blood, better help than her brother's iron arm, he really believed. Her brother and the guide held him on each side, and she led to pick out the safer footing for him; she looked round and pointed to some projection that would form a step; she drew attention to views here and there, to win excuses for his resting; she did not omit to soften her brother's visible impatience as well, and this was the art which affected her keenly sensible debtor most.

'I suppose I ought to have taken a guide,' he said.

'There's not a doubt of that,' said Chillon Kirby.

Carinthia halted, leaning on her staff: 'But I had the same wish. They told us at the inn of an Englishman who left last night to sleep on the mountain, and would go alone; and did I not say, brother, that must be true love of the mountains?'

'These freaks get us a bad name on the Continent,' her brother replied. He had no sympathy with nonsense, and naturally not with a youth who smelt of being a dreamy romancer and had caused the name of Englishman to be shouted in his ear in derision. And the fellow might delay his arrival at the Baths and sight of the lady of his love for hours!

They managed to get him hobbling and slipping to the first green tuft of the base, where long black tongues of slate-rubble pouring into the grass, like shore-waves that have spent their burden, seem about to draw back to bring the mountain down. Thence to the level pasture was but a few skips performed sliding.

'Well, now,' said Chillon, 'you can stand?'

'Pretty well, I think.' He tried his foot on the ground, and then stretched his length, saying that it only wanted rest. Anton pressed a hand at his ankle and made him wince, but the bones were sound, leg and hip not worse than badly bruised. He was advised by Anton to plant his foot in the first running water he came to, and he was considerate enough to say to Chillon

'Now you can leave me; and let me thank you. Half an hour will set me right. My name is Woodseer, if ever we meet again.'

Chillon nodded a hurried good-bye, without a thought of giving his name in return. But Carinthia had thrown herself on the grass. Her brother asked her in dismay if she was tired. She murmured to him: 'I should like to hear more English.'

'My dear girl, you'll have enough of it in two or three weeks.'

'Should we leave a good deed half done, Chillon?'

'He shall have our guide.'

'He may not be rich.'

'I'll pay Anton to stick to him.'

'Brother, he has an objection to guides.'

Chillon cast hungry eyes on his watch: 'Five minutes, then.' He addressed Mr. Woodseer, who was reposing, indifferent to time, hard-by: 'Your objection to guides might have taught you a sharp lesson. It 's like declining to have a master in studying a science--trusting to instinct for your knowledge of a bargain. One might as well refuse an oar to row in a boat.'

'I'd rather risk it,' the young man replied. 'These guides kick the soul out of scenery. I came for that and not for them.'

'You might easily have been a disagreeable part of the scene.'

'Why not here as well as elsewhere?'

'You don't care for your life?'

'I try not to care for it a fraction more than Destiny does.'

'Fatalism. I suppose you care for something?'

'Besides I've a slack purse, and shun guides and inns when I can. I care for open air, colour, flowers, weeds, birds, insects, mountains. There's a world behind the mask. I call this life; and the town's a boiling pot, intolerably stuffy. My one ambition is to be out of it. I thank heaven I have not another on earth. Yes, I care for my note-book, because it's of no use to a human being except me. I slept beside a spring last night, and I never shall like a bedroom so well. I think I have discovered the great secret: I may be wrong, of course.' And if so, he had his philosophy, the admission was meant to say.

Carinthia expected the revelation of a notable secret, but none came; or if it did it eluded her grasp:--he was praising contemplation, he was praising tobacco. He talked of the charm of poverty upon a settled income of a very small sum of money, the fruit of a compact he would execute with the town to agree to his perpetual exclusion from it, and to retain his identity, and not be the composite which every townsman was. He talked of Buddha. He said: 'Here the brook's the brook, the mountain's the mountain: they are as they always were.'

'You'd have men be the same,' Chillon remarked as to a nursling prattler, and he rejoined: 'They've lost more than they've gained; though, he admitted, 'there has been some gain, in a certain way.'

Fortunately for them, young men have not the habit of reflecting upon the indigestion of ideas they receive from members of their community, sometimes upon exchange. They compare a view of life with their own view, to condemn it summarily; and he was a curious object to Chillon as the perfect opposite of himself.

'I would advise you,' Chillon said, 'to get a pair of Styrian boots, if you intend to stay in the Alps. Those boots of yours are London make.'

'They're my father's make,' said Mr. Woodseer.

Chillon drew out his watch. 'Come, Carinthia, we must be off.' He proposed his guide, and, as Anton was rejected, he pointed the route over the head of the valley, stated the distance to an inn that way, saluted and strode.

Mr. Woodseer, partly rising, presumed, in raising his hat and thanking

Carinthia, to touch her fingers. She smiled on him, frankly extending her open hand, and pointing the route again, counselling him to rest at the inn, even saying: 'You have not yet your strength to come on with us?'

He thought he would stay some time longer: he had a disposition to smoke.

She tripped away to her brother and was watched through the whiffs of a pipe far up the valley, guiltless of any consciousness of producing an impression. But her mind was with the stranger sufficiently to cause her to say to Chillon, at the close of a dispute between him and Anton on the interesting subject of the growth of the horns of chamois: 'Have we been quite kind to that gentleman?'

Chillon looked over his shoulder. 'He's there still; he's fond of solitude. And, Carin, my dear, don't give your hand when you are meeting or parting with people it's not done.'

His uninstructed sister said: 'Did you not like him?'

She was answered with an 'Oh,' the tone of which balanced lightly on the neutral line. 'Some of the ideas he has are Lord Fleetwood's, I hear, and one can understand them in a man of enormous wealth, who doesn't know what to do with himself and is dead-sick of flattery; though it seems odd for an English nobleman to be raving about Nature. Perhaps it's because none else of them does.'

'Lord Fleetwood loves our mountains, Chillon?'

'But a fellow who probably has to make his way in the world!--and he despises ambition!' . . . Chillon dropped him. He was antipathetic to eccentrics, and his soldierly and social training opposed the profession of heterodox ideas: to have listened seriously to them coming from the mouth of an unambitious bootmaker's son involved him in the absurdity. He considered that there was no harm in the lad, rather a commendable sort of courage and some notion of manners; allowing for his ignorance of the convenable in putting out his hand to take a young lady's, with the plea of thanking her. He hoped she would be more on her guard.

Carinthia was sure she had the name of the nobleman wishing to bestow his title upon the beautiful Henrietta. Lord Fleetwood! That slender thread given her of the character of her brother's rival who loved the mountains was woven in her mind with her passing experience of the youth they had left behind them, until the two became one, a highly transfigured one, and the mountain scenery made him very threatening to her brother. A silky haired youth, brown-eyed, unconquerable in adversity, immensely rich, fond of solitude, curled, decorated, bejewelled by all the elves and gnomes of inmost solitude, must have marvellous attractions, she feared. She thought of him so much, that her humble spirit conceived the stricken soul of the woman as of necessity the pursuer; as shamelessly, though timidly, as she herself pursued in imagination the enchanted secret of the mountain-land. She hoped her brother would not supplicate, for it struck her that the lover who besieged the lady would forfeit her

roaming and hunting fancy.

'I wonder what that gentleman is doing now,' she said to Chillon.

He grimaced slightly, for her sake; he would have liked to inform her, for the sake of educating her in the customs of the world she was going to enter, that the word 'gentleman' conveys in English a special signification.

Her expression of wonder whether they were to meet him again gave Chillon the opportunity of saying:

'It 's the unlikeliest thing possible--at all events in England.'

'But I think we shall,' said she.

'My dear, you meet people of your own class; you don't meet others.'

'But we may meet anybody, Chillon!'

'In the street. I suppose you would not stop to speak to him in the street.'

'It would be strange to see him in the street!' Carinthia said.

'Strange or not!'

. . . Chillon thought he had said sufficient. She was under his protectorship, otherwise he would not have alluded to the observance of class distinctions. He felt them personally in this case because of their seeming to stretch grotesquely by the pretentious heterodoxy of the young fellow, whom, nevertheless, thinking him over now that he was mentioned, he approved for his manliness in bluntly telling his origin and status.

A chalet supplied them with fresh milk, and the inn of a village on a perch with the midday meal. Their appetites were princely and swept over the little inn like a conflagration. Only after clearing it did they remember the rearward pedestrian, whose probable wants Chillon was urged by Carinthia to speak of to their host. They pushed on, clambering up, scurrying down, tramping gaily, till by degrees the chambers of Carinthia's imagination closed their doors and would no longer intercommunicate. Her head refused to interest her, and left all activity to her legs and her eyes, and the latter became unobservant, except of foot-tracks, animal-like. She felt that she was a fine machine, and nothing else: and she was rapidly approaching those ladies!

'You will tell them how I walked with you,' she said.

'Your friends over yonder?' said he.

'So that they may not think me so ignorant, brother.' She stumbled on the helpless word in a hasty effort to cloak her vanity.

He laughed. Her desire to meet the critical English ladies with a towering reputation in one department of human enterprise was comprehensible, considering the natural apprehensiveness of the half-wild girl before such a meeting. As it often happens with the silly phrases of simple people, the wrong word, foolish although it was, went to the heart of the hearer and threw a more charitable light than ridicule on her. So that they may know I can do something they cannot do, was the interpretation. It showed her deep knowledge of her poorness in laying bare the fact.

Anxious to cheer her, he said: 'Come, come, you can dance. You dance well, mother has told me, and she was a judge. You ride, you swim, you have a voice for country songs, at all events. And you're a bit of a botanist too. You're good at English and German; you had a French governess for a couple of years. By the way, you understand the use of a walking-stick in self-defence: you could handle a sword on occasion.'

'Father trained me,' said Carthina. 'I can fire a pistol, aiming.'

'With a good aim, too. Father told me you could. How fond he was of his girl! Well, bear in mind that father was proud of you, and hold up your head wherever you are.'

'I will,' she said.

He assured her he had a mind to have a bugle blown at the entrance of the Baths for a challenge to the bathers to match her in warlike accomplishments.

She bit her lips: she could not bear much rallying on the subject just then:

'Which is the hard one to please?' she asked.

'The one you will find the kinder of the two.'

'Henrietta?'

He nodded.

'Has she a father?'

'A gallant old admiral: Admiral Baldwin Fakenham.'

'I am glad of that!' Carinthia sighed out heartily. 'And he is with her? And likes you, Chillon?'

'On the whole, I think he does.'

'A brave officer!' Such a father would be sure to like him.

So the domestic prospect was hopeful.

At sunset they stood on the hills overlooking the basin of the Baths, all enfolded in swathes of pink and crimson up to the shining grey of a high heaven that had the fresh brightness of the morning.

'We are not tired in the slightest,' said Carinthia, trifling with the vision of a cushioned rest below. 'I could go on through the night quite comfortably.'

'Wait till you wake up in your little bed to-morrow,' Chillon replied stoutly, to drive a chill from his lover's heart, that had seized it at the bare suggestion of their going on.

CHAPTER VII

THE LADY'S LETTER

Is not the lover a prophet? He that fervently desires may well be one; his hurried nature is alive with warmth to break the possible blow: and if his fears were not needed they were shadows; and if fulfilled, was he not convinced of his misfortune by a dark anticipation that rarely erred? Descending the hills, he remembered several omens: the sun had sunk when he looked down on the villas and clustered houses, not an edge of the orb had been seen; the admiral's quarters in the broad-faced hotel had worn an appearance resembling the empty house of yesterday; the encounter with the fellow on the rocks had a bad whisper of impish tripping. And what moved Carinthia to speak of going on?

A letter was handed to Chillon in the hall of the admiral's hotel, where his baggage had already been delivered. The manager was deploring the circumstance that his rooms were full to the roof, when Chillon said:

'Well, we must wash and eat'; and Carinthia, from watching her brother's forehead during his perusal of the letter, declared her readiness for anything. He gave her the letter to read by herself while preparing to sit at table, unwilling to ask her for a further tax on her energies--but it was she who had spoken of going on! He thought of it as of a debt she had contracted and might be supposed to think payable to their misfortune.

She read off the first two sentences.

'We can have a carriage here, Chillon; order a carriage; I shall get as much sleep in a carriage as in a bed: I shall enjoy driving at night,' she said immediately, and strongly urged it and forced him to yield, the manager observing that a carriage could be had.

In the privacy of her room, admiring the clear flowing hand, she read the words, delicious in their strangeness to her, notwithstanding the heavy news, as though they were sung out of a night-sky:

'Most picturesque of Castles!

May none these marks efface,
For they appeal from Tyranny . . .'

'We start at noon to-day. Sailing orders have been issued, and I could only have resisted them in my own person by casting myself overboard. I go like the boat behind the vessel. You were expected yesterday, at latest this morning. I have seen boxes in the hall, with a name on them not foreign to me. Why does the master tarry? Sir, of your valliance you should have held to your good vow,--quoth the damozel, for now you see me sore perplexed and that you did not your devoir is my affliction. Where lingers chivalry, she should have proceeded, if not with my knight? I feast on your regrets. I would not have you less than miserable: and I fear the reason is, that I am not so very, very sure you will be so at all or very hugely, as I would command it of you for just time enough to see that change over your eyebrows I know so well.

'If you had seen a certain Henrietta yesterday you would have the picture of how you ought to look. The admiral was heard welcoming a new arrival --you can hear him. She ran down the stairs quicker than any cascade of this district, she would have made a bet with Livia that it could be no one else--her hand was out, before she was aware of the difference it was locked in Lord F.'s!

'Let the guilty absent suffer for causing such a betrayal of disappointment. I must be avenged! But if indeed you are unhappy and would like to chide the innocent, I am full of compassion for the poor gentleman inheriting my legitimate feelings of wrath, and beg merely that he will not pour them out on me with pen and paper, but from his lips and eyes.

'Time pressing, I chatter no more. The destination is Livia's beloved Baden. We rest a night in the city of Mozart, a night at Munich, a night at Stuttgart. Baden will detain my cousin full a week. She has Captain Abrane and Sir Meeson Corby in attendance--her long shadow and her short: both devoted to Lord F., to win her smile, and how he drives them! The captain has been paraded on the promenade, to the stupefaction of the foreigner. Princes, counts, generals, diplomats passed under him in awe. I am told that he is called St. Christopher.

'Why do we go thus hastily?--my friend, this letter has to be concealed. I know some one who sees in the dark.

'Think no harm of Livia. She is bent upon my worldly advantage, and that is plain even to the person rejecting it. How much more so must it be to papa, though he likes you, and when you are near him would perhaps, in a fit of unworldliness, be almost as reckless as the creature he calls madcap and would rather call countess. No! sooner with a Will-o'-the-wisp, my friend. Who could ever know where the man was when he himself never knows where he is. He is the wind that bloweth as it listeth--because it is without an aim or always with a new one. And am I the one

to direct him? I need direction. My lord and sovereign must fix my mind. I am volatile, earthly, not to be trusted if I do not worship. He himself said to me that--he reads our characters. "Nothing but a proved hero will satisfy Henrietta," his words! And the hero must be shining like a beacon-fire kept in a blaze. Quite true; I own it. Is Chillon Kirby satisfied? He ought to be.

'But oh!--to be yoked is an insufferable thought, unless we name all the conditions. But to be yoked to a creature of impulses! Really I could only describe his erratic nature by commending you to the study of a dragon-fly. It would map you an idea of what he has been in the twenty-four hours since we had him here. They tell me a vain sort of person is the cause. Can she be the cause of his resolving to have a residence here, to buy up half the valley--erecting a royal palace--and marking out the site--raving about it in the wildest language, poetical if it had been a little reasonable--and then, after a night, suddenly, unaccountably, hating the place, and being under the necessity of flying from it in hot haste, tearing us all away, as if we were attached to a kite that will neither mount nor fall, but rushes about headlong. Has he heard, or suspected? or seen certain boxes bearing a name? Livia has no suspicion, though she thinks me wonderfully contented in so dull a place, where it has rained nine days in a fortnight. I ask myself whether my manner of greeting him betrayed my expectation of another. He has brains. It is the greatest of errors to suppose him at all like the common run of rich young noblemen. He seems to thirst for brilliant wits and original sayings. His ambition is to lead all England in everything! I readily acknowledge that he has generous ideas too; but try to hold him, deny him his liberty, and it would be seen how desperate and relentless he would be to get loose. Of this I am convinced: he would be either the most abject of lovers, or a woman (if it turned out not to be love) would find him the most unscrupulous of yoke-fellows. Yoke-fellow! She would not have her reason in consenting. A lamb and a furious bull! Papa and I have had a serious talk. He shuts his ears to my comparisons, but admits, that as I am the principal person concerned, etc. Rich and a nobleman is too tempting for an anxious father; and Livia's influence is paramount. She has not said a syllable in depreciation of you. That is to her credit. She also admits that I must yield freely if at all, and she grants me the use of similes; but her tactics are to contest them one by one, and the admirable pretender is not as shifty as the mariner's breeze, he is not like the wandering spark in burnt paper, of which you cannot say whether it is chasing or chased: it is I who am the shifty Pole to the steadiest of magnets. She is a princess in other things besides her superiority to Physics. There will be wild scenes at Baden.

'My Diary of to-day is all bestowed on you. What have I to write in it except the pair of commas under the last line of yesterday--" He has not come!" Oh! to be caring for a he.

'O that I were with your sister now, on one side of her idol, to correct her extravagant idolatry! I long for her. I had a number of nice little phrases to pet her with.

'You have said (I have it written) that men who are liked by men are the

best friends for women. In which case, the earl should be worthy of our friendship; he is liked. Captain Abrane and Sir Meeson, in spite of the hard service he imposes on them with such comical haughtiness, incline to speak well of him, and Methuen Rivers--here for two days on his way to his embassy at Vienna--assured us he is the rarest of gentlemen on the point of honour of his word. They have stories of him, to confirm Livia's eulogies, showing him punctilious to chivalry: No man alive is like him in that, they say. He grieves me. All that you have to fear is my pity for one so sensitive. So speed, sir! It is not good for us to be much alone, and I am alone when you are absent.

'I hear military music!

'How grand that music makes the dullest world appear in a minute. There is a magic in it to bring you to me from the most dreadful of distances. --Chillon! it would kill me!--Writing here and you perhaps behind the hill, I can hardly bear it;--I am torn away, my hand will not any more. This music burst out to mock me! Adieu.

'I am yours.

'Your HENRIETTA.

'A kiss to the sister. It is owing to her.'

Carinthia kissed the letter on that last line. It seemed to her to end in a celestial shower.

She was oppressed by wonder of the writer who could run like the rill of the mountains in written speech; and her recollection of the contents perpetually hurried to the close, which was more in her way of writing, for there the brief sentences had a throb beneath them.

She did not speak of the letter to her brother when she returned it. A night in the carriage, against his shoulder, was her happy prospect, in the thought that she would be with her dearest all night, touching him asleep, and in the sweet sense of being near to the beloved of the fairest angel of her sex. They pursued their journey soon after Anton was dismissed with warm shakes of the hand and appointments for a possible year in the future.

The blast of the postillion's horn on the dark highway moved Chillon to say: 'This is what they call posting, my dear.'

She replied: 'Tell me, brother: I do not understand, "Let none these marks efface," at the commencement, after most "picturesque of Castles": --that is you.'

'They are quoted from the verses of a lord who was a poet, addressed to the castle on Lake Lemman. She will read them to you.'

'Will she?'

The mention of the lord set Carinthia thinking of the lord whom that beautiful SHE pitied because she was forced to wound him and he was very sensitive. Wrapped in Henrietta, she slept through the joltings of the carriage, the grinding of the wheels, the blowing of the horn, the flashes of the late moonlight and the kindling of dawn.

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE ENCOUNTER OF TWO STRANGE YOUNG MEN AND THEIR CONSORTING: IN WHICH THE MALE READER IS REQUESTED TO BEAR IN MIND WHAT WILD CREATURE HE WAS IN HIS YOUTH, WHILE THE FEMALE SHOULD MARVEL CREDULOUSLY.

The young man who fancied he had robed himself in the plain homespun of a natural philosopher at the age of twenty-three journeyed limping leisurely in the mountain maid Carinthia's footsteps, thankful to the Fates for having seen her; and reproving the remainder of superstition within him, which would lay him open to smarts of evil fortune if he, encouraged a senseless gratitude for good; seeing that we are simply to take what happens to us. The little inn of the village on the perch furnished him a night's lodging and a laugh of satisfaction to hear of a young lady and gentleman, and their guide, who had devoured everything eatable half a day in advance of him, all save the bread and butter, and a few scraps of meat, apologetically spread for his repast by the maid of the inn: not enough for, a bantam cock, she said, promising eggs for breakfast. He vowed with an honest heart, that it was more than enough, and he was nourished by sympathy with the appetites of his precursors and the maid's description of their deeds. That name, Carinthia, went a good way to fill him.

Farther on he had plenty, but less contentment. He was compelled to acknowledge that he had expected to meet Carinthia again at the Baths. Her absence dealt a violent shock to the aerial structure he dwelt in; for though his ardour for the life of the solitudes was unfeigned, as was his calm overlooking of social distinctions, the self-indulgent dreamer became troubled with an alarming sentience, that for him to share the passions of the world of men was to risk the falling lower than most. Women are a cause of dreams, but they are dreaded enemies of his kind of dream, deadly enemies of the immaterial dreamers; and should one of them be taken on board a vessel of the vapourish texture young Woodseer sailed in above the clouds lightly while he was in it alone, questions of past, future, and present, the three weights upon humanity, bear it down, and she must go, or the vessel sinks. And cast out of it, what was he? The asking exposed him to the steadiest wind the civilized world is known to blow. From merely thinking upon one of the daughters of earth, he was made to feel his position in that world, though he refused to understand it, and assisted by two days of hard walking he reduced Carinthia to an abstract enthusiasm, no very serious burden. His note-book sustained it easily. He wrote her name in simple fondness of the name; a verse, and hints for more, and some sentences, which he thought profound. They were composed as he sat by the roadway, on the top of hills, and in a boat

crossing a dark green lake deep under wooded mountain walls: things of priceless value.

It happened, that midway on the lake he perceived his boatman about to prime a pistol to murder the mild-eyed stillness, and he called to the man in his best German to desist. During the altercation, there passed a countryman of his in another of the punts, who said gravely: 'I thank you for that.' It was early morning, and they had the lake to themselves, each deeming the other an intruder; for the courtship of solitude wanes when we are haunted by a second person in pursuit of it; he is discolouring matter in our pure crystal cup. Such is the worship of the picturesque; and it would appear to say, that the spirit of man finds itself yet in the society of barbarians. The case admits of good pleading either way, even upon the issue whether the exclusive or the vulgar be the more barbarous. But in those days the solicitation of the picturesque had been revived by a poet of some impassioned rhetoric, and two devotees could hardly meet, as the two met here, and not be mutually obscurants.

They stepped ashore in turn on the same small shoot of land where a farmhouse near a chapel in the shadow of cliffs did occasional service for an inn. Each had intended to pass a day and a night in this lonely dwelling-place by the lake, but a rival was less to be tolerated there than in love, and each awaited the other's departure, with an air that said: 'You are in my sunlight'; and going deeper, more sternly: 'Sir, you are an offence to Nature's pudency!'

Woodseer was the more placable of the two; he had taken possession of the bench outside, and he had his note-book and much profundity to haul up with it while fish were frying. His countryman had rushed inside to avoid him, and remained there pacing the chamber like a lion newly caged. Their boatmen were brotherly in the anticipation of provision and payment.

After eating his fish, Woodseer decided abruptly, that as he could not have the spot to himself, memorable as it would have been to intermarry with Nature in so sacred a welldepth of the mountains, he had better be walking and climbing. Another boat paddling up the lake had been spied: solitude was not merely shared with a rival, but violated by numbers. In the first case, we detest the man; in the second, we fly from an outraged scene. He wrote a line or so in his book, hurriedly paid his bill, and started, full of the matter he had briefly committed to his pages.

At noon, sitting beside the beck that runs from the lake, he was overtaken by the gentleman he had left behind, and accosted in the informal English style, with all the politeness possible to a nervously blunt manner: 'This book is yours,--I have no doubt it is yours; I am glad to be able to restore it; I should be glad to be the owner-writer of the contents, I mean. I have to beg your excuse; I found it lying open; I looked at the page, I looked through the whole; I am quite at your mercy.'

Woodseer jumped at the sight of his note-book, felt for the emptiness of his pocket, and replied: 'Thank you, thank you. It's of use to me, though to no one else.'

'You pardon me?'

'Certainly. I should have done it myself.'

'I cannot offer you my apologies as a stranger.' Lord Fleetwood was the name given.

Woodseer's plebeian was exchanged for it, and he stood up.

The young lord had fair, straight, thin features, with large restless eyes that lighted quickly, and a mouth that was winning in his present colloquial mood.

'You could have done the same? I should find it hard to forgive the man who pried into my secret thoughts,' he remarked.

'There they are. If one puts them to paper! . . .' Woodseer shrugged.

'Yes, yes. They never last long enough with me. So far I'm safe. One page led to another. You can meditate. I noticed some remarks on Religions. You think deeply.'

Woodseer was of that opinion, but modesty urged him to reply with a small flourish. 'Just a few heads of ideas. When the wind puffs down a sooty chimney the air is filled with little blacks that settle pretty much like the notes in this book of mine. There they wait for another puff, or my fingers to stamp them.'

'I could tell you were the owner of that book,' said Lord Fleetwood. He swept his forehead feverishly. 'What a power it is to relieve one's brain by writing! May I ask you, which one of the Universities . . . ?'

The burden of this question had a ring of irony to one whom it taught to feel rather defiantly, that he carried the blazon of a reeking tramp.

'My University,' Woodseer replied, 'was a merchant's office in Bremen for some months. I learnt more Greek and Latin in Bremen than business. I was invalided home, and then tried a merchant's office in London. I put on my hat one day, and walked into the country. My College fellows were hawkers, tinkers, tramps and ploughmen, choughs and crows. A volume of our Poets and a History of Philosophy composed my library. I had scarce any money, so I learnt how to idle inexpensively--a good first lesson. We're at the bottom of the world when we take to the road; we see men as they were in the beginning--not so eager for harness till they get acquainted with hunger, as I did, and studied in myself the old animal having his head pushed into the collar to earn a feed of corn.'

Woodseer laughed, adding, that he had been of a serious mind in those days of the alternation of smooth indifference and sharp necessity, and he had plucked a flower from them.

His nature prompted him to speak of himself with simple candour, as he had done spontaneously to Chillon Kirby, yet he was now anxious to let his companion know at once the common stuff he was made of, together with the great stuff he contained. He grew conscious of an over-anxiety, and was uneasy, recollecting how he had just spoken about his naturalness, dimly if at all apprehending the cause of this disturbance within. What is a lord to a philosopher! But the world is around us as a cloak, if not a coat; in his ignorance he supposed it specially due to a lord seeking acquaintance with him, that he should expose his condition: doing the which appeared to subject him to parade his intellectual treasures and capacity for shaping sentences; and the effect upon Lord Fleetwood was an incentive to the display. Nevertheless he had a fretful desire to escape from the discomposing society of a lord; he fixed his knapsack and began to saunter.

The young lord was at his elbow. 'I can't part with you. Will you allow me?'

Woodseer was puzzled and had to say: 'If you wish it.'

'I do wish it: an hour's walk with you. One does not meet a man like you every day. I have to join a circle of mine in Baden, but there's no hurry; I could be disengaged for a week. And I have things to ask you, owing to my indiscretion--but you have excused it.'

Woodseer turned for a farewell gaze at the great Watzmann, and saluted him.

'Splendid,' said Lord Fleetwood; 'but don't clap names on the mountains. --I saw written in your book: "A text for Dada." You write: "A despotism would procure a perfect solitude, but kill the ghost." That was my thought at the place where we were at the lake. I had it. Tell me--though I could not have written it, and "ghost" is just the word, the exact word--tell me, are you of Welsh blood? "Dad" is good Welsh--pronounce it hard.'

Woodseer answered: 'My mother was a Glamorganshire woman. My father, I know, walked up from Wales, mending boots on his road for a livelihood. He is not a bad scholar, he knows Greek enough to like it. He is a Dissenting preacher. When I strike a truism, I've a habit of scoring it to give him a peg or tuning-fork for one of his discourses. He's a man of talent; he taught himself, and he taught me more than I learnt at school. He is a thinker in his way. He loves Nature too. I rather envy him in some respects. He and I are hunters of Wisdom on different tracks; and he, as he says, "waits for me." He's patient!'

Ah, and I wanted to ask you,' Lord Fleetwood observed, bursting with it, 'I was puzzled by a name you write here and there near the end, and permit me to ask, it: Carinthia! It cannot be the country? You write after, the name: "A beautiful Gorgon--a haggard Venus." It seized me. I have had the face before my eyes ever since. You must mean a woman. I can't be deceived in allusions to a woman: they have heart in them.

You met her somewhere about Carinthia, and gave her the name? You write --may I refer to the book?'

He received the book and flew through the leaves:

'Here--"A panting look": you write again: "A look of beaten flame: a look of one who has run and at last beholds!" But that is a living face: I see her! Here again: "From minute to minute she is the rock that loses the sun at night and reddens in the morning." You could not create an idea of a woman to move you like that. No one could, I am certain of it, certain; if so, you're a wizard--I swear you are. But that's a face high over beauty. Just to know there is a woman like her, is an antidote. You compare her to a rock. Who would imagine a comparison of a woman to a rock! But rock is the very picture of beautiful Gorgon, haggard Venus. Tell me you met her, you saw her. I want only to hear she lives, she is in the world. Beautiful women compared to roses may whirl away with their handsome dragoons! A pang from them is a thing to be ashamed of. And there are men who trot about whining with it! But a Carinthia makes pain honourable. You have done what I thought impossible--fused a woman's face and grand scenery, to make them inseparable. She might be wicked for me. I should see a bright rim round hatred of her!--the rock you describe. I could endure horrors and not annihilate her! I should think her sacred.'

Woodseer turned about to have a look at the man who was even quicker than he at realizing a person from a hint of description, and almost insanely extravagant in the pitch of the things he uttered to a stranger. For himself, he was open with everybody, his philosophy not allowing that strangers existed on earth. But the presence of a lord brought the conventional world to his feelings, though at the same time the title seemed to sanction the exceptional abruptness and wildness of this lord. As for suspecting him to be mad, it would have been a common idea: no stretching of speech or overstepping of social rules could waken a suspicion so spiritless in Woodseer.

He said: 'I can tell you I met her and she lives. I could as soon swim in that torrent or leap the mountain as repeat what she spoke, or sketch a feature of her. She goes into the blood, she is a new idea of women. She has the face that would tempt a gypsy to evil tellings. I could think of it as a history written in a line: Carinthia, Saint and Martyr! As for comparisons, they are flowers thrown into the fire.'

'I have had that--I have thought that,' said Lord Fleetwood. 'Go on; talk of her, pray; without comparisons. I detest them. How did you meet her? What made you part? Where is she now? I have no wish to find her, but I want thoroughly to believe in her.'

Another than Woodseer would have perceived the young lord's malady. Here was one bitten by the serpent of love, and athirst for an image of the sex to serve for the cooling herb, as youth will be. Woodseer put it down to a curious imaginative fellowship with himself. He forgot the lord, and supposed he had found his own likeness, less gifted in speech. After talking of Carinthia more and more in the abstract, he fell upon

his discovery of the Great Secret of life, against which his hearer struggled for a time, though that was cooling to him too; but ultimately there was no resistance, and so deep did they sink into the idea of pure contemplation, that the idea of woman seemed to have become a part of it. No stronger proof of their aethereal conversational earnestness could be offered. A locality was given to the Great Secret, and of course it was the place where the most powerful recent impression had been stamped on the mind of the discoverer: the shadowy valley rolling from the slate-rock. Woodseer was too artistic a dreamer to present the passing vision of Carinthia with any associates there. She passed: the solitude accepted her and lost her; and it was the richer for the one swift gleam: she brought no trouble, she left no regrets; she was the ghost of the rocky obscurity. But now remembering her mountain carol, he chanced to speak of her as a girl.

'She is a girl?' cried Lord Fleetwood, frowning over an utter revolution of sentiment at the thought of the beautiful Gorgon being a girl; for, rapid as he was to imagine, he had raised a solid fabric upon his conception of Carinthia the woman, necessarily the woman--logically. Who but the woman could look the Gorgon! He tried to explain it to be impossible for a girl to wear the look: and his notion evidently was, that it had come upon a beautiful face in some staring horror of a world that had bitten the tender woman. She touched him sympathetically through the pathos.

Woodseer flung out vociferously for the contrary. Who but a girl could look the beautiful Gorgon! What other could seem an emanation of the mountain solitude? A woman would instantly breathe the world on it to destroy it. Hers would be the dramatic and not the poetic face. It would shriek of man, wake the echoes with the tale of man, slaughter all quietude. But a girl's face has no story of poisonous intrusion. She indeed may be cast in the terrors of Nature, and yet be sweet with Nature, beautiful because she is purely of Nature. Woodseer did his best to present his view irresistibly. Perhaps he was not clear; it was a piece of skiamachy, difficult to render clear to the defeated.

Lord Fleetwood had nothing to say but 'Gorgon! a girl a Gorgon!' and it struck Woodseer as intensely unreasonable, considering that he had seen the girl whom, in his effort to portray her, he had likened to a beautiful Gorgon. He recounted the scene of the meeting with her, pictured it in effective colours, but his companion gave no response, nor a nod. They ceased to converse, and when the young lord's hired carriage drew up on the road, Woodseer required persuasion to accompany him. They were both in their different stations young tyrants of the world, ready to fight the world and one another for not having their immediate view of it such as they wanted it. They agreed, however, not to sleep in the city. Beds were to be had near the top of a mountain on the other side of the Salza, their driver informed them, and vowing themselves to that particular height, in a mutual disgust of the city, they waxed friendlier, with a reserve.

Woodseer soon had experience that he was receiving exceptional treatment from Lord Fleetwood, whose manservant was on the steps of the hotel in

Salzburg on the lookout for his master.

'Sir Meeson has been getting impatient, my lord,' said the man.

Sir Meeson Corby appeared; Lord Fleetwood cut him short: 'You 're in a hurry; go at once, don't wait for me; I join you in Baden.--Do me the favour to eat with me,' he turned to Woodseer. 'And here, Corby! tell the countess I have a friend to bear me company, and there is to be an extra bedroom secured at her hotel. That swinery of a place she insists on visiting is usually crammed. With you there,' he turned to Woodseer, 'I might find it agreeable.--You can take my man, Corby; I shall not want the fellow.'

'Positively, my dear Fleetwood, you know,' Sir Meeson expostulated, 'I am under orders; I don't see how--I really can't go on without you.'

'Please yourself. This gentleman is my friend, Mr. Woodseer.'

Sir Meeson Corby was a plump little beau of forty, at war with his fat and accounting his tight blue tail coat and brass buttons a victory. His tightness made his fatness elastic; he looked wound up for a dance, and could hardly hold on a leg; but the presentation of a creature in a battered hat and soiled garments, carrying a tattered knapsack half slung, lank and with disorderly locks, as the Earl of Fleetwood's friend --the friend of the wealthiest nobleman of Great Britain!--fixed him in a perked attitude of inquiry that exhausted interrogatives. Woodseer passed him, slouching a bow. The circular stare of Sir Meeson seemed unable to contract. He directed it on Lord Fleetwood, and was then reminded that he dealt with prickles.

'Where have you been?' he said, blinking to refresh his eyeballs. 'I missed you, I ran round and round the town after you.'

'I have been to the lake.'

'Queer fish there!' Sir Meeson dropped a glance on the capture.

Lord Fleetwood took Woodseer's arm. 'Do you eat with us?' he asked the baronet, who had stayed his eating for an hour and was famished; so they strode to the dining-room.

'Do you wash, sir, before eating?' Sir Meeson said to Woodseer, caressing his hands when they had seated themselves at table. 'Appliances are to be found in this hotel.'

'Soap?' said Lord Fleetwood.

'Soap--at least, in my chamber.'

'Fetch it, please.'

Sir Meeson, of course, could not hear that. He requested the waiter to show the gentleman to a room.

Lord Fleetwood ordered the waiter to bring a handbasin and towel. 'We're off directly and must eat at once,' he said.

'Soap--soap! my dear Fleetwood,' Sir Meeson knuckled on the table, to impress it that his appetite and his gorge demanded a thorough cleansing of those fingers, if they were to sit at one board.

'Let the waiter fetch it.'

'The soap is in my portmanteau.'

'You spoke of it as a necessity for this gentleman and me. Bring it.'

Woodseer had risen. Lord Fleetwood motioned him down. He kept an eye dead--as marble on Corby, who muttered: 'You can't mean that you ask me . . .?' But the alternative was forced on Sir Meeson by too strong a power of the implacable eye; there was thunder in it, a continuity of gaze forcefuller than repetitions of the word. He knew Lord Fleetwood. Men privileged to attend on him were dogs to the flinty young despot: they were sure to be called upon to expiate the faintest offence to him. He had hastily to consider, that he was banished beyond appeal, with the whole torture of banishment to an adorer of the Countess Livia, or else the mad behest must be obeyed. He protested, shrugged, sat fast, and sprang up, remarking, that he went with all the willingness imaginable. It could not have been the first occasion.

He was affecting the excessively obsequious when he came back bearing his metal soap-case. The performance was checked by another look solid as shot, and as quick. Woodseer, who would have done for Sir Meeson Corby or Lazarus what had been done for him, thought little of the service, but so intense a peremptoriness in the look of an eye made him uncomfortable in his own sense of independence. The humblest citizen of a free nation has that warning at some notable exhibition of tyranny in a neighbouring State: it acts like a concussion of the air.

Lord Fleetwood led an easy dialogue with him and Sir Meeson, on their different themes immediately, which was not less impressive to an observer. He listened to Sir Meeson's entreaties that he should start at once for Baden, and appeared to pity the poor gentleman, condemned by his office to hang about him in terror of his liege lady's displeasure. Presently, near the close of the meal, drawing a ring from his finger, he handed it to the baronet, and said, 'Give her that. She knows I shall follow that.' He added to himself:--I shall have ill-luck till I have it back! and he asked Woodseer whether he put faith in the virtue of talismans.

'I have never possessed one,' said Woodseer, with his natural frankness. 'It would have gone long before this for a night's lodging.'

Sir Meeson heard him, and instantly urged Lord Fleetwood not to think of dismissing his man Francis. 'I beg it, Fleetwood! I beg you to take the man. Her ladyship will receive me badly, ring or no ring, if she hears

of your being left alone. I really can't present myself. I shall not go, not go. I say no.'

'Stay, then,' said Fleetwood.

He turned to Woodseer with an air of deference, and requested the privilege of glancing at his notebook again, and scanned it closely at one of the pages. 'I believe it true,' he cried; 'I had a half recollection of it--I have had some such thought, but never could put it in words. You have thought deeply.'

'That is only a surface thought, or common reflection,' said Woodseer.

Sir Meeson stared at them in turn. Judging by their talk and the effect produced on the earl, he took Woodseer for a sort of conjuror.

It was his duty to utter a warning.

He drew Fleetwood aside. A word was whispered, and they broke asunder with a snap. Francis was called. His master gave him his keys, and despatched him into the town to purchase a knapsack or bag for the outfit of a jolly beggar. The prospect delighted Lord Fleetwood. He sang notes from the deep chest, flaunting like an opera brigand, and contemplating his wretched satellite's indecision with brimming amusement.

'Remember, we fight for our money. I carry mine,' he said to Woodseer.

'Wouldn't it be expedient, Fleetwood . . .' Sir Meeson suggested a treasurer in the person of himself.

'Not a florin, Corby! I should find it all gambled away at Baden.'

'But I am not Abrane, I'm not Abrane! I never play, I have no mania, none. It would be prudent, Fleetwood.'

'The slightest bulging of a pocket would show on you, Corby; and they would be at you, they would fall on you and pluck you to have another fling. I'd rather my money should go to a knight of the road than feed that dragon's jaw. A highwayman seems an honest fellow compared with your honourable corporation of fly-catchers. I could surrender to him with some satisfaction after a trial of the better man. I've tried these tables, and couldn't stir a pulse. Have you?'

It had to be explained to Woodseer what was meant by trying the tables.

'Not I,' said he, in strong contempt of the queer allurement.

Lord Fleetwood studied him half a minute, as if measuring and discarding a suspicion of the young philosopher's possible weakness under temptation.

Sir Meeson Corby accompanied the oddly assorted couple through the town and a short way along the road to the mountain, for the sake of quieting his conscience upon the subject of his leaving them together. He could

not have sat down a second time at a table with those hands. He said it:--he could not have done the thing. So the best he could do was to let them go. Like many of his class, he had a mind open to the effect of striking contrasts, and the spectacle of the wealthiest nobleman in Great Britain tramping the road, pack on back, with a young nobody for his comrade, a total stranger, who might be a cut-throat, and was avowedly next to a mendicant, charged him with quantities of interjectory matter, that he caught himself firing to the foreign people on the highway. Hundreds of thousands a year, and tramping it like a pedlar, with a beggar for his friend! He would have given something to have an English ear near him as he watched them rounding under the mountain they were about to climb.

CHAPTER IX

CONCERNING THE BLACK GODDESS FORTUNE AND THE WORSHIP OF HER, TOGETHER WITH AN INTRODUCTION OF SOME OF HER VOTARIES

In those early days of Fortune's pregnant alternations of colour between the Red and the Black, exhibited publicly, as it were a petroleum spring of the ebony-fiery lake below, Black-Forest Baden was the sprightliest' of the ante-chambers of Hades. Thither in the ripeness of the year trooped the devotees of the sable goddess to perform sacrifice; and annually among them the beautiful Livia, the Countess of Fleetwood; for nowhere else had she sensation of the perfect repose which is rocked to a slumber by gales.

She was not of the creatures who are excited by an atmosphere of excitement; she took it as the nymph of the stream her native wave, and swam on the flood with expansive languor, happy to have the master passions about her; one or two of which her dainty hand caressed, fearless of a sting; the lady petted them as her swans. It surprised her to a gentle contempt of men and women, that they should be ruffled either by love or play. A withholding from the scene will naturally arouse disturbing wishes; but to be present lulls; for then we live, we are in our element. And who could expect, what sane person can desire, perpetual good luck? Fortune, the goddess, and young Love, too, are divine in their mutability: and Fortune would resemble a humdrum housewife, Love a droning husband, if constancy were practised by them. Observe the staggering and plunging of the blindfold wretch seeking to be persuaded of their faithfulness.

She could make for herself a quiet centre in the heart of the whirlwind, but the whirlwind was required. The clustered lights at the corner of the vale under forest hills, the burst of music, the blazing windows of the saloons of the Furies, and the gamblers advancing and retreating, with their totally opposite views of consequences, and fashions of wearing or tearing the mask; and closer, the figures shifting up and down the promenade, known and unknown faces, and the histories half known, half woven, weaving fast, which flew their, threads to provoke

speculation; pleasantly embraced and diverted the cool-blooded lady surrounded by her courtiers, who could upon occasion supply the luminous clue or anecdote. She had an intuitive liveliness to detect interchanges of eyes, the shuttle of intrigue; the mild hypocrisy, the clever audacity, the suspicion confirmed, the complication threatening to become resonant and terrible; and the old crossing the young and the young outwitting the old, wiles of fair traitors and dark, knaves of all suits of the pack. A more intimate acquaintance with their lineaments inspired a regard for them, such as poets may feign the throned high moon to entertain for objects causing her rays to flash.

The simple fools, performing in character, were a neutral people, grotesques and arabesques wreathed about the margins of the scene. Venus or Fortune smote them to a relievio distinguishing one from another. Here, however, as elsewhere, the core of interest was with the serious population, the lovers and the players in earnest, who stood round the furnace and pitched themselves into it, not always under a miscalculation of their chances of emerging transfigured instead of serving for fuel. These, the tragical children of folly, were astute: they played with lightning, and they knew the conditions of the game; victories were to be had.

The ulterior conditions of the game, the price paid for a victory, they thought little of: for they were feverish worshippers of the phantasmal deity called the Present; a god reigning over the Past, appreciable only in the Future; whose whiff of actual being is composed of the embryo idea of the union of these two periods. Still he is occasionally a benevolent god to the appetites; which have but to be continuous to establish him in permanence; and as nothing in us more readily supposes perpetuity than the appetite rushing to destroy itself, the rational nature of the most universal worship on earth is perceived at once.

Now, the price paid for a victory is this: that having been favoured in a single instance by the spouse of the aforesaid eminent divinity--the Black Goddess of the golden fringes--men believe in her for ever after, behold her everywhere, they belong to her. Their faith as to sowing and reaping has gone; and so has their capacity to see the actual as it is: she has the power to attach them to her skirts the more by rewarding their impassioned devotion with cuffs and scorns. They have ceased to have a first notion upon anything without a second haunting it, which directs them to propitiate Fortune.

But I am reminded by the convulsions of Dame Gossip, that the wisdom of our ancestors makes it a mere hammering of commonplace to insist on such reflections. Many of them, indeed, took the union of the Black Goddess and the Rosy Present for the composition of the very Arch-Fiend. Some had a shot at the strange conjecture, figuring her as tired of men in the end and challengeing him below--equally tired of his easy conquests of men since the glorious old times of the duelling saints. By virtue of his one incorrigible weakness, which we know him to have as long as we have it ourselves: viz., the belief in her existence, she is to get the better of him.

Upon this point the experience of Captain Abrane has a value. Livia was a follower of the Red and Black and the rounding ball in the person of the giant captain, through whom she received her succession of sweetly teasing thrills and shocks, as one of the adventurous company they formed together. The place was known to him as the fair Philistine to another muscular hero; he had been shorn there before, and sent forth tottering, treating the friends he met as pillars to fall with him; and when the operation was done thoroughly, he pronounced himself refreshed by it, like a more sensible Samson, the cooler for his clipping. Then it was that he relapsed undistractedly upon processes of his mind and he often said he thought Fortune would beat the devil.

Her power is shown in the moving of her solicitors to think, instantly after they have made their cast, that the reverse of it was what they intended. It comes as though she had withdrawn the bandage from her forehead and dropped a leaden glance on them, like a great dame angry to have her signal misinterpreted. Well, then, distinguished by the goddess in such a manner, we have it proved to us how she wished to favour: for the reverse wins, and we who are pinched blame not her cruelty but our blind folly. This is true worship. Henceforth the pain of her nip is mingled with the dream of her kiss; between the positive and the imagined of her we remain confused until the purse is an empty body on a gallows, honour too, perhaps.

Captain Abrane was one of the Countess Livia's numerous courtiers on the border of the promenade under the lighted saloons. A colossus inactive, he had little to say among the chattering circle; for when seated, cards were wanted to animate him: and he looked entirely out of place and unfitted, like a great vessel's figure-head in a shipwright's yard.

She murmured: 'Not this evening?'

Abrane quoted promptly a line of nursery song 'How shall he cut it without e'er a knife?'

'Have we run it down so low?' said she, with no reproach in her tone.

The captain shrugged over his clean abyss, where nothing was.

Yesterday their bank presented matronly proportions. But an importuned goddess reduces the most voluminous to bare stitches within a few winks of an eye.

Livia turned to a French gentleman of her court, M. de St. Ombre, and pursued a conversation. He was a stately cavalier of the Gallicized Frankish outlines, ready, but grave in his bearing, grave in his delivery, trimly moustached, with a Guise beard.

His profound internal question relating to this un-English beauty of the British Isles:--had she no passion in her nature? was not convinced by her apparent insensibility to Fortune's whips.

Sir Meeson Corby inserted a word of Bull French out of place from time to

time.

As it might be necessary to lean on the little man for weapons of war, supposing Lord Fleetwood delayed his arrival yet another day, Livia was indulgent. She assisted him to think that he spoke the foreign tongue.

Mention of Lord Fleetwood set Sir Meeson harping again on his alarms, in consideration of the vagabond object of the young lord had roamed away with.

'You forget that Russett has gypsy in him: Welsh! it's about the same,' said Livia. 'He can take excellent care of himself and his purse.'

'Countess, he is a good six days overdue.'

'He will be in time for the ball at the Schloss.'

Sir Meeson Corby produced an aspect of the word 'if,' so perkily, that the dejected Captain Abrane laughed outright and gave him double reason to fret for Lord Fleetwood's arrival, by saying: 'If he hangs off much longer, I shall have to come on you for another fifty.'

Our two pedestrians out of Salzburg were standing up in the night of cloud and pines above the glittering pool, having made their way along the path from the hill anciently dedicated to the god Mercury; and at the moment when Sir Meeson put forth his frilled wrists to say: 'If you had seen his hands--the creature Fleetwood trotted off alone with!--you'd be a bit anxious too'; the young lord called his comrade to gaze underneath them: 'There they are, hard at it, at their play!--it's the word used for the filthiest gutter scramble.'

They had come to know something of one another's humours; which are taken by young men for their characters; and should the humours please, they are friends, until further humours develop, trying these nascent conservatives hard to suit them to their moods as well as the accustomed. Lord Fleetwood had discovered in his companion, besides the spirit of independence and the powers of thought impressed on him by Woodseer's precocious flashes, a broad playfulness, that trenched on buffoonery; it astonished, amused, and relieved him, loosening the spell of reverence cast over him by one who could so wonderfully illumine his brain. Prone to admire and bend the knee where he admired, he chafed at subjection, unless he had the particular spell constantly renewed. A tone in him once or twice of late, different from the comrade's, had warned Woodseer to be guarded.

Susceptible, however, of the extreme contrast between the gamblers below and Nature's lover beside him, Fleetwood returned to his enthusiasm without thinking it a bondage.

'I shall never forget the walk we 've had. I have to thank you for the noblest of pleasures. You 've taught me--well, a thousand things; the things money can't buy. What mornings they were! And the dead-tired nights! Under the rock and up to see the snowy peak pink in a gap of

thick mist. You were right: it made a crimsoning colour shine like a new idea. Up in those mountains one walks with the divinities, you said. It's perfectly true. I shall remember I did. I have a treasure for life! Now I understand where you get your ideas. The life we lead down there is hoggish. You have chosen the right. You're right, over and over again, when you say, the dirty sweaters are nearer the angels for cleanliness than my Lord and Lady Sybarite out of a bath, in chemical scents. A man who thinks, loathes their High Society. I went through Juvenal at college. But you--to be sure, you add example--make me feel the contempt of it more. I am everlastingly indebted to you. Yes, I won't forget: you preach against the despising of anything.

This was pleasant in Woodseer's ears, inasmuch as it established the young nobleman as the pupil of his philosophy for the conduct of life; and to fortify him, he replied:

'Set your mind on the beauty, and there'll be no room for comparisons. Most of them are unjust, precious few instructive. In this case, they spoil both pictures: and that scene down there rather hooks me; though I prefer the Dachstein in the wane of the afterglow. You called it Carinthia.'

'I did: the beautiful Gorgon, haggard Venus--if she is to be a girl!' Fleetwood rejoined. 'She looked burnt out--a spectre.'

'One of the admirably damned,' said Woodseer, and he murmured with enjoyment: 'Between the lights--that 's the beauty and the tragedy of Purgatory!'

His comrade fell in with the pictured idea: 'You hit it--not what you called the "sublimely milky," and not squalid as you'll see the faces of the gambling women at the tables below. Oblige me--may I beg?--don't clap names on the mountains we've seen. It stamps guide-book on them, English tourist, horrors. We'll moralize over the crowds at the tables down there. On the whole, it's a fairish game: you know the odds against you, as you don't on the Turf or the Bourse. Have your fling; but don't get bitten. There's a virus. I'm not open to it. Others are.'

Hereupon Woodseer, wishing to have his individuality recognised in the universality it consented to, remarked on an exchequer that could not afford to lose, and a disposition free of the craving to win.

These were, no doubt, good reasons for abstaining, and they were grand morality. They were, at the same time, customary phrases of the unfleshed in folly. They struck Fleetwood with a curious reminder of the puking inexperienced, whom he had seen subsequently plunge suicidally. He had a sharp vision of the attractive forces of the game; and his elemental nature exulted in siding with the stronger against a pretender to the superhuman. For Woodseer had spoken a trifle loftily, as quite above temptation. To see a forewarned philosopher lured to try the swim on those tides, pulled along the current, and caught by the undertug of the lasher, would be fun.

'We'll drop down on them, find our hotel, and have a look at what they're doing,' he said, and stepped.

Woodseer would gladly have remained. The starlit black ridges about him and the dragon's mouth yawning underneath were an opposition of spiritual and mundane; innocent, noxious; exciting to the youthful philosopher. He had to follow, and so rapidly in the darkness that he stumbled and fell on an arm; a small matter.

Bed-chambers awaited them at the hotel, none of the party: and Fleetwood's man-servant was absent.

'Gambling, the rascal!' he said. Woodseer heard the first note of the place in that.

His leader was washed, neatly dressed, and knocking at his door very soon, impatient to be off, and he flung a promise of 'supper presently' to one whose modest purse had fallen into a debate with this lordly hostelry, counting that a supper and a night there would do for it. They hurried on to the line of promenaders, a river of cross-currents by the side of seated groups; and the willowy swish of silken dresses, feminine perfumery, cigar-smoke, chatter, laughter, told of pleasure reigning.

Fleetwood scanned the groups. He had seen enough in a moment and his face blackened. A darting waiter was called to him.

He said to Woodseer, savagely, as it sounded: 'You shall have something to joint your bones!' What cause of wrath he had was past a guess: a wolf at his vitals bit him, hardening his handsome features.

The waiter darted back, bearing a tray and tall glasses filled each with piled parti-coloured liqueurs, on the top of which an egg-yolk swam. Fleetwood gave example. Swallowing your egg, the fiery-velvet triune behind slips after it, in an easy milky way, like a princess's train on a state-march, and you are completely, transformed, very agreeably; you have become a merry demon. 'Well, yes, it's next to magic,' he replied to Woodseer's astonished snigger after the draught, and explained, that it was a famous Viennese four-of-the-morning panacea, the revellers' electrical restorer. 'Now you can hold on for an hour or two, and then we'll sup. At Rome?'

'Ay! Druids to-morrow!' cried the philosopher bewitched.

He found himself bowing to a most heavenly lady, composed of day and night in her colouring, but more of night, where the western edge has become a pale steel blade. Men were around her, forming a semi-circle. The world of men and women was mere timber and leafage to this flower of her sex, glory of her kind. How he behaved in her presence, he knew not; he was beyond self-criticism or conscious reflection; simply the engine of the commixed three liqueurs, with parlous fine thoughts, and a sense of steaming into the infinite.

To leave her was to have her as a moon in the heavens and to think of her creatively. A swarm of images rushed about her and away, took lustre and shade. She was a miracle of greyness, her eyes translucently grey, a dark-haired queen of the twilights; and his heart sprang into his brain to picture the novel beauty; language became a flushed Bacchanal in a ring of dancing similes. Lying beside a bank of silvery cinquefoil against a clear evening sky, where the planet Venus is a point of new and warmer light, one has the vision of her. Or something of Persephone rising to greet her mother, when our beam of day first melts through her as she kneels to gather an early bud of the year, would be near it. Or there is a lake in mid-forest, that curls part in shadow under the foot of morning: there we have her.

He strained to the earthly and the skyey likenesses of his marvel of human beauty because they bestowed her on him in passing. All the while, he was gazing on a green gaming-table.

The gold glittered, and it heaped or it vanished. Contemptuous of money, beyond the limited sum for his needs, he gazed; imagination was blunted in him to the hot drama of the business. Moreover his mind was engaged in insisting that the Evening Star is not to be called Venus, because of certain stories; and he was vowed to defend his lady from any allusion to them. This occupied him. By degrees, the visible asserted its authority; his look on the coin fell to speculating. Oddly, too, he was often right;--the money, staked on the other side, would have won. He considered it rather a plain calculation than a guess.

Philosophy withdrew him from his temporary interest in the tricks of a circling white marble ball. The chuck farthing of street urchins has quite as much dignity. He compared the creatures dabbling, over the board to summer flies on butcher's meat, periodically scared by a cloth. More in the abstract, they were snatching at a snapdragon bowl. It struck him, that the gamblers had thronged on an invitation to drink the round of seed-time and harvest in a gulp. Again they were desperate gleaners, hopping, skipping, bleeding, amid a whizz of scythe-blades, for small wisps of booty. Nor was it long before the presidency of an ancient hoary Goat-Satan might be perceived, with skew-eyes and pucker-mouth, nursing a hoof on a knee.

Our mediaeval Enemy sat symbolical in his deformities, as in old Italian and Dutch thick-line engravings of him. He rolled a ball for souls, excited like kittens, to catch it, and tumbling into the dozens of vacant pits. So it seemed to Woodseer, whose perceptions were discoloured by hereditary antagonism. Had he preserved his philosopher's eye, he would have known that the Hoofed One is too wily to show himself, owing to his ugliness. The Black Goddess and no other presides at her own game. She (it is good for us to know it) is the Power who challenges the individual, it is he who spreads the net for the mass. She liquefies the brain of man; he petrifies or ossifies the heart. From her comes craziness, from him perversity: a more provocative and, on the whole, more contagious disease. The gambler does not seek to lead his fellows into perdition; the snared of the Demon have pleasure in the act. Hence our naturally interested forecasts of the contests between them: for if

he is beaten, as all must be at the close of an extended game with her, we have only to harden the brain against her allurements and we enter a clearer field.

Woodseer said to Fleetwood: 'That ball has a look of a nymph running round and round till she changes to one of the Fates.'

'We'll have a run with her,' said Fleetwood, keener for business than for metaphors--at the moment.

He received gold for a bank-note. Captain Abrane hurriedly begged a loan. Both of them threw. Neither of them threw on the six numbers Woodseer would have selected, and they lost. He stated that the number of 17 had won before. Abrane tried the transversal enclosing this favoured number. 'Of course!' he cried, with foul resignation and a hostile glare: the ball had seated itself and was grinning at him from the lowest of the stalls.

Fleetwood quitted the table-numbers to throw on Pair; he won, won again, pushed his luck and lost, dragging Abrane with him. The giant varied his tone of acquiescence in Fortune's whims: 'Of course! I've only to fling! Luck hangs right enough till I put down my stake.'

'If the luck has gone three times, the chances' Woodseer was rather inquiring than pronouncing. . . . Lord Fleetwood cut him short. 'The chances are equally the contrary!' and discomposed his argumentative mind.

As argument in such a place was impossible, he had a wild idea of example--'just to see'--; and though he smiled, his brain was liquefying. Upon a calculation of the chances, merely for the humour of it, he laid a silver piece on the first six, which had been neglected. They were now blest. He laid his winnings on the numbed 17. Who would have expected it? why, the player, surely! Woodseer comported himself like a veteran: he had proved that you can calculate the chances. Instead of turning in triumph to Lord Fleetwood, he laid gold pieces to hug the number 17, and ten in the centre. And it is the truth, he hoped then to lose and have done with it--after proving his case. The ball whirled, kicked, tried for seat in two, in three points, and entered 17. The usual temporary wonderment flew round the table; and this number was courted in dread, avoided with apprehension.

Abrane let fly a mighty breath: 'Virgin, by Jove!'

Success was a small matter to Gower Woodseer. He displayed his contempt of fortune by letting his heap of bank-notes lie on Impair, and he won. Abrane bade him say 'Maximum' in a furious whisper. He did so, as one at home with the word; and winning repeatedly, observed to Fleetwood: 'Now I can understand what historians mean, in telling us of heroes rushing into the fray and vainly seeking death. I always thought death was to be had, if you were in earnest.'

Fleetwood scrutinized the cast of his features and the touch of his

fingers on the crispy paper.

'Come to another of these "green fields,"' he returned briefly. 'The game here is child's play.'

Urging Virgin Luck not to quit his initiatory table, the captain reluctantly went at their heels. Shortly before the tables were clad in mantles for the night, he reported to Livia one of the great cases of Virgin Luck; described it, from the silver piece to the big heap of notes, and drew on his envy of the fellow to sketch the indomitable coolness shown in following or in quitting a run. 'That fellow it is, Fleetwood's tag-rag; holds his head like a street-fiddler; Woodler or some name. But there's nothing to be done if we don't cultivate him. He must have pocketed a good three thousand and more. They had a quarrel about calculations of chances, and Fleet ran the V up his forehead at a piece of impudence. Fellow says some high-flying stuff; Fleet brightens like a Sunday chimney-sweep. If I believed in Black Arts, upon my word!'

'Russett is not usually managed with ease,' the lady said.

Her placid observation was directed on the pair then descending the steps.

'Be careful how you address, this gentleman,' she counselled Abrane. 'The name is not Woodier, I know. It must be the right name or none.'

Livia's fairest smile received them. She heard the captain accosting the child of luck as Mr. Woodier, and she made a rustle in rising to take Fleetwood's arm.

'We haven't dined, we have to sup,' said he.

'You are released at the end of the lamps. You redeem your ring, Russett, and I will restore it. I have to tell you, Henrietta is here to-morrow.'

'She might be in a better place.'

'The place where she is to be seen is not generally undervalued by men. It is not her fault that she is absent. The admiral was persuaded to go and attend those cavalry manoeuvres with the Grand Duke, to whom he had been civil when in command of the Mediterranean squadron. You know, the admiral believes he has military--I mean soldierly-genius; and the delusion may have given him wholesome exercise and helped him to forget his gout. So far, Henrietta will have been satisfied. She cannot have found much amusement among dusty troopers or at that court at Carlsruhe. Our French milliner there has helped in retarding her quite against her will. She has had to choose a balldress for the raw mountain-girl they have with them, and get her fitted, and it's a task! Why take her to the ball? But the admiral's infatuated with this girl, and won't hear of her exclusion--because, he says, she understands a field of battle; and the Ducal party have taken to her. Ah, Russett, you should not have flown! No harm, only Henrietta does require a trifle of management. She writes,

that she is sure of you for the night at the Schloss.'

'Why, ma'am?'

'You have given your word. "He never breaks his lightest word," she says.'

'It sounds like the beginning of respect.'

'The rarest thing men teach women to feel for them!'

'A respectable love match--eh? Good Lord! You'll be civil to my friend. You have struck him to the dust. You have your one poetical admirer in him.'

'I am honoured, Russett.'

'Cleared out, I suppose? Abrane is a funnel for pouring into that Bank. Have your fun as you like it! I shall get supplies to-morrow. By the way, you have that boy Cressett here. What are you doing with him?'

Livia spoke of watching over him and guarding him:

'He was at the table beside me, bursting to have a fling; and my friend Mr. Woodseer said, it was "Adonis come to spy the boar":--the picture!'

Prompt as bugle to the breath, Livia proposed to bet him fifty pounds that she would keep young Cressett from gambling a single louis. The pretty saying did not touch her.

Fleetwood moved and bowed. Sir Meeson Corby simulated a petrification of his frame at seeing the Countess of Fleetwood actually partly bent with her gracious acknowledgement of the tramp's gawky homage.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Accounting his tight blue tail coat and brass buttons a victory
Amused after their tiresome work of slaughter
And her voice, against herself, was for England
As for comparisons, they are flowers thrown into the fire
As if the age were the injury!
Brains will beat Grim Death if we have enough of them
But a great success is full of temptations
Could affect me then, without being flung at me
Country enclosed us to make us feel snug in our own importance
Did not know the nature of an oath, and was dismissed
Dogs' eyes have such a sick look of love
Drank to show his disdain of its powers
Earl of Cressett fell from his coach-box in a fit
Father used to say, four hours for a man, six for a woman

Fond, as they say, of his glass and his girl
Found that he 'cursed better upon water'
Good-bye to sorrow for a while--Keep your tears for the living
Had got the trick of lying, through fear of telling the truth
Hard enough for a man to be married to a fool
He was a figure on a horse, and naught when off it
Her intimacy with a man old enough to be her grandfather
I hate sleep: I hate anything that robs me of my will
Innocence and uncleanness may go together
It was an honest buss, but dear at ten thousand
Limit was two bottles of port wine at a sitting
Little boy named Tommy Wedger said he saw a dead body go by
Mighty Highnesses who had only smelt the outside edge of battle
No enemy's shot is equal to a weak heart in the act
Not afford to lose, and a disposition free of the craving to win
Past, future, and present, the three weights upon humanity
Put material aid at a lower mark than gentleness
Puzzle to connect the foregoing and the succeeding
Seventy, when most men are reaping and stacking their sins
Should we leave a good deed half done
Showery, replied the admiral, as his cocked-hat was knocked off
So indulgent when they drop their blot on a lady's character
So much for morality in those days!
Steady shakes them
Sweetest on earth to her was to be prized by her brother
They could have pardoned her a younger lover
Thus are we stricken by the days of our youth
Truth is, they have taken a stain from the life they lead
Very little parleying between determined men
Warm, is hardly the word--Winter's warm on skates
Woman finds herself on board a rudderless vessel
Writer society delights in, to show what it is composed of
You are to imagine that they know everything
You saw nothing but handkerchiefs out all over the theatre

[The End]

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