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THE AMAZING MARRIAGE

By George Meredith

1895

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CHAPTER X

SMALL CAUSES

A clock sounded one of the later morning hours of the night as Gower Woodseer stood at his hotel door, having left Fleetwood with a band of revellers. The night was now clear. Stars were low over the ridge of pines, dropped to a league of our strange world to record the doings. Beneath this roof lay the starry She. He was elected to lie beneath it also: and he beheld his heavenly lady floating on the lull of soft white cloud among her sister spheres. After the way of imaginative young men, he had her features more accurately now she was hidden, and he idealized her more. He could escape for a time from his coil of similes and paint for himself the irids of her large, long, grey eyes darkly rimmed; purest water-grey, lucid within the ring, beneath an arch of lashes. He had them fast; but then he fell to contemplating their exceeding rareness; And the mystery of the divinely grey swung a kindled fancy to the flight with some queen-witch of woods, of whom a youth may dream under the spell of twilights, East or West, among forest branches.

She had these marvellous eyes and the glamour for men. She had not yet met a man with the poetical twist in the brain to prize her elementally. All admitted the glamour; none of her courtiers were able to name it, even the poetical head giving it a name did not think of the witch in her looks as a witch in her deeds, a modern daughter of the mediaeval. To her giant squire the eyes of the lady were queer: they were unlit glass lamps to her French suppliant; and to the others, they were attractively uncommon; the charm for them being in her fine outlines, her stature, carriage of her person, and unalterable composure; particularly her latent daring. She had the effect on the general mind of a lofty crag-castle with a history. There was a whiff of gunpowder exciting the atmosphere in the anecdotal part of the history known.

Woodseer sat for a certain time over his note-book. He closed it with a thrilling conceit of the right thing written down; such as entomologists feel when they have pinned the rare insect. But what is butterfly or beetle compared with the chiselled sentences carved out of air to constitute us part owner of the breathing image and spirit of an adored fair woman? We repeat them, and the act of repeating them makes her come close on ours, by virtue of the eagle thought in the stamped gold of the lines.

Then, though she is not ever to be absolutely ours (and it is an impoverishing desire that she should be), we have beaten out the golden sentence--the essential she and we in one. But is it so precious after all? A suspicious ring of an adjective drops us on a sickening descent.

The author dashed at his book, examined, approved, keenly enjoyed, and he murderously scratched the adjective. She stood better without it, as a bright planet star issuing from clouds, which are perhaps an adornment to our hackneyed moon. This done, he restored the book to his coat's breast-pocket, smiling or sneering at the rolls of bank-notes there,

disdaining to count them. They stuffed an inner waistcoat pocket and his trousers also. They at any rate warranted that we can form a calculation of the chances, let Lord Fleetwood rave as he may please.

Woodseer had caught a glimpse of the elbow-point of his coat when flinging it back to the chair. There was distinctly abrasion. Philosophers laugh at such things. But they must be the very ancient pallium philosophers, ensconced in tubs, if they pretend to merriment over the spectacle of nether garments gapped at the spot where man is most vulnerable. He got loose from them and held them up to the candle, and the rays were admitted, neither winking nor peeping. Serviceable old clothes, no doubt. Time had not dealt them the final kick before they scored a good record.

They dragged him, nevertheless, to a sort of confession of some weakness, that he could not analyze for the swirl of emotional thoughts in the way; and they had him to the ground. An eagle of the poetic becomes a mere squat toad through one of these pretty material strokes. Where then is Philosophy? But who can be philosopher and the fervent admirer of a glorious lady? Ask again, who in that frowzy garb can presume to think of her or stand within fifty miles of her orbit?

A dreary two hours brought round daylight. Woodseer quitted his restless bed and entered the abjured habiliments, chivalrous enough to keep from denouncing them until he could cast the bad skin they now were to his uneasy sensations. He remembered having stumbled and fallen on the slope of the hill into this vale, and probably then the mischief had occurred though a brush would have, been sufficient, the slightest collision. Only, it was odd that the accident should have come to pass just previous to his introduction. How long antecedent was it? He belaboured his memory to reckon how long it was from the moment of the fall to the first sight of that lady.

His window looked down on the hotel stable-yard. A coach-house door was open. Odd or not--and it certainly looked like fate--that he should be bowing to his lady so shortly after the mishap expelling him, he had to leave the place. A groom in the yard was hailed, and cheerily informed him he could be driven to Carlsruhe as soon as the coachman had finished his breakfast. At Carlsruhe a decent refitting might be obtained, and he could return from exile that very day, thanks to the praiseworthy early hours of brave old Germany.

He had swallowed a cup of coffee with a roll of stale bread, in the best of moods, and entered his carriage; he was calling the order to start when a shout surprised his ear: 'The fiddler bolts!'

Captain Abrane's was the voice. About twenty paces behind, Abrane, Fleetwood, and one whom they called Chummy Potts, were wildly waving arms. Woodseer could hear the captain's lowered roar: 'Race you, Chummy, couple of louis, catch him first!' The two came pelting up to the carriage abreast.

They were belated revellers, and had been carelessly strolling under the

pinky cloudlets bedward, after a prolonged carousal with the sons and daughters of hilarious nations, until the apparition of Virgin Luck on the wing shocked all prospect of a dead fight with the tables that day.

'Here, come, no, by Jove, you, Mr. Woodsir! won't do, not a bit! can't let you go,' cried Abrane, as he puffed. 'What! cut and run and leave us, post winnings--bankers--knock your luck on the head! What a fellow! Can't let you. Countess never forgive us. You promised--swore it--play for her. Struck all ahead to hear of your play! You've got the trick. Her purse for you in my pocket. Never a fellow played like you. Cool as a cook over a-gridiron! Comme un phare! St. Ombre says--that Frenchman. You astonished the Frenchman! And now cut and run? Can't allow it. Honour of the country at stake.'

'Hands off!' Woodseer bellowed, feeling himself a leaky vessel in dock, his infirmities in danger of exposure. 'If you pull!--what the deuce do you want? Stop!'

'Out you come,' said the giant, and laughed at the fun to his friends, who were entirely harmonious when not violently dissenting, as is the way with Night's rollickers before their beds have reconciled them to the day-beams.

Woodseer would have had to come and was coming; he happened to say: 'Don't knock my pipe out of my mouth,' and touched a chord in the giant.

'All--right; smoke your pipe,' was answered to his remonstrance.

During the amnesty, Fleetwood inquired: 'Where are you going?'

'Far a drive,--to be sure. Don't you see!'

'You'll return?'

'I intend to return.'

'He's beastly excited,' quoth Abrane.

Fleetwood silenced him, though indeed Woodseer appeared suspiciously restive.

'Step down and have a talk with me before you start. You're not to go yet.'

'I must. I'm in a hurry.'

'What 's the hurry?'

'I want to smoke and think.'

'Takes a carriage on the top of the morning to smoke and think! Hark at that!' Abrane sang out. 'Oh, come along quietly, you fellow, there's a good fellow! It concerns us all, every man Jack; we're all bound up in

your fortunes. Fellow with luck like yours can't pretend to behave independently. Out of reason!

'Do you give me your word you return?' said Fleetwood.

Woodseer replied: 'Very well, I do; there, I give my word. Hang it! now I know what they mean by "anything for a quiet life." Just a shake brings us down on that cane-bottomed chair!'

'You return to-day?'

'To-day, yes, yes.'

Fleetwood signified the captive's release; and Abrane immediately suggested:

'Pop old Chummy in beside the fellow to mount guard.'

Potts was hustled and precipitated into the carriage by the pair, with whom he partook this last glimmer of their night's humorous extravagances, for he was an easy creature. The carriage drove off.

'Keep him company!' they shouted.

'Escort him back!' said he, nodding.

He remarked to Woodseer: 'With your permission,' concerning the seat he took, and that 'a draught of morning air would do him good.' Then he laughed politely, exchanged wavy distant farewells with his comrades, touched a breast-pocket for his case of cigars, pulled forth one, obtained 'the loan of a light,' blew clouds and fell into the anticipated composure, quite understanding the case and his office.

Both agreed as to the fine morning it was. Woodseer briefly assented to his keeper's reiterated encomium on the morning, justified on oath. A fine morning, indeed. 'Damned if I think I ever saw so fine a morning!' Potts cried. He had no other subject of conversation with this hybrid: and being equally disposed for hot discourse or for sleep, the deprivation of the one and the other forced him to seek amusement in his famous reading of character; which was profound among the biped equine, jockeys, turfmen, sharpers, pugilists, demireps. He fronted Woodseer with square shoulders and wide knees, an elbow on one, a fist on the other, engaged in what he termed the 'prodding of his eel,' or 'nicking of his man,' a method of getting straight at the riddle of the fellow by the test of how long he could endure a flat mute stare and return look for look unblinking. The act of smoking fortifies and partly covers the insolence. But if by chance an equable, not too narrowly focussed, counterstare is met, our impertinent inquisitor may resemble the fisherman pulled into deep waters by his fish. Woodseer perused his man, he was not attempting to fathom him: he had besides other stuff in his head. Potts had naught, and the poor particle he was wriggled under detection.

'Tobacco before breakfast!' he said disgustedly tossing his cigar to the road. 'Your pipe holds on. Bad thing, I can tell you, that smoking on an empty stomach. No trainer'd allow it, not for a whole fee or double. Kills your wind. Let me ask you, my good sir, are you going to turn? We've sat a fairish stretch. I begin to want my bath and a shave, linen and coffee. Thirsty' as a dog.'

He heard with stupefaction, that he could alight on the spot, if he pleased, otherwise he would be driven into Carlsruhe. And now they had a lingual encounter, hot against cool; but the eyes of Chummy Potts having been beaten, his arguments and reproaches were not backed by the powerful looks which are an essential part of such eloquence as he commanded. They fled from his enemy's curiously, even while he was launching epithets. His pathetic position subjected him to beg that Woodseer would direct the driver to turn, for he had no knowledge of 'their German lingo.' And said he: 'You've nothing to laugh at, that I can see. I'm at your mercy, you brute; caught in a trap. I never walk;--and the sun fit to fry a mackerel along that road! I apologize for abusing you; I can't do more. You're an infernally clever player--there! And, upon my soul, I could drink ditchwater! But if you're going in for transactions at Carlsruhe, mark my words, your luck's gone. Laugh as much as you like.'

Woodseer happened to be smiling over the excellent reason for not turning back which inflicted the wofulness. He was not without sympathy for a thirsty wretch, and guessing, at the sight of an avenue of limes to the left of the road, that a wayside inn was below, he said: 'You can have coffee or beer in two minutes,' and told the driver where to pull up.

The sight of a grey-jacketed, green-collared sportsman, dog at heel, crossing the flat land to the hills of the forest, pricked him enviously, and caused him to ask what change had come upon him, that he should be hurrying to a town for a change of clothes. Just as Potts was about to jump out, a carriage, with a second behind it, left the inn door. He rubbed a hand on his unshaven chin, tried a glance at his shirt-front, and remarking: 'It won't be any one who knows me,' stood to let the carriages pass. In the first were a young lady and a gentleman: the lady brilliantly fair, an effect of auburn hair and complexion, despite the signs of a storm that had swept them and had not cleared from her eyelids. Apparently her maid, a damsel sitting straight up, occupied the carriage following; and this fresh-faced young person twice quickly and bluntly bent her head as she was driven by. Potts was unacquainted with the maid. But he knew the lady well, or well enough for her inattention to be the bigger puzzle. She gazed at the Black Forest hills in the steadiest manner, with eyes betraying more than they saw; which solved part of the puzzle, of course. Her reasons for declining to see him were exposed by the presence of the gentleman beside her. At the same time, in so highly bred a girl, a defenceless exposure was unaccountable. Half a nod and the shade of a smile would have been the proper course; and her going along on the road to the valley seemed to say it might easily have been taken; except that there had evidently been a bit of a scene.

Potts ranked Henrietta's beauty far above her cousin Livia's. He was

therefore personally offended by her disregard of him, and her bit of a scene with the fellow carrying her off did him injury on behalf of his friend Fleetwood. He dismissed Woodseer curtly. Thirsting more to gossip than to drink, he took a moody draught of beer at the inn, and by the aid of a conveyance, hastily built of rotten planks to serve his needs, and drawn by a horse of the old wars,' as he reported on his arrival at Baden,--reached that home of the maltreated innocents twenty minutes before the countess and her party were to start for lunch up the Lichtenthal. Naturally, he was abused for letting his bird fly: but as he was shaven, refreshed, and in clean linen, he could pull his shirt-cuffs and take seat at his breakfast-table with equanimity while Abrane denounced him.

'I'll bet you the fellow's luck has gone,' said Potts. 'He 's no new hand and you don't think him so either, Fleet. I've looked into the fellow's eye and seen a leery old badger at the bottom of it. Talks vile stuff. However, 'perhaps I didn't drive out on that sweltering Carlsruhe road for nothing.'

He screwed a look at the earl, who sent Abrane to carry a message and heard the story Potts had to tell.

'Henrietta Fakenham! no mistake about her; driving out from a pothouse; man beside her, military man; might be a German. And, if you please, quite unacquainted with your humble servant, though we were as close as you to me. Something went wrong in that pothouse. Red eyes. There had been a scene, one could swear. Behind the lady another carriage, and her maid. Never saw the girl before, and sets to bowing and smirking at me, as if I was the-fellow of all others! Comical. I made sure they were bound for this place. They were on the Strasburg road. No sign of them?'

'You speak to me?' said Fleetwood.

Potts muttered. He had put his foot into it.

'You have a bad habit of speaking to yourself,' Fleetwood remarked, and left him. He suffered from the rustics he had to deal with among his class, and it was not needed that he should thunder at them to make his wrath felt.

Livia swam in, asking: 'What has come to Russett? He passed me in one of his black fits.'

The tale of the Carlsruhe road was repeated by Potts. She reproved him. 'How could you choose Russett for such a report as that! The admiral was on the road behind. Henrietta--you're sure it was she? German girls have much the same colouring. The gentleman with her must have been one of the Court equerries. They were driving to some chateau or battlefield the admiral wanted to inspect. Good-looking man? Military man?'

'Oh! the man! pretty fair, I dare say,' Potts rejoined. 'If it wasn't Henrietta Fakenham, I see with the back of my head. German girl! The

maid was a German girl.'

'That may well be,' said Livia.

She conceived the news to be of sufficient importance for her to countermand the drive up the Lichtenthal, and take the Carlsruhe road instead; for Henrietta was weak, and Chillon Kirby an arch-plotter, and pleader too, one of the desperate lovers. He was outstaying his leave of absence already, she believed; he had to be in England. If he feared to lose Henrietta, he would not hesitate to carry her off. Livia knew him, and knew the power of his pleading with a firmer woman than Henrietta.

CHAPTER XI

THE PRISONER OF HIS WORD

Nothing to rouse alarm was discovered at Carlsruhe. Livia's fair cousin was there with the red-haired gaunt girl of the mountains; and it was frankly stated by Henrietta, that she had accompanied the girl a certain distance along the Strasburg road, for her to see the last of her brother Chillon on his way to England. Livia was not the woman to push inquiries. On that subject, she merely said, as soon as they were alone together:

'You seem to have had the lion's share of the parting.'

'Yes, we passed Mr. Chumley Potts,' was Henrietta's immediate answer; and her reference to him disarmed Livia.

They smiled at his name transiently, but in agreement: the tattler-spout of their set was, a fatal person to encounter, and each deemed the sudden apparition of him in the very early morning along the Carlsruhe road rather magical.

'You place particular confidence in Russett's fidelity to his word, Riette--as you have been hearing yourself called. You should be serious by this time. Russett won't bear much more. I counted on the night of the Ball for the grand effect. You will extinguish every woman there--and if he is absent?'

'I shall excuse him.'

'You are not in a position to be so charitable. You ought to know your position, and yourself too, a little better than you do. How could you endure poverty? Chillon Kirby stands in his uniform, and all's told. He can manoeuvre, we know. He got the admiral away to take him to those reviews cleverly. But is he thinking of your interests when he does it? He requires twenty years of active service to give you a roof to your head. I hate such allusions. But look for a moment at your character: you must have ordinary luxuries and pleasures, and if you were to find

yourself grinding against common necessities--imagine it! Russett is quite manageable. He is, trust me! He is a gentleman; he has more ability than most young men: he can do anything he sets his mind to do. He has his great estates and fortune all in his own hands. We call him eccentric. He is only young, with a lot of power. Add, he's in love, and some one distracts him. Not love, do you say?--you look it. He worships. He has no chance given him to show himself at his best. Perhaps he is off again now. Will you bet me he is not?'

'I should incline to make the bet, if I betted,' said Henrietta. 'His pride is in his word, and supposing he's in love, it's with his pride, which never quits him.'

'There's firmness in a man who has pride of that kind. You must let me take you back to Baden. I hold to having you with me to-day. You must make an appearance there. The admiral will bring us his Miss Kirby to-morrow, if he is bound to remain here to-night. There's no harm in his bachelor dinners. I suspect his twinges of gout come of the prospect of affairs when he lands in England. Remember our bill with Madame Clemence. There won't be the ghost of a bank-note for me if Russett quits the field; we shall all be stranded.'

Henrietta inquired: 'Does it depend on my going with you to-day?'

'Consider, that he is now fancying a thousand things. We won't talk of the road to Paris.'

A shot of colour swept over Henrietta.

'I will speak to papa:--if he can let me go. He has taken to Miss Kirby.'

'Does she taste well?'

Henrietta debated. 'It's impossible to dislike her. Oh! she is wild! She knows absolutely nothing of the world. She can do everything we can't--or don't dare to try.--Men would like her. Papa's beginning to doat. He says she would have made a first-rate soldier. She fears blood as little as her morning cup of milk. One of the orderlies fell rather badly from a frightened horse close by our carriage. She was out in a moment and had his head on her lap, calling to papa to keep the carriage fast and block the way of the squadron, for the man's leg was hurt. I really thought we were lost. At these manoeuvres anything may happen, at any instant. Papa will follow the horse-artillery. You know his vanity to be a military quite as much as a naval commander like the Greeks and Romans, he says. We took the bruised man into our carriage and drove him to camp, Carinthia nursing him on the way.'

'Carinthia! She's well fitted with her name. What with her name and her hair and her build and her singular style of attire, one wonders at her coming into civilized parts. She 's utterly unlike Chillon.'

Henrietta reddened at the mention of one of her own thoughts in the

contrasting of the pair.

They had their points of likeness, she said.

It did not concern Livia to hear what these were. Back to Baden, with means to procure the pleasant shocks of the galvanic battery there, was her thought; for she had a fear of the earl's having again departed in a huff at Henrietta's behaviour.

The admiral consented that his daughter should go, as soon as he heard that Miss Kirby was to stay. He had when a young man met her famous father; he vowed she was the Old Buccaneer young again in petticoats and had made prize of an English man-of-war by storm; all the profit, however, being his. This he proved with a courteous clasp of the girl and a show of the salute on her cheek, which he presumed to take at the night's farewell. 'She's my tonic,' he proclaimed heartily. She seemed to Livia somewhat unstrung and toneless. The separation from her brother in the morning might account for it. And a man of the admiral's age could be excused if he exalted the girl. Senility, like infancy, is fond of plain outlines for the laying on of its paints. The girl had rugged brows, a short nose, red hair; no young man would look at her twice. She was utterly unlike Chillon! Kissing her hand to Henrietta from the steps of the hotel, the girl's face improved.

Livia's little squire, Sir Meeson Corby, ejaculated as they were driving down the main street, 'Fleetwood's tramp! There he goes. Now see, Miss Fakenham, the kind of object Lord Fleetwood picks up and calls friend!--calls that object friend! . . . But, what? He has been to a tailor and a barber!'

'Stop the coachman. Run, tell Mr. Woodseer I wish him to join us,' Livia said, and Sir Meeson had to thank his tramp for a second indignity. He protested, he simulated remonstrance,--he had to go, really feeling a sickness.

The singular-looking person, whose necessities or sense of the decencies had, unknown to himself and to the others, put them all in motion that day, swung round listening to the challenge to arms, as the puffy little man's delivery of the countess's message sounded. He was respectably clad, he thought, in the relief of his escape from the suit of clothes discarded, and he silently followed Sir Meeson's trot to the carriage. 'Should have mistaken you for a German to-day, sir,' the latter said, and trotted on.

'A stout one,' Woodseer replied, with his happy indifference to his exterior.

His dark lady's eyes were kindly overlooking, like the heavens. Her fair cousin, to whom he bowed, awakened him to a perception of the spectacle causing the slight, quick arrest of her look, in an astonishment not unlike the hiccup in speech, while her act of courtesy proceeded. At once he was conscious of the price he paid for respectability, and saw the Teuton skin on the slim Cambrian, baggy at shoulders, baggy at seat,

pinched at the knees, short at the heels, showing outrageously every spot where he ought to have been bigger or smaller. How accept or how reject the invitation to drive in such company to Baden!

'You're decided enough, sir, in your play, they tell me,' the vindictive little baronet commented on his hesitation, and Woodseer sprang to the proffered vacant place. But he had to speak of his fly waiting for him at the steps of a certain hotel.

'Best hotel in the town!' Sir Beeson exclaimed pointedly to Henrietta, reading her constraint with this comical object before her. It was the admiral's hotel they stopped at.

'Be so good as to step down and tell the admiral he is to bring Madame Clemence in his carriage to-morrow; and on your way, you will dismiss Mr. Woodseer's fly,' Livia mildly addressed her squire. He stared: again he had to go, muttering: 'That nondescript's footman!' and his mischance in being checked and crossed and humiliated perpetually by a dirty-fisted vagabond impostor astounded him. He sent the flyman to the carriage for orders.

Admiral Fakenham and Carinthia descended. Sir Meeson heard her cry out: 'Is it you!' and up stood the pretentious lout in the German sack, affecting the graces of a born gentleman fresh from Paris,--bowing, smirking, excusing himself for something; and he jumped down to the young lady, he talked intimately with her, with a joker's air; he roused the admiral to an exchange of jokes, and the countess and Miss Fakenham more than smiled; evidently at his remarks, unobservant of the preposterous figure he cut. Sir Meeson Corby had intimations of the disintegration of his country if a patent tramp burlesquing in those clothes could be permitted to amuse English ladies of high station, quite at home with them. Among the signs of England's downfall, this was decidedly one. What to think of the admiral's favourite when, having his arm paternally on her shoulder, she gave the tramp her hand at parting, and then blushed! All that the ladies had to say about it was, that a spread of colour rather went to change the character of her face.

Carinthia had given Woodseer her hand and reddened under the recollection of Chillon's words to her as they mounted the rise of the narrow vale, after leaving the lame gentleman to his tobacco on the grass below the rocks. Her brother might have counselled her wisely and was to be obeyed. Only, the great pleasure in seeing the gentleman again inspired gratitude: he brought the scene to her; and it was alive, it chatted and it beckoned; it neighboured her home; she had passed it on her walk away from her home; the gentleman was her link to the mountain paths; he was just outside an association with her father and mother. At least, her thinking of them led to him, he to them. Now that she had lost Chillon, no one was near to do so much. Besides, Chillon loved Henrietta; he was her own. His heart was hers and his mind his country's. This gentleman loved the mountains; the sight of him breathed mountain air. To see him next day was her anticipation: for it would be at the skirts of hilly forest land, where pinetrees are a noble family, different from the dusty firs of the weariful plains, which had tired her eyes of late.

Baden was her first peep at the edges of the world since she had grown to be a young woman. She had but a faint idea of the significance of gambling. The brilliant lights, the band music, the sitting groups and company of promenaders were novelties; the Ball of the ensuing night at the Schloss would be a wonder, she acknowledged in response to Henrietta, who was trying to understand her; and she admired her ball-dress, she said, looking unintelligently when she heard that she would be guilty of slaying numbers of gentlemen before the night was over. Madame Clemence thought her chances in that respect as good as any other young lady's, if only she could be got to feel interested. But at a word of the pine forest, and saying she intended to climb the hills early with the light in the morning, a pointed eagerness flushed Carinthia, the cold engraving became a picture of colour.

She was out with the earliest light. Yesterday's parting between Chillon and Henrietta had taught her to know some little about love; and if her voice had been heeded by Chillon's beloved, it would not have been a parting. Her only success was to bring a flood of tears from Henrietta. The tears at least assured her that her brother's beautiful girl had no love for the other one,--the young nobleman of the great wealth, who was to be at the Ball, and had 'gone flying,' Admiral Fakenham shrugged to say; for Lord Fleetwood was nowhere seen.

The much talk of him on the promenade overnight fetched his name to her thoughts; he scarcely touched a mind that her father filled when she was once again breathing early morning air among the stems of climbing pines, broken alleys of the low-sweeping spruce branches and the bare straight shafts carrying their heads high in the march upward. Her old father was arch-priest of such forest land, always recoverable to her there. The suggestion of mountains was enough to make her mind play, and her old father and she were aware of one another without conversing in speech. He pointed at things to observe; he shared her satisfied hunger for the solitudes of the dumb and growing and wild sweet-smelling. He would not let a sorrowful thought backward or an apprehensive idea forward disturb the scene. A half-uprooted pine-tree stem propped mid-fall by standing comrades, and the downy drop to ground and muted scurry up the bark of long-brush squirrels, cocktail on the wary watch, were noticed by him as well as by her; even the rotting timber drift, bark and cones on the yellow pine needles, and the tortuous dwarf chestnut pushing level out, with a strain of the head up, from a crevice of mossed rock, among ivy and ferns; he saw what his girl saw. Power of heart was her conjuring magician.

She climbed to the rock-slabs above. This was too easily done. The poor bit of effort excited her frame to desire a spice of danger, her walk was towering in the physical contempt of a mountain girl for petty lowland obstructions. And it was just then, by the chance of things--by the direction of events, as Dame Gossip believes it to be--while colour, expression, and her proud stature marked her from her sex, that a gentleman, who was no other than Lord Fleetwood, passed Carinthia, coming out of the deeper pine forest.

Some distance on, round a bend of the path, she was tempted to adventure by a projected forked head of a sturdy blunted and twisted little rock-fostered forest tree pushing horizontally for growth about thirty feet above the lower ground. She looked on it, and took a step down to the stem soon after.

Fleetwood had turned and followed, merely for the final curious peep at an unexpected vision; he had noticed the singular shoot of thick timber from the rock, and the form of the goose-neck it rose to, the sprout of branches off the bill in the shape of a crest. And now a shameful spasm of terror seized him at sight of a girl doing what he would have dreaded to attempt. She footed coolly, well-balanced, upright. She seated herself.

And there let her be. She was a German girl, apparently. She had an air of breeding, something more than breeding. German families of the nobles give out, here and there, as the Great War showed examples of, intrepid young women, who have the sharp lines of character to render them independent of the graces. But, if a young woman out alone in the woods was hardly to be counted among the well-born, she held rank above them. Her face and bearing might really be taken to symbolize the forest life. She was as individual a representative as the Tragic and Comic masks, and should be got to stand between them for sign of the naturally straight-growing untrained, a noble daughter of the woods.

Not comparable to Henrietta in feminine beauty, she was on an upper plateau, where questions as to beauty are answered by other than the shallow aspect of a girl. But would Henrietta eclipse her if they were side by side? Fleetwood recalled the strange girl's face. There was in it a savage poignancy in serenity unexampled among women--or modern women. One might imagine an apotheosis of a militant young princess of Goths or Vandals, the glow of blessedness awakening her martial ardours through the languor of the grave:--Woodseer would comprehend and hit on the exact image to portray her in a moment, Fleetwood thought, and longed for that fellow.

He walked hurriedly back to the stunted rock tree. The damsel had vanished. He glanced below. She had not fallen. He longed to tell Woodseer he had seen a sort of Carinthia sister, cousin, one of the family. A single glimpse of her had raised him out of his grovelling perturbations, cooled and strengthened him, more than diverting the course of the poison Henrietta infused, and to which it disgraced him to be so subject. He took love unmanfully; the passion struck at his weakness; in wrath at the humiliation, if only to revenge himself for that, he could be fiendish; he knew it, and loathed the desired fair creature who caused and exposed to him these cracks in his nature, whence there came a brimstone stench of the infernal pits. And he was made for better. Of this he was right well assured. Superior to station and to wealth, to all mundane advantages, he was the puppet of a flrid puppet girl; and he had slept at the small inn of a village hard by, because it was intolerable to him to see the face that had been tearful over her lover's departure, and hear her praises of the man she trusted to keep his word, however grievously she wounded him.

He was the prisoner of his word;--rather like the donkeys known as married men: rather more honourable than most of them. He had to be present at the ball at the Schloss and behold his loathed Henrietta, suffer torture of chains to the rack, by reason of his having promised the bitter coquette he would be there. So hellish did the misery seem to him, that he was relieved by the prospect of lying a whole day long in loneliness with the sunshine of the woods, occasionally conjuring up the antidote face of the wood-sprite before he was to undergo it. But, as he was not by nature a dreamer, only dreamed of the luxury of being one, he soon looked back with loathing on a notion of relief to come from the state of ruminating animal, and jumped up and shook off another of men's delusions--that they can, if they have the heart to suffer pain, deaden it with any semi-poetical devices, similar to those which Rufus Abrane's 'fiddler fellow' practised and was able to carry out because he had no blood. The spite of a present entire opposition to Woodseer's professed views made him exult in the thought, that the mouther of sentences was likely to be at work stultifying them and himself in the halls there below during the day. An imp of mischief offered consolatory sport in those halls of the Black Goddess; already he regarded his recent subservience to the conceited and tripped peripatetic philosopher as among the ignominies he had cast away on his road to a general contempt; which is the position of a supreme elevation for particularly sensitive young men.

Pleasure in the scenery had gone, and the wood-sprite was a flitted vapour; he longed to be below there, observing Abrane and Potts and the philosopher confounded, and the legible placidity of Countess Livia. Nevertheless, he hung aloft, feeding where he could, impatient of the solitudes, till night, when, according to his guess, the ladies were at their robing.

Half the fun was over: but the tale of it, narrated in turn by Abrane and his Chummy Potts on the promenade, was a very good half. The fiddler had played for the countess and handed her back her empty purse, with a bow and a pretty speech. Nothing had been seen of him since. He had lost all his own money besides. 'As of course he would,' said Potts. 'A fellow calculating the chances catches at a knife in the air.'

'Every franc-piece he had!' cried Abrane. 'And how could the jackass expect to keep his luck! Flings off his old suit and comes back here with a rig of German bags--you never saw such a figure!--Shoreditch Jew's holiday!--why, of course, the luck wouldn't stand that.'

They confessed ruefully to having backed him a certain distance, notwithstanding. 'He took it so coolly, just as if paying for goods across a counter.'

'And he had something to bear, Braney, when you fell on him,' said Potts, and murmured aside: 'He can be smartish. Hears me call Braney Rufus, and says he, like a fellow-chin on his fiddle--"Captain Mountain, Rufus Mus'. Not bad, for a counter.'"

Fleetwood glanced round: he could have wrung Woodseer's hand. He saw young Cressett instead, and hailed him: 'Here you are, my gallant! You shall flash your maiden sword tonight. When I was under your age by a long count, I dealt sanctimoniousness a flick o' the cheek, and you shall, and let 'em know you're a man. Come and have your first boar-hunt along with me. Petticoats be hanged.'

The boy showed some recollection of the lectures of his queen, but he had not the vocables for resistance to an imperative senior at work upon sneaking inclinations. 'Promised Lady F.'--do you hear him?' Fleetwood called to the couple behind; and as gamblers must needs be parasites, manly were the things they spoke to invigorate the youthful plunger and second the whim of their paymaster.

At half-past eleven, the prisoner of his word entered under the Schloss partico, having vowed to himself on the way, that he would satisfy the formulas to gain release by a deferential bow to the great personages, and straightway slip out into the heavenly starlight, thence down among the jolly Parisian and Viennese Bacchanals.

CHAPTER XII

HENRIETTA'S LETTER TREATING OF THE GREAT EVENT

By the first light of an autumn morning, Henrietta sat at her travelling-desk, to shoot a spark into the breast of her lover with the story of the great event of the night. For there had been one, one of our biggest, beyond all tongues and trumpets and possible anticipations. Wonder at it hammered on incredulity as she wrote it for fact, and in writing had vision of her lover's eyes over the page.

'Monsieur Du Lac!

'Grey Dawn. 'You are greeted. This, if you have been tardy on the journey home, will follow close on the heels of the prowest, I believe truest, of knights, and bear perhaps to his quick mind some help to the solution he dropped a hint of seeking.

'The Ball in every way a success. Grand Duke and Duchess perfect in courtesy, not a sign of the German morgue. Livia splendid. Compared to Day and Night. But the Night eclipses the Day. A summer sea of dancing. Who, think you, eclipsed those two?

'I tell you the very truth when I say your Carinthia did. If you had seen her,--the "poor dear girl" you sigh to speak of,--with the doleful outlook on her fortunes: "portionless, unattractive!" Chillon, she was magical!

You cannot ever have seen her irradiated with happiness. Her pleasure in the happiness of all around her was part of the charm. One should be a

poet to describe her. It would task an artist to paint the rose-crystal she became when threading her way through the groups to be presented. This is not meant to say that she looked beautiful. It was the something above beauty--more unique and impressive--like the Alpine snow-cloak towering up from the flowery slopes you know so well and I a little.

'You choose to think, is it Riette who noticed my simple sister so closely before . . .? for I suppose you to be reading this letter a second time and reflecting as you read. In the first place, acquaintance with her has revealed that she is not the simple person--only in her manner. Under the beams of subsequent events, it is true I see her more picturesquely. But I noticed also just a suspicion of the "grenadier" stride when she was on the march to make her curtsey. But Livia had no cause for chills and quivers. She was not the very strange bird requiring explanatory excuses; she dances excellently, and after the first dance, I noticed she minced her steps in the walk with her partner. She catches the tone readily. If not the image of her mother, she has inherited her mother's bent for the graces; she needs but a small amount of practice.

'Take my assurance of that; and you know who has critical eyes. Your anxiety may rest; she is equal to any station.

'As expected by me, my Lord Tyrant appeared, though late, near midnight. I saw him bowing to the Ducal party. Papa had led your "simple sister" there. Next I saw the Tyrant and Carinthia conversing. Soon they were dancing together, talking interestedly, like cheerful comrades. Whatever his faults, he has the merit of being a man of his word. He said he would come, he did not wish to come, and he came.

'His word binds him--I hope not fatally; irrevocably, it certainly does. There is charm of character in that. His autocrat airs can be forgiven to a man who so profoundly respects his word.

'It occurred during their third dance. Your Riette was not in the quadrille. O but she was a snubbed young woman last night! I refrain--the examples are too minute for quotation.

'A little later and he had vanished. Carinthia Kirby may already be written Countess of Fleetwood! His hand was offered and hers demanded in plain terms. Her brother would not be so astounded if he had seen the brilliant creature she was--is, I could say; for when she left me here, to go to her bed, she still wore the "afterglow." She tripped over to me in the ball-room to tell me. I might doubt, she had no doubt whatever. I fancied he had subjected her to some degree of trifling. He was in a mood. His moods are known to me. But no, he was precise; her report of him strikes the ear as credible, in spite of the marvel it insists on our swallowing.

"Lord Fleetwood had asked me to marry him." Neither assurance nor bashfulness; newspaper print; aid an undoubting air of contentment.

'Imagine me hearing it.

"To be his wife?"

"He said wife."

"And you replied?"

"I--said I would."

"Tell me all?"

"He said we were plighted."

'Now, "wife" is one of the words he abhors; and he loathes the hearing of a girl as "engaged." However, "plighted" carried a likeness.

'I pressed her: "My dear Carinthia, you thought him in earnest?"

"He was."

"How do you judge?"

"By his look when he spoke."

"Not by his words?"

"I repeat them to you."

'She has repeated them to me here in my bedroom. There is no variation. She remembers every syllable. He went so far as to urge her to say whether she would as willingly utter consent if they were in a church and a clergyman at the altar-rails.

'That was like him.

'She made answer: "Wherever it may be, I am bound, if I say yes."

'She then adds: "He told me he joined hands with me."

"Did he repeat the word 'wife'?"

"He said it twice."

'I transcribe verbatim scrupulously. There cannot be an error, Chillon. It seems to show, that he has embraced the serious meaning of the word--or seriously embraced the meaning, reads' better. I have seen his lips form "wife."

'But why wonder so staringly? They both love the mountains. Both are wildish. She was looking superb. And he had seen her do a daring thing on the rocks on the heights in the early morning, when she was out by herself, unaware of a spectator, he not knowing who she was;--the Fates had arranged it so. That was why he took to her so rapidly. So he told

her. She likes being admired. The preparation for the meeting does really seem "under direction." She likes him too, I do think. Between her repetitions of his compliments, she praised his tone of voice, his features. She is ready to have the fullest faith in the sincerity of his offer; speaks without any impatience for the fulfilment. If it should happen, what a change in the fortunes of a girl--of more than one, possibly.

'Now I must rest "eyelids fall." It will be with a heart galloping. No rest for me till this letter flies. Good morning is my good night to you, in a world that has turned over.'

Henrietta resumes:

'Livia will not hear of it, calls up all her pretty languor to put it aside. It is the same to-day as last night. "Why mention Russett's nonsense to me?" Carinthia is as quietly circumstantial as at first. She and the Tyrant talked of her native home. Very desirous to see it! means to build a mansion there! "He said it must be the most romantic place on earth."

'I suppose I slept. I woke with my last line to you on my lips, and the great news thundering. He named Esslemont and his favourite--always uninhabited--Cader Argau. She speaks them correctly. She has an unfailing memory. The point is, that it is a memory.

'Do not forget also--Livia is affected by her distaste--that he is a gentleman. He plays with his nobility. With his reputation of gentleman, he has never been known to play. You will understand the slightly hypocritical air--it is not of sufficient importance for it to be alluded to in papa's presence--I put on with her.

'Yes, I danced nearly all the dances. One, a princeling in scarlet uniform, appearing fresh from under earth; Prussian: a weighty young Graf in green, between sage and bottle, who seemed to have run off a tree in the forest, and was trimmed with silver like dew-drops: one in your Austrian white, dragon de Boheme, if I caught his French rightly. Others as well, a list. They have the accomplishment. They are drilled in it young, as girls are, and so few Englishmen--even English officers. How it may be for campaigning, you can pronounce; but for dancing, the pantalon collant is the perfect uniform. Your critical Henrietta had not to complain of her partners, in the absence of the one.

'I shall be haunted by visions of Chillon's amazement until I hear or we meet. I serve for Carinthia's mouthpiece, she cannot write it, she says. It would be related in two copybook lines, if at all.

'The amazement over London! The jewel hand of the kingdom gone in a flash, to "a raw mountain girl," as will be said. I can hear Lady Endor, Lady Eldritch, Lady Cowry. The reasonable woman should be Lady Arpington. I have heard her speak of your mother, seen by her when she was in frocks.

'Enter the "plighted." Poor Livia! to be made a dowager of by any but a damsel of the family. She may well ridicule "that nonsense of Russett's last night"! Carinthia kisses, embraces, her brother. I am to say: "What Henrietta tells you is true, Chillon." She is contented though she has not seen him again and has not the look of expecting to see him. She still wears the kind of afterglow.

'Chillon's Viennese waltz was played by the band: played a second time, special request, conveyed to the leader by Prince Ferdinand. True, most true, she longs to be home across the water. But be it admitted, that to any one loving colour, music, chivalry, the Island of Drab is an exile. Imagine, then, the strange magnetism drawing her there! Could warmer proof be given?

'Adieu. Livia's "arch-plotter" will weigh the letter he reads to the smallest fraction of a fraction before he moves a step.

'I could leave it and come to it again and add and add. I foresee in Livia's mind a dread of the aforesaid "arch," and an interdict. So the letter must be closed, sealed and into the box, with the hand I still call mine, though I should doubt my right if it were contested fervently. I am singing the waltz.

'Adieu,
 'Ever and beyond it,
 'Your obedient Queen,
 'HENRIETTA.

'P.S.-My Lord Tyrant has departed--as on other occasions. The prisoner of his word is sure to take his airing before he presents himself to redeem it. His valet is left to pay bills, fortunately for Livia. She entrusted her purse yesterday to a man picked up on the road by my lord, that he might play for her. Captain Abrane assured her he had a star, and Mr. Potts thought him a rush compere, an adept of those dreadful gambling tables. Why will she continue to play! The purse was returned to her, without so much as a piece of silver in it; the man has flown. Sir M. Corby says, he is a man whose hands betray him--or did to Sir M.; expects to see him one day on the wrong side of the criminal bar. He struck me as not being worse than absurd. He was, in any case, an unfit companion, and our C. would help to rescue the Eccentric from such complicating associates. I see worlds of good she may do. Happily, he is no slave of the vice of gambling; so she would not suffer that anxiety. I wish it could be subjoined, that he has no malicious pleasure in misleading others. Livia is inconsolable over her pet, young Lord Cressett, whom he yesterday induced to "try his luck"--with the result. We leave, if bills are paid, in two days. Captain Abrane and Mr. Potts left this afternoon; just enough to carry them home. Papa and your blissful sister out driving. Riette within her four walls and signing herself,

'THE PRISONER OF CHILLON.'

CHAPTER XIII

AN IRRUPTION. OF MISTRESS GOSSIP IN BREACH OF THE CONVENTION

'It is a dark land,' Carinthia said, on seeing our Island's lowered clouds in swift motion, without a break of their folds, above the sheer white cliffs.

--She said it, we know. That poor child Carinthia Jane, when first she beheld Old England's shores, tossing in the packet-boat on a wild Channel sea, did say it and think it, for it is in the family that she did; and no wonder that she should, the day being showery from the bed of the sun, after a frosty three days, at the close of autumn. We used to have an eye of our own for English weather before printed Meteorological Observations and Forecasts undertook to supplant the shepherd and the poacher, and the pilot with his worn brown leather telescope tucked beneath his arm. All three would have told you, that the end of a three days' frost in the late season of the year and the early, is likely to draw the warm winds from the Atlantic over Cornish Land's End and Lizard.

Quite by chance of things, Carinthia Jane looked on the land of her father and mother for the first time under those conditions. There can be no harm in quoting her remark. Only--I have to say it--experience causes apprehension, that we are again to be delayed by descriptions, and an exposition of feelings; taken for granted,--of course, in a serious narrative; which it really seems these moderns think designed for a frequent arrest of the actors in the story and a searching of the internal state of this one or that one of them: who is laid out stark naked and probed and expounded, like as in the celebrated picture by a great painter--and we, thirsting for events as we are, are to stop to enjoy a lecture on Anatomy. And all the while the windows of the lecture-room are rattling, if not the whole fabric shaking, with exterior occurrences or impatience for them to come to pass. Every explanation is sure to be offered by the course events may take; so do, in mercy, I say, let us bide for them.

She thought our Island all the darker because Henrietta had induced her to talk on the boat of her mountain home and her last morning there for the walk away with Chillon John. Soon it was to appear supernaturally bright, a very magician's cave for brilliancy.

Now, this had happened--and comment on it to yourselves, remembering always, that Chillon John was a lover, and a lover has his excuses, though they will not obviate the penalties he may incur; and dreadful they were. After reading Henrietta's letter to him, he rode out of his Canterbury quarters across the country to the borders of Sussex, where his uncle Lord Levellier lived, on the ridge of ironstone, near the wild land of a forest, Croridge the name of the place. Now, Chillon John knew his uncle was miserly, and dreaded the prospect of having to support a niece in the wretched establishment at Lekkatts, or, as it was popularly called, Leancats; you can understand why. But he managed to assure

himself he must in duty consult with the senior and chief member of .his family on a subject of such importance as the proposal of marriage to his lordship's niece.

The consultation was short: 'You will leave it to me,' his uncle said: and we hear of business affairs between them, involving payment of moneys due to the young man; and how, whenever he touched on them, his uncle immediately fell back on the honour of the family and Carinthia Jane's reputation, her good name to be vindicated, and especially that there must be no delays, together with as close a reckoning as he could make of the value of Lord Fleetwood's estates in Kent and in Staffordshire and South Wales, and his house property in London.

'He will have means to support her,' said the old lord, shrugging as if at his own incapacity for that burden.

The two then went to the workshops beside a large pond, where there was an island bordered with birch trees and workmen's cottages near the main building; and that was an arsenal containing every kind of sword and lance and musket, rifle and fowling-piece and pistol, and more gunpowder than was, I believe, allowed by law. For they were engaged in inventing a new powder for howitzer shells, of tremendous explosive power.

Nothing further did either of them say, concerning the marriage. Nor did Carinthia Jane hear any mention of Lord Fleetwood from her brother on the landingplace at Dover. She was taken to Admiral Baldwin Fakenham's house in Hampshire; and there she remained, the delight of his life, during two months, patiently expecting and rebuking the unmaidenliness of her expectations, as honest young women in her position used to do. So did they sometimes wait for years; they have waited until they withered into their graves, like the vapours of a brief winter's day: a moving picture of a sex restrained by modesty in those purer times from the taking of one step forward unless inquired for.

Two months she waited in our 'dark land.' January arrived, and her brother. Henrietta communicated the news:

'My Janey, you are asked by Lord Fleetwood whether it is your wish that he should marry you.'

Now, usually a well-born young woman's answer, if a willing one, is an example of weak translation. Here it was the heart's native tongue, without any roundabout, simple but direct.

'Oh, I will, I am ready, tell him.'

Remember, she was not speaking publicly.

Henrietta knew the man enough to be glad he did not hear. She herself would have felt a little shock on his behalf: only, that answer suited the scheme of the pair of lovers.

How far those two were innocent in not delivering the whole of Lord

Fleetwood's message to Carinthia Jane through Lord Levellier, we are unable to learn. We may suspect the miserly nobleman of curtailing it for his purposes; and such is my idea. But the answer would have been the same, I am sure.

In consequence and straight away, Chillon John betakes him to Admiral Baldwin and informs him of Lord Fleetwood's proposal on the night at Baden, and renewal of it through the mouth of Lord Levellier, not communicating, however (he may really not have known), the story of how it had been wrung from the earl by a surprise movement on the part of the one-armed old lord, who burst out on him in the street from the ambush of a Club-window, where he had been stationed every day for a fortnight, indefatigably to watch for the passing of the earl, as there seemed no other way to find him. They say, indeed, there was a scene, judging by the result, and it would have been an excellent scene for the stage; though the two noblemen were to all appearance politely exchanging their remarks. But the audience hearing what passes, appreciates the courteous restraint of an attitude so contrasting with their tempers. Behind the ostentation of civility, their words were daggers.

For it chanced, that the young earl, after a period of refuge at his Welsh castle, supposing, as he well might, that his latest mad freak of the proposal of his hand and title to the strange girl in a quadrille at a foreign castle had been forgotten by her, and the risks of annoyance on the subject had quite blown over, returned to town, happy in having done the penance for his impulsiveness, and got clean again--that is to say, struck off his fetters and escaped from importunities--the very morning of the day when Lord Levellier sprang upon him! It shows the old campaigner's shrewdness in guessing where his prey would come, and not putting him on his guard by a call at his house. Out of the window he looked for all the hours of light during an entire fortnight. 'In the service of my sister's child,' he said. 'To save him from the cost of maintaining her,' say his enemies. At any rate he did it.

He was likely to have done the worse which I suspect.

Now, the imparting of the wonderful news to Admiral Baldwin Fakenham was, we read, the whiff of a tropical squall to lay him on his beam ends. He could not but doubt; and his talk was like the sails of a big ship rattling to the first puff of wind. He had to believe; and then, we read, he was for hours like a vessel rolling in the trough of the sea. Of course he was a disappointed father. Naturally his glance at the loss to Henrietta of the greatest prize of the matrimonial market of all Europe and America was vexing and saddening. Then he woke up to think of the fortunes of his 'other girl,' as he named her, and cried: 'Crinny catches him!'

He cried it in glee and rubbed his hands.

So thereupon, standing before him, Chillon John, from whom he had the news, bent to him slightly, as his elegant manner was, and lengthened the admiral's chaps with another proposal; easy, deliberate, precise, quite the respectful bandit, if you please, determined on having his daughter

by all means, only much preferring the legal, formal, and friendly. Upon that, in the moment of indecision, Henrietta enters, followed by Admiral Baldwin's heroine, his Crinny, whom he embraced and kissed, congratulated and kissed again. One sees the contrivance to soften him.

So it was done, down in that Hampshire household on the heights near the downs, whence you might behold, off a terra firma resembling a roll of billows, England's big battle-ships in line fronting the island; when they were a spectacle of beauty as well as power: which now they are no more, but will have to be, if they are both to float and to fight. For I have, had quoted to me by a great admirer of the Old Buccaneer, one of the dark sayings in his MAXIMS FOR MEN, where Captain John Peter Kirby commends his fellow-men to dissatisfaction with themselves if they have not put an end to their enemy handsomely.. And he advises the copying of Nature in this; whose elements have always, he says, a pretty, besides a thorough, style of doing it, when they get the better of us; and the one by reason of the other. He instances the horse, the yacht, and chiefly the sword, for proof, that the handsomest is the most effective. And he prints large: 'UGLY IS ONLY HALF WAY TO A THING.' To an invention, I suppose he intends to say. But looking on our huge foundering sea-monsters and the disappearance of the unwieldy in Nature, and the countenances of criminals, who are, he bids us observe, always in the long run beaten, I seem to see a meaning our country might meditate on.

So, as I said, it was done; for Admiral Baldwin could refuse his Crinny nothing; as little as he would deny anything to himself, the heartiest of kindly hosts, fathers, friends. Carinthia Jane's grand good fortune covered that pit, the question of money, somehow, and was, we may conceive, a champagne wine in their reasoning faculties. The admiral was in debt, Henrietta had no heritage, Chillon John was the heir of a miserly uncle owing him sums and evading every application for them, yet they behaved as people who had the cup of golden wishes. Perhaps it was because Henrietta and her lover were so handsome a match as to make it seem to them and others they must marry; and as to character, her father could trust her to the man of her choice more readily than to the wealthy young nobleman; of whose discreetness he had not the highest opinion. He reconciled this view with his warm feeling for the Countess of Fleetwood to be, by saying: 'Crinny will tame him!' His faith was in her dauntless bold spirit, not thinking of the animal she was to tame.

Countess Livia, after receiving Henrietta's letter of information, descended on them and thought them each and all a crazed set. Love, as a motive of action for a woman, she considered the female's lunacy and suicide. Men are born subject to it, happily, and thus the balance between the lordly half of creation and the frail is rectified. We women dress, and smile, sigh, if you like, to excite the malady. But if we are the fools to share it, we lose our chance; instead of the queens, we are the slaves, and instead of a life of pleasure, we pass from fever to fever at a tyrant's caprice: he does rightly in despising us. Ay, and many a worthy woman thinks the same. Educated in dependency as they are, they come to the idea of love to snatch at it for their weapon of the man's weakness. For which my lord calls them heartless, and poets are angry with them, rightly or wrongly.

It must, I fear, be admitted for a truth, that sorrow is the portion of young women who give the full measure of love to the engagement, marrying for love. At least, Countess Livia could declare subsequently she had foretold it and warned her cousin. Not another reflection do you hear from me, if I must pay forfeit of my privilege to hurry you on past descriptions of places and anatomy of character and impertinent talk about philosophy in a story. When we are startled and offended by the insinuated tracing of principal incidents to a thread-bare spot in the nether garments of a man of no significance, I lose patience.

Henrietta's case was a secondary affair. What with her passion--it was nothing less--and her lover's cunning arts, and her father's consent given, and in truth the look of the two together, the dissuasion of them from union was as likely to keep them apart as an exhortation addressed to magnet and needle. Countess Livia attacked Carinthia Jane and the admiral backing her. But the admiral, having given his consent to his daughter's marriage, in consequence of the earl's pledged word to 'his other girl,' had become a zealot for this marriage and there was only not a grand altercation on the subject because Livia shunned annoyances. Alone with Carinthia Jane, as she reported to Henrietta, she spoke to a block, that shook a head and wore a thin smile and nursed its own idea of the better knowledge of Edward Russett, Earl of Fleetwood, gained in the run of a silly quadrille at a ball:

What is a young man's word to his partner in a quadrille?

Livia put the question, she put it twice rather sternly, and the girl came out with: 'Oh, he meant it!'

The nature, the pride, the shifty and furious moods of Lord Fleetwood were painted frightful to her.

She had conceived her own image of him.

Whether to set her down as an enamoured idiot or a creature not a whit less artful than her brother, was Countess Livia's debate. Her inclination was to misdoubt the daughter of the Old Buccaneer: she might be simple, at her age, and she certainly was ignorant; but she clung to her prize. Still the promise was extracted from her, that she would not worry the earl to fulfil the word she supposed him to mean in its full meaning.

The promise was unreluctantly yielded. No, she would not write. Admiral Fakenham, too, engaged to leave the matter to a man of honour.

Meanwhile, Chillon John had taken a journey to Lekkatts; following which, his uncle went to London. Lord Fleetwood heard that Miss Kirby kept him bound. He was again the fated prisoner of his word.

And following that, not so very long, there was the announcement of the marriage of Chillon John Kirby Levellier, Lieutenant in the King's Own Hussars, and Henrietta, daughter of Admiral Baldwin Fakenham. A county

newspaper paragraph was quoted for its eulogy of the Beauty of Hampshire --not too strong, those acquainted with her thought. Interest at Court obtained an advancement for the bridegroom: he was gazetted Captain during his honeymoon, and his prospects under his uncle's name were considered fair, though certain people said at the time, it was likely to be all he would get while old Lord Levellier of Leancats remained in the flesh.

Now, as it is good for those to tell who intend preserving their taste for romance and hate anatomical lectures, we never can come to the exact motives of any extraordinary piece of conduct on the part of man or woman. Girls are to read; and the study of a boy starts from the monkey. But no literary surgeon or chemist shall explain positively the cause of the behaviour of men and women in their relations together; and speaking to rescue my story, I say we must with due submission accept the facts. We are not a bit the worse for wondering at them. So it happened that Lord Fleetwood's reply to Lord Levellier's hammer--hammer by post and messenger at his door, one may call it, on the subject of the celebration of the marriage of the young Croesus and Carinthia Jane, in which there was demand for the fixing of a date forthwith, was despatched on the day when London had tidings of Henrietta Pakenham's wedding.

The letter, lost for many years, turned up in the hands of a Kentish auctioneer, selling it on behalf of a farm-serving man, who had it from Lord Levellier's cook and housemaid, among the things she brought him as her wifely portion after her master's death, and this she had not found saleable in her husband's village at her price, but she had got the habit of sticking to the scraps, being proud of hearing it said that she had skinned Leancats to some profit: and her expectation proved correct after her own demise, for her husband putting it up at the auction; our relative on the mother's side, Dr. Glossop, interested in the documents and particulars of the story as he was, had it knocked down to him, in contest with an agent of a London gentleman, going as high as two pounds ten shillings, for the sum of two pounds and fifteen shillings. Count the amount that makes for each word of a letter a marvel of brevity, considering the purport! But Dr. Glossop was right in saying he had it cheap. The value of that letter may now be multiplied by ten: nor for that sum would he part with it.

Thus it ran, I need not refer to it in Bundle No. 3:

'MY LORD: I drive to your church-door on the fourteenth of the month at ten A.M., to keep my appointment with Miss C. J. Kirby, if I do not blunder the initials.

'Your lordship's obedient servant,
'FLEETWOOD.'

That letter will ever be a treasured family possession with us.

That letter was dated from Lord Fleetwood's Kentish mansion, Esslemont, the tenth of the month. He must have quitted London for Esslemont, for change of scene, for air, the moment after the news of Henrietta's marriage. Carinthia Jane received the summons without transmission of

the letter from her uncle on the morning of the twelfth. It was a peremptory summons.

Unfortunately, Admiral Fakenham, a real knight and chevalier of those past times, would not let her mount the downs to have her farewell view of the big ships unaccompanied by him; and partly and largely in pure chivalry, no doubt; but her young idea of England's grandeur, as shown in her great vessels of war, thrilled him, too, and restored his youthful enthusiasm for his noble profession or made it effervesce. However it was, he rode beside her and rejoiced to hear the young girl's talk of her father as a captain of one of England's thunderers, and of the cruelty of that Admiralty to him: at which Admiral Baldwin laughed, but had not the heart to disagree with her, for he could belabour the Admiralty in season, cause or no cause. Altogether he much enjoyed the ride, notwithstanding intimations of the approach of 'his visitor,' as he called his attacks of gout.

Riding home, however, the couple passed through a heavy rainfall, and the next day, when he was to drive with the bride to Lekkatts, gout, the fiercest he had ever known, chained him fast to his bed. Such are the petty accidents affecting circumstances. They are the instruments of Destiny.

There he lay, protesting that the ceremony could not possibly be for the fourteenth, because Countess Livia had, he now remembered, written of her engagement to meet Russett on the night of that day at a ball at Mrs. Cowper Quillett's place, Canleys, lying south of the Surrey hills: a house famed for its gatherings of beautiful women; whither Lord Fleetwood would be sure to engage to go, the admiral now said; and it racked him like gout in his mind, and perhaps troubled his conscience about handing the girl to such a young man. But he was lying on his back, the posture for memory to play the fiend with us, as we read in the BOOK of MAXIMS of the Old Buccaneer. Admiral Baldwin wished heartily to be present at his Crinny's wedding 'to see her launched,' if wedding it was to be, and he vowed the date of the fourteenth, in Lord Levellier's announcement of it, must be an error and might be a month in advance, and ought to be. But it was sheer talking and raving for a solace to his disappointment or his anxiety. He had to let Carinthia Jane depart under the charge of his housekeeper, Mrs. Carthew, a staid excellent lady, poorly gifted with observation.

Her report of the performance of the ceremony at Croridge village church, a half mile from Lekkatts, was highly reassuring to the anxious old admiral still lying on his back with memory and gout at their fiend's play, and livid forecasts hovering. He had recollected that there had been no allusion in Lord Levellier's message to settlements or any lawyer's preliminaries, and he raged at himself for having to own it would have been the first of questions on behalf of his daughter.

'All passed off correctly,' Mrs. Carthew said. 'The responses of the bride and bridegroom were particularly articulate.'

She was reserved upon the question of the hospitality of Lekkatts. The

place had entertained her during her necessitated residence there, and honour forbade her to smile concordantly at the rosy admiral's mention of Leancats. She took occasion, however, to praise the Earl of Fleetwood's eminently provident considerateness for his bride, inasmuch as he had packed a hamper in his vehicle, which was a four-in-hand, driven by himself.

Admiral Baldwin inquired: 'Bride inside?'

He was informed: 'The Countess of Fleetwood sat on the box on the left of my lord.'

She had made no moan about the absence of bridesmaids.

'She appeared too profoundly happy to meditate an instant upon deficiencies.'

'How did the bridegroom behave?'

'Lord Fleetwood was very methodical. He is not, or was not, voluntarily a talker.'

'Blue coat, brass buttons, hot-house flower? old style or new?'

'His lordship wore a rather low beaver and a buttoned white overcoat, not out of harmony with the bride's plain travelling-dress.'

'Ah! he's a good whip, men say. Keeps first-rate stables, hacks, and bloods. Esslemont hard by will be the place for their honeymoon, I guess. And he's a lucky dog, if he knows his luck.'

So said Admiral Baldwin. He was proceeding to say more, for he had a prodigious opinion of the young countess and the benefit of her marriage to the British race. As it concerned a healthy constitution and motherhood, Mrs. Carthew coughed and retired. Nor do I reprove either of them. The speculation and the decorum are equally commendable. Masculine ideas are one thing; but let feminine ever be feminine, or our civilization perishes.

At Croridge village church, then, one of the smallest churches in the kingdom, the ceremony was performed and duly witnessed, names written in the vestry book, the clergyman's fee, the clerk, and the pew-woman, paid by the bridegroom. And thus we see how a pair of lovers, blind with the one object of lovers in view; and a miserly uncle, all on edge to save himself the expense of supporting his niece; and an idolatrous old admiral, on his back with gout; conduced in turn and together to the marriage gradually exciting the world's wonder, till it eclipsed the story of the Old Buccaneer and Countess Fanny, which it caused to be discussed afresh.

Mrs. Carthew remembered Carinthia Jane's last maiden remark and her first bridal utterance. On the way, walking to the church of Croridge from Lekkatts, the girl said: 'Going on my feet, I feel I continue the

mountain walk with my brother when we left our home.' And after leaving the church, about to mount the coach, she turned to Mrs. Carthew, saying, as she embraced her:

'A happy bride's kiss should bring some good fortune.' And looking down from her place on the top of the coach:

'Adieu, dear Mrs. Carthew. A day of glory it is to-day.' She must actually have had it in her sight as a day of glory: and it was a day of the clouds off our rainy quarter, similar in every way to the day of her stepping on English soil and saying: 'It is a dark land.' For the heart is truly declared to be our colourist. A day having the gale in its breast, sweeping the whole country and bending the trees for the twigs to hiss like spray of the billows around our island, was a day of golden splendour to the young bride of the Earl of Fleetwood, though he scarcely addressed one syllable to her, and they sat side by side all but dumb, he like a coachman driving an unknown lady fare, on a morning after a night when his wife's tongue may have soured him for the sex.

CHAPTER XIV

A PENDANT OF THE FOREGOING

Mention has been omitted or forgotten by the worthy Dame, in her vagrant fowl's treatment of a story she cannot incubate, will not relinquish, and may ultimately addle, that the bridegroom, after walking with a disengaged arm from the little village church at Croridge to his coach and four at the cross of the roads to Lekkatts and the lowland, abruptly, and as one pursuing a deferential line of conduct he had prescribed to himself, asked his bride, what seat she would prefer.

He shouted: 'Ives!'

A person inside the coach appeared to be effectually roused.

The glass of the window dropped. The head of a man emerged. It was the head of one of the bargefaced men of the British Isles, broad, and battered flattish, with sentinel eyes.

In an instant the heavy-headed but not ill-looking fellow was nimble and jumped from the coach.

'Napping, my lord,' he said.

Heavy though the look of him might be, his feet were light; they flipped a bar of a hornpipe at a touch of the ground. Perhaps they were allowed to go with their instinct for the dance, that his master should have a sample of his wakefulness. He quenched a smirk and stood to take orders; clad in a flat blue cap, a brown overcoat, and knee-breeches, as the temporary bustle of his legs had revealed.

Fleet-wood heard the young lady say: 'I would choose, if you please, to sit beside you.'

He gave a nod of enforced assent, glancing at the vacated box.

The man inquired: 'A knee and a back for the lady to mount up, my lord?'

'In!' was the smart command to him; and he popped in with the agility of his popping out.

Then Carinthia made reverence to the grey lean figure of her uncle and kissed Mrs. Carthew. She needed no help to mount the coach. Fleetwood's arm was rigidly extended, and he did not visibly wince when this foreign girl sprang to the first hand-grip on the coach and said: 'No, my husband, I can do it'; unaided,' was implied.

Her stride from the axle of the wheel to the step higher would have been a graceful spectacle on Alpine crags.

Fleetwood swallowed that, too, though it conjured up a mocking recollection of the Baden woods, and an astonished wild donkey preparing himself for his harness. A sour relish of the irony in his present position sharpened him to devilish enjoyment of it, as the finest form of loathing: on the principle that if we find ourselves consigned to the nether halls, we do well to dance drunkenly. He had cried for Romance-- here it was!

He raised his hat to Mrs. Carthew and to Lord Levellier. Previous to the ceremony, the two noblemen had interchanged the short speech of mannered duellists punctiliously courteous in the opening act. Their civility was maintained at the termination of the deadly work. The old lord's bosom thanked the young one for not requiring entertainment and a repast; the young lord's thanked the old one for a strict military demeanour at an execution and the abstaining from any nonsensical talk over the affair.

A couple of liveried grooms at the horses' heads ran and sprang to the hinder seats as soon as their master had taken the reins. He sounded the whip caressingly: off those pretty trotters went.

Mrs. Carthew watched them, waving to the bride. She was on the present occasion less than usually an acute or a reflective observer, owing to her admiration of lordly state and masculine commandership; and her thought was: 'She has indeed made a brilliant marriage!'

The lady thought it, notwithstanding an eccentricity in the wedding ceremony, such as could not but be noticeable. But very wealthy noblemen were commonly, perhaps necessarily, eccentric, for thus they proved themselves egregious, which the world expected them to be.

Lord Levellier sounded loud eulogies of the illustrious driver's team. His meditation, as he subsequently stated to Chillon, was upon his vanquished antagonist's dexterity, in so conducting matters, that he had

to be taken at once, with naught of the customary preface and apology for taking to himself the young lady, of which a handsome settlement, is the memorial.

We have to suppose, that the curious occupant of the coach inside aroused no curiosity in the pair of absorbed observers.

Speculations regarding the chances of a fall of rain followed the coach until it sank and the backs of the two liveried grooms closed the chapter of the wedding, introductory to the honeymoon at Esslemont, seven miles distant by road, to the right of Lekkatts. It was out of sight that the coach turned to the left, Northwestward.

CHAPTER XV

OPENING STAGE OF THE HONEYMOON

A famous maxim in the book of the Old Buccaneer, treating of PRECAUTION, as 'The brave man's clean conscience,' with sound counsel to the adventurous, has it:--

'Then you sail away into the tornado, happy as a sealed bottle of ripe wine.'

It should mean, that brave men entering the jaws of hurricanes are found to have cheerful hearts in them when they know they have done their best. But, touching the picture of happiness, conceive the bounteous Bacchic spirit in the devoutness of a Sophocles, and you find comparison neighbour closely between the sealed wine-flask and the bride, who is being driven by her husband to the nest of the unknown on her marriage morn.

Seated beside him, with bosom at heave and shut mouth, in a strange land, travelling cloud-like, rushing like the shower-cloud to the vale, this Carinthia, suddenly wedded, passionately grateful for humbleness exalted, virginly sensible of treasures of love to give, resembled the inanimate and most inspiring, was mindless and inexpressive, past memory, beyond the hopes, a thing of the thrilled blood and skylark air, since she laid her hand in this young man's. His not speaking to her was accepted. Her blood rather than recollection revived their exchanges during the dance at Baden, for assurance that their likings were one, their aims rapturously one; that he was she, she he, the two hearts making one soul.

Could she give as much as he? It was hardly asked. If we feel we can give our breath of life, the strength of the feeling fully answers. It bubbles perpetually from the depth like a well-spring in tumult. Two hearts that make one soul do not separately count their gifts.

For the rest, her hunger to admire disposed her to an absorbing sentience of his acts; the trifles, gestures, manner of this and that; which were

seized as they flew, and swiftly assimilated to stamp his personality. Driving was the piece of skill she could not do. Her husband's mastery of the reins endowed him with the beauty of those harmonious trotters he guided and kept to their pace; and the humming rush of the pace, the smooth torrent of the brown heath-knolls and reddish pits and hedge-lines and grass-flats and copses pouring the counter-way of her advance, belonged to his wizardry. The bearing of her onward was her abandonment to him. Delicious as mountain air, the wind sang; it had a song of many voices. Quite as much as on the mountains, there was the keen, the blissful, nerve-knotting catch of the presence of danger in the steep descents, taken as if swallowed, without swerve or check. She was in her husband's hands. At times, at the pitch of a rapid shelving, that was like a fall, her heart went down; and at the next throb exalted before it rose, not reasoning why;--her confidence was in him; she was his comrade whatever chanced. Up over the mountain-peaks she had known edged moments, little heeded in their passage, when life is poised as a crystal pitcher on the head, in peril of a step. Then she had been dependent on herself. Now she had the joy of trusting to her husband.

His hard leftward eye had view of her askant, if he cared to see how she bore the trial; and so relentlessly did he take the slopes, that the man inside pushed out an inquiring pate, the two grooms tightened arms across their chests. Her face was calmly set, wakeful, but unwrinkled: the creature did not count among timid girls--or among civilized. She had got what she wanted from her madman--mad in his impulses, mad in his reading of honour. She was the sister of Henrietta's husband. Henrietta bore the name she had quitted. Could madness go beyond the marrying of the creature? He chafed at her containment, at her courage, her silence, her withholding the brazen or the fawnish look-up, either of which he would have hated.

He, however, was dragged to look down. Neither Gorgon nor Venus, nor a mingling of them, she had the chasm of the face, recalling the face of his bondage, seen first that night at Baden. It recalled and it was not the face; it was the skull of the face, or the flesh of the spirit. Occasionally she looked, for a twinkle or two, the creature or vision she had been, as if to mock by reminding him. She was the abhorred delusion, who captured him by his nerves, ensnared his word--the doing of a foul witch. How had it leapt from his mouth? She must have worked for it. The word spoken--she must have known it--he was bound, or the detested Henrietta would have said: Not even true to his word!

To see her now, this girl, insisting to share his name, for a slip of his tongue, despite the warning sent her through her uncle, had that face much as a leaden winter landscape pretends to be the country radiant in colour. She belonged to the order of the variable animals--a woman indeed!--womanish enough in that. There are men who love women--the idea of woman. Woman is their shepherdess of sheep. He loved freedom, loathed the subjection of a partnership; could undergo it only in adoration of an ineffable splendour. He had stepped to the altar fancying she might keep to her part of the contract by appearing the miracle that subdued him. Seen by light of day, this bitter object beside him was a witch without her spells; that is, the skeleton of the

seductive, ghastliest among horrors and ironies. Let her have the credit of doing her work thoroughly before the exposure. She had done it. She might have helped--such was the stipulation of his mad freak in consenting to the bondage--yes, she might have helped to soften the sting of his wound. She was beside him bearing his name, for the perpetual pouring of an acid on the wound that vile Henrietta--poisoned honey of a girl!--had dealt.

He glanced down at his possession:--heaven and the yawning pit were the contrast! Poisoned honey is after all honey while you eat it. Here there was nothing but a rocky bowl of emptiness. And who was she? She was the sister of Henrietta's husband. He was expected to embrace the sister of Henrietta's husband. Those two were on their bridal tour.

This creature was also the daughter of an ancient impostor and desperado called the Old Buccaneer; a distinguished member of the family of the Lincolnshire Kirbys, boasting a present representative grimly acquitted, men said, on a trial for murder. An eminent alliance! Society considered the Earl of Fleetwood wildish, though he could manage his affairs. He and his lawyers had them under strict control. How of himself? The prize of the English marriage market had taken to his bosom for his winsome bride the daughter of the Old Buccaneer. He was to mix his blood with the blood of the Lincolnshire Kirbys, lying pallid under the hesitating acquittal of a divided jury.

How had he come to this pass, which swung him round to think almost regretfully of the scorned multitude of fair besiegers in the market, some of whom had their unpoetic charms?

He was renowned and unrivalled as the man of stainless honour: the one living man of his word. He had never broken it--never would. There was his distinction among the herd. In that, a man is princely above princes. The nobility of Edward Russett, Earl of Fleetwood, surpassed the nobility of common nobles. But, by all that is holy, he pays for his distinction.

The creature beside him is a franked issue of her old pirate of a father in one respect--nothing frightens her. There she sits; not a screw of her brows or her lips; and the coach rocked, they were sharp on a spill midway of the last descent. It rocks again. She thinks it scarce worth while to look up to reassure him. She is looking over the country.

'Have you been used to driving?' he said.

She replied: 'No, it is new to me on a coach.'

Carinthia felt at once how wild the wish or half expectation that he would resume the glowing communion of the night which had plighted them.

She did not this time say 'my husband,' still it flicked a whip at his ears.

She had made it more offensive, by so richly toning the official title

just won from him as to ring it on the nerves; one had to block it or be invaded. An anticipation that it would certainly recur haunted every opening of her mouth.

Now that it did not, he felt the gap, relieved, and yet pricked to imagine a mimicry of her tones, for the odd foreignness of the word and the sound. She had a voice of her own besides her courage. At the altar, her responses had their music. No wonder: the day was hers. 'My husband' was a manner of saying 'my fish.'

He, spoke very civilly. 'Oblige me by telling me what name you are accustomed to answer to.'

She seemed unaware of an Arctic husband, and replied: 'My father called me Carin--short for Carinthia. My mother called me Janey; my second name is Jane. My brother Chillon says both. Henrietta calls me Janey.'

The creature appeared dead flesh to goads. But the name of her sister-in-law on her lips returned the stroke neatly. She spared him one whip, to cut him with another.

'You have not informed me which of these names you prefer.'

'Oh, my husband, it is as you shall please.'

Fleetwood smartened the trot of his team, and there was a to-do with the rakish leaders.

Fairies of a malignant humour in former days used to punish the unhappiest of the naughty men who were not favourites, by suddenly planting a hump on their backs. Off the bedevilled wretches pranced, and they kicked, they snorted, whinnied, rolled, galloped, outflying the wind, but not the dismal rider. Marriage is our incubus now. No explanation is offered of why we are afflicted; we have simply offended, or some one absent has offended, and we are handy. The spiteful hag of power ties a wife to us; perhaps for the reason, that we behaved in the spirit of a better time by being chivalrously honourable. Wives are just as inexplicable curses, just as ineradicable and astonishing as humps imposed on shapely backs.

Fleetwood lashed his horses until Carinthia's low cry of entreaty rose to surprise. That stung him.

'Leave the coachman to his devices: we have an appointment and must keep it,' he said.

'They go so willingly.'

'Good beasts, in their way.'

'I do not like the whip.'

'I have the same objection.'

They were on the level of the vale, going along a road between farms and mansions, meadows and gardenplots and park-palings. A strong warm wind drove the pack of clouds over the tree-tops and charged at the branches. English scenery, animating air; a rouse to the blood and the mind. Carinthia did not ask for hues. She had come to love of the dark land with the warm lifting wind, the big trees and the hedges, and the stately houses, and people requiring to be studied, who mean well and are warm somewhere below, as chimneypots are, though they are so stiff.

English people dislike endearments, she had found. It might be that her husband disliked any show of fondness. He would have to be studied very much. He was not like others, as Henrietta had warned her. From thinking of him fervidly, she was already past the marvel of the thought that she called him husband. At the same time, a curious intimation, gathered she knew not whence, of the word 'husband' on a young wife's lips as being a foreign sound in England, advised her to withhold it. His behaviour was instructing her.

'Are you weather-wise?--able to tell when the clouds will hold off or pelt,' he said, to be very civil to a neighbour.

She collected her understanding, apparently; treating a conversational run of the tongue as a question to be pondered; and the horses paid for it. Ordinarily he was gentle with his beasts. He lashed at her in his heart for perverting the humanest of men.

'Father was,' she replied.

'Oh! I have heard of him.'

Her face lightened. 'Father had a great name in England.'

'The Old Buccaneer, I think.'

'I do not know. He was a seaman of the navy, like Admiral Fakenham is. Weather at sea, weather on the mountains, he could foretell it always. He wrote a book; I have a copy you will read. It is a book of Maxims. He often speaks of the weather. English weather and women, he says. But not my mother. My mother he stood aside by herself--pas capricieuse du tout! Because she would be out in the weather and brave the weather. She rode, she swam, best of any woman. If she could have known you, what pleasure for me! Mother learnt to read mountain weather from father. I did it too. But sometimes on the high fields' upper snows it is very surprising. Father has been caught. Here the cloud is down near the earth and the strong wind keeps the rain from falling. How long the wind will blow I cannot guess. But you love the mountains. We spoke . . . And mountains' adventures we both love. I will talk French if you like, for, I think, German you do not speak. I may speak English better than French; but I am afraid of my English with you.'

'Dear me!' quoth Fleetwood, and he murmured politely and cursorily, attentive to his coachman business. She had a voice that clove the noise

of the wheels, and she had a desire to talk--that was evident. Talk of her father set her prattling. It became clear also to his not dishonest, his impressionable mind, that her baby English might be natural. Or she was mildly playing on it, to give herself an air.

He had no remembrance of such baby English at Baden. There, however, she was in a state of enthusiasm--the sort of illuminated transparency they show at the end of fireworks. Mention of her old scapegrace of a father lit her up again. The girl there and the girl here were no doubt the same. It could not be said that she had duped him; he had done it for himself--acted on by a particular agency. This creature had not the capacity to dupe. He had armed a bluntnosed young woman with his idiocy, and she had dealt the stroke; different in scarce a degree by nature from other young women of prey.

But her look at times, and now and then her voice, gave sign that she counted on befooling him as well, to reconcile him to his bondage. The calculation was excessive. No woman had done it yet. Idiocy plunged him the step which reawakened understanding; and to keep his whole mind alert on guard against any sort of satisfaction with his bargain, he frankly referred to the cause. Not female arts, but nature's impulses, it was his passion for the wondrous in the look of a woman's face, the new morning of the idea of women in the look, and the peep into imaginary novel character, did the trick of enslaving him. Call it idiocy. Such it was. Once acknowledged, it is not likely to recur. An implacable reason sits in its place, with a keen blade for efforts to carry the imposture further afield or make it agreeable. Yet, after giving his word to Lord Levellier, he had prodded himself to think the burden of this wild young woman might be absurdly tolerable and a laugh at the world.

A solicitude for the animal was marked by his inquiry 'You are not hungry yet?'

'Oh no, not yet,' said she, oddly enlivened.

They had a hamper and were independent of stoppages for provision, he informed her. What more delightful? cried her look, seeing the first mid-day's rest and meal with Chillon on the walk over the mountain from their empty home.

She could get up enthusiasm for a stocked hamper! And when told of some business that drew him to a meadow they were nearing, she said she would be glad to help, if she could. 'I learn quickly, I know.'

His head acquiesced. The daughter of the Old Buccaneer might learn the business quickly, perhaps; a singularly cutting smile was on his tight lips, in memory of a desire he had as a boy to join hands with an Amazonian damsel and be out over the world for adventures, comrade and bride as one. Here the creature sat. Life is the burlesque of young dreams; or they precipitate us on the roar and grin of a recognized beast world.

The devil possessing him gnawed so furiously that a partial mitigation of the pain was afforded by sight of waving hats on a hill-rise of the road. He flourished his whip. The hats continued at wind-mill work. It signified brisk news to him, and prospect of glee to propitiate any number of devils.

'You will want a maid to attend on you,' he said.

She replied: 'I am not used to attendance on me. Henrietta's maid would help. I did not want her. I had no maid at home. I can do for myself. Father and mother liked me to be very independent.'

He supposed he would have to hear her spelling her words out next.

The hill-top was gained; twenty paces of pretty trotting brought up the coach beside an inn porch, in the style of the finish dear to whips, and even imperative upon them, if they love their art. Two gentlemen stood in the road, and a young woman at the inn door; a dark-haired girl of an anxious countenance. Her puckers vanished at some signal from inside the coach.

'All right, Madge; nothing to fear,' Fleetwood called to her, and she curtsied.

He alighted, saying to her, before he spoke to his friends: 'I've brought him safe; had him under my eye the last four and twenty hours. He'll do the trick to-day. You don't bet?'

'Oh! my lord, no.'

'Help the lady down. Out with you, Ines!'

The light-legged barge-faced man touched ground capering. He was greeted 'Kit' by the pair of gentlemen, who shook hands with him, after he had faintly simulated the challenge to a jig with Madge. She flounced from him, holding her arms up to the lady. Landlord, landlady, and hostler besought the lady to stay for the fixing of a ladder. Carinthia stepped, leaped, and entered the inn, Fleetwood remarking:

'We are very independent, Chummy Potts.'

'Cordy bally, by Jove!' Potts cried. But the moment after this disengaged ejaculation, he was taken with a bewilderment. 'At the Opera?' he questioned of his perplexity.

'No, sir, not at the Opera,' Fleetwood rejoined. 'The lady's last public appearance was at the altar.'

'Sort of a suspicion of having seen her somewhere. Left her husband behind, has she?'

'You see: she has gone in.'

The scoring of a proposition of Euclid on the forehead of Potts amused him and the other gentleman, who was hailed 'Mallard!' and cared nothing for problems involving the female of man when such work was to the fore as the pugilistic encounter of the Earl of Fleetwood's chosen Kit Ines, with Lord Brailstone's unbeaten and well-backed Ben Todds.

Ines had done pretty things from the age of seventeen to his twenty-third year. Remarkably clever things they were, to be called great in the annals of the Ring. The point, however, was, that the pockets of his backers had seriously felt his latest fight. He received a dog's licking at the hands of Lummy Phelps, his inferior in skill, fighting two to one of the odds; and all because of his fatal addiction to the breaking of his trainer's imposed fast in liquids on, the night before the battle. Right through his training, up to that hour, the rascal was devout; the majority's money rattled all on the snug safe side. And how did he get at the bottle? His trainers never could say. But what made him turn himself into a headlong ass, when he had only to wait a night to sit among friends and worshippers drinking off his tumbler upon tumbler with the honours? It was past his wits to explain. Endurance of his privation had snapped in him; or else, which is more likely, this Genius of the Ring was tempted by his genius on the summit of his perfected powers to believe the battle his own, and celebrate it, as became a victor despising the drubbed antagonist.

In any case, he drank, and a minor man gave him the dog's licking.. 'Went into it puffy, came out of it bunged,' the chronicle resounding over England ran. Old England read of an 'eyeless carcase' heroically stepping up to time for three rounds of mashing punishment. If he had won the day after all, the country would have been electrified. It sympathized on the side of his backers too much to do more than nod a short approval of his fortitude. To sink with flag flying is next to sinking the enemy. There was talk of a girl present at the fight, and of how she received the eyeless, almost faceless, carcase of her sweetheart Kit, and carried him away in a little donkey-cart, comfortably cushioned to meet disaster. This petty incident drew the attention of the Earl of Fleetwood, then beginning to be known as the diamond of uncounted facets, patron of the pick of all departments of manly activity in England.

The devotion of the girl Madge to her sweetheart was really a fine story. Fleetwood touched on it to Mr. Mallard, speaking of it like the gentleman he could be, while Chumley Potts wagged impatient acquiescence in a romantic episode of the Ring, that kept the talk from the hotter theme.

'Money's Bank of England to-day, you think?' he interposed, and had his answer after Mallard had said:

'The girl 's rather good-looking, too.'

'You may double your bets, Chummy. I had the fellow to his tea at my dinner-table yesterday evening; locked him in his bedroom, and had him up and out for a morning spin at six. His trainer, Flipper's on the field, drove from Esslemont at nine, confident as trumps.'

'Deuce of a good-looking girl,' Potts could now afford to say; and he sang out: 'Feel fit, lucky dog?'

'Concert pitch!' was the declaration of Kit Ines.

'How about Lord Brailstone's man?'

'Female partner in a quadrille, sir.'

'Ah!' Potts doated on his limbs with a butcher's eye for prize joints.

'Cock-sure has crowed low by sunset,' Mallard observed.

Fleetwood offered him to take his bets.

'You're heavy on it with Brailstone?' said Mallard.

'Three thousand.'

'I'd back you for your luck blindfold.'

A ruffle of sourness shot over the features of the earl, and was noticed by both eager betters, who exchanged a glance.

Potts inspected his watch, and said half aloud: 'Liver, ten to one! That never meant bad luck--except bad to act on. We slept here last night, you know. It 's a mile and a quarter from the Royal Sovereign to the field of glory. Pretty well time to start. Brailstone has a drive of a couple of miles. Coaches from London down by this time. Abrane's dead on Ben Todds, any odds. Poor old Braney! "Steady man, Todds." Backs him because he's a "respectable citizen,"--don't drink. A prize-fighter total abstainer has no spurts. Old Braney's branded for the losing side. You might bet against Braney blindfold, Mallard. How long shall you take to polish him off, Kit Ines?'

The opponent of Ben Todds calculated.

'Well, sir, steady Benny ought to be satisfied with his dose in, say, about forty minutes. Maybe he won't own to it before an hour and ten. He's got a proud English stomach.'

'Shall we be late?' Potts asked.

'Jump in,' Fleetwood said to his man. 'We may be five minutes after time, Chummy. I had a longer drive, and had to get married on the way, and--ah, here they are!'

'Lady coming?'

'I fancy she sticks to the coach; I don't know her tastes. Madge must see her through it, that's positive.'

Potts deferred his astonishment at the things he was hearing and seeing,

which were only Fleetwood's riddles. The fight and the bets rang every other matter out of his head. He beheld the lady, who had come down from the coach like a columbine, mount it like Bean-stalk Jack. Madge was not half so clever, and required a hand at her elbow.

After, giving hurried directions to Rundles, the landlord of the Royal Sovereign, Fleetwood took the reins, and all three gentlemen touched hats to the curtseying figure of Mrs. Rundles.

'You have heard, I dare say--it's an English scene,' he spoke, partly turning his face, to Carinthia; 'particularly select to-day. Their Majesties might look on, as the Caesars did in Rome. Pity we can't persuade them. They ought to set the fashion. Here we have the English people at their grandest, in prime condition, if they were not drunk overnight; and dogged, perfectly awake, magnanimous, all for fair play; fine fellows, upon my word. A little blood, of course.'

But the daughter of the Old Buccaneer would have inherited a tenderness for the sight of blood. She should make a natural Lady Patroness of England's National Sports. We might turn her to that purpose; wander over England with a tail of shouting riff-raft; have exhibitions, join in them, display our accomplishments; issue challenges to fence, shoot, walk, run, box, in time: the creature has muscle. It's one way of crowning a freak; we follow the direction, since the deed done can't be undone; and a precious poetical life, too! You may get as royally intoxicated on swipes as on choice wine; win a name for yourself as the husband of such a wife; a name in sporting journals and shilling biographies: quite a revival of the Peerage they have begun to rail at!

'I would not wish to leave you,' said Carinthia.

'You have chosen,' said Fleetwood.

CHAPTER XVI

IN WHICH THE BRIDE FROM FOREIGN PARTS IS GIVEN A TASTE OF OLD ENGLAND

Cheers at an open gate of a field saluted the familiar scarlet of the Earl of Fleetwood's coach in Kentish land. They were chorister cheers, the spontaneous ringing out of English country hearts in homage to the nobleman who brightened the heaviness of life on English land with a spectacle of the noble art distinguishing their fathers. He drove along over muffling turf; ploughboys and blue butcher-boys, and smocked old men, with an approach to a hundred-weight on their heels, at the trot to right and left; all hoping for an occasional sight of the jewel called Kitty, that he carried inside. Kitty was there.

Kitty's eyes are shut. Think of that: cradled innocence and angels' dreams and the whole of the hymn just before ding-dong-bang on noses and jaws! That means confidence? Looks like it. But Kitty's not asleep you

try him. He's only quiet because he has got to undergo great exertion. Last fight he was knocked out of time, because he went into it honest drunk, they tell. And the earl took him up, to give him a chance of recovering his good name, and that's Christian. But the earl, he knows a man as well as a horse. He's one to follow. Go to a fayte down at Esslemont, you won't forget your day. See there, he's brought a lady on the top o' the coach. That seems for to signify he don't expect it's going to be much of a bloody business. But there's no accounting. Anyhow, Broadfield 'll have a name in the papers for Sunday reading. In comes t' other lord's coach. They've timed it together closes they have.

They were pronounced to be both the right sort of noblemen for the country. Lord Brailstone's blue coach rattled through an eastern gate to the corner of the thirty-acre meadow, where Lord Fleetwood had drawn up, a toss from the ring. The meeting of the blue and scarlet coaches drew forth Old England's thunders; and when the costly treasures contained in them popped out heads, the moment was delirious. Kit Ines came after his head on a bound. Ben Todds was ostentatiously deliberate: his party said he was no dancing-master. He stepped out, grave as a barge emerging from a lock, though alive to the hurrahs of supporters and punctilious in returning the formal portion of his rival's too roguish nod. Their look was sharp into the eyes, just an instant.

Brailstone and Fleetwood jumped to the grass and met, talking and laughing, precise upon points of business, otherwise cordial: plenipotentiaries of great powers, whom they have set in motion and bind to the ceremonial opening steps, according to the rules of civilized warfare. They had a short colloquy with newspaper reporters;-- an absolutely fair, square, upright fight of Britons was to be chronicled. Captain Abrane, a tower in the crowd, registered bets whenever he could. Curricles, gigs, carts, pony-traps, boys on ponies, a swarm on legs, flowed to the central point and huddled there.

Was either champion born in Kent? An audacious boy proclaimed Kit Ines a man of Kent. Why, of course he was! and that was why the Earl of Fleetwood backed our cocky Kitty, and means to land him on the top of his profession. Ben Todds was shuffled aside; as one of their Londoners, destitute of county savour.

All very well, but have a spy at Benny Todds. Who looks the square man? And hear what that big gentleman of the other lord's party says. A gentleman of his height and weight has a right to his opinion. He 's dead against Kit Ines: it's fists, not feet, he says, 'll do it to-day; stamina, he says. Benny has got the stamina.

Todds' possession of the stamina, and the grand voice of Captain Abrane, and the Father Christmas, roast-beef-of-Old England face of the umpire declared to be on the side of Lord Brailstone's colour blue, darkened the star of Kit Ines till a characteristic piece of behaviour was espied. He dashed his cap into the ring and followed it, with the lightest of vaults across the ropes. There he was, the first in the ring: and that stands for promise of first blow, first blood, first flat knock-down,

and last to cry for quarter. His pair of seconds were soon after him. Fleetwood mounted his box.

'Is it to fight?' said Carinthia.

'To see which is the master.'

'They fight to see?'

'Generally until one or the other can't see. You are not obliged to see it; you can be driven away if you wish.'

'I will be here, if you are here.'

'You choose it.'

Fleetwood leaned over to Chumley Potts on the turf. 'Abrane's ruining himself.'

Potts frankly hoped that his friend might be doing so. 'Todds is jolly well backed. He's in prime condition. He's the favourite of the knowing ones.'

'You wouldn't have the odds, if he weren't.'

'No; but the odds are like ten per cent.: they conjure the gale, and be hanged,' said Potts; he swore at his betting mania, which destroyed the pleasure of the show he loved.

All in the ring were shaking hands. Shots of a desire to question and comment sped through Carinthia's veins and hurt her. She had gathered that she spoke foolishly to her husband's ear, so she kept her mouth shut, though the unanswered of her inquisitive ignorance in the strange land pricked painfully at her bosom. She heard the girl behind her say: 'Our colours!' when the colour scarlet unwound with Lord Brailstone's blue was tied to the stake: and her husband nodded; he smiled; he liked to hear the girl.

Potts climbed up, crying: 'Toilets complete! Now for paws out, and then at it, my hearties!'

Choice of corners under the leaden low cloud counted for little. A signal was given; a man outside the ring eyed a watch, raised a hand; the two umpires were on foot in their places; the pair of opposing seconds hurried out cheery or bolt-business words to their men; and the champions advanced to the scratch. Todds first, by the courtesy of Ines, whose decorous control of his legs at a weighty moment was rightly read by his party.

Their hands grasped firmly: thereupon becoming fists of a hostile couple in position. And simply to learn which of us two is the better man! Or in other words, with four simple fists to compass a patent fact and stand it on the historic pedestal, with a little red writing underneath: you

never can patent a fact without it. But mark the differences of this kind of contention from all other--especially the Parliamentary: this is positive, it has a beginning and an end; and it is good-humoured from beginning to end; trial of skill, trial of stamina; Nature and Art; Old English; which made us what we are; and no rancours, no vows of vengeance; the beaten man of the two bowing to the bit of history he has helped to make.

Kittites had need to be confident in the skill of their lither lad. His facer looked granite. Fronting that mass, Kit you might--not to lash about for comparisons--call a bundle of bamboo. Ay, but well knitted, springy, alive every inch of him; crafty, too, as you will soon bear witness. He knows he has got his task, and he's the man to do it.

There was wary sparring, and mirrors watched them.

'Bigger fellow: but have no fear,' the earl said over his shoulder to Madge.

She said in return: 'Oh, I don't know, I'm praying.'

Kit was now on his toes, all himself, like one who has found the key. He feinted. Quick as lightning, he landed a bolt on Ben's jib, just at the toll-bar of the bridge, between the eyes, and was off, out of reach, elastic; Ben's counter fell short by a couple of inches. Cheers for first blow.

The earl clucked to Madge. Her gaze at the ring was a sullen intensity.

Will you believe it?--Ben received a second spanking cracker on the spectacles-seat: neat indeed; and, poor payment for the compliment, he managed to dig a drive at the ribs. As much of that game as may suit you, sturdy Ben! But hear the shout, and behold!

First blood to Kit Ines! That tell-tale nose of old Ben's has mounted the Earl of Fleetwood's colours, and all his party are looking Brailstone-blue.

'So far!' said Fleetwood. His grooms took an indication: the hamper was unfastened; sandwiches were handed. Carinthia held one; she tried to nibble, in obedience to her husband's example. Madge refused a bite of food.

Hearing Carinthia say to her: 'I hope he will not be beaten, I hope, I hope,' she made answer: 'You are very good, Miss'; and the young lady flushed.

Gentlemen below were talking up to the earl. A Kentish squire of an estate neighbouring Esslemont introduced a Welsh squire he had driven to see the fun, by the name of Mr. Owain Wythan, a neighbour of the earl's down in Wales. Refreshments were offered. Carinthia submissively sipped the sparkling wine, which stings the lips when they are indisposed to it. The voice of the girl Madge rang on the tightened chords of her breast.

Madge had said she was praying: and to pray was all that could be done by two women. Her husband could laugh loudly with Mr. Potts and the other gentlemen and the strangers. He was quite sure the man he supported would win; he might have means of knowing. Carinthia clung to his bare words, for the sake of the girl.

A roaring peal went up from the circle of combat. Kit had it this time. Attacking Ben's peepers, he was bent on defending his own, and he caught a bodyblow that sent him hopping back to his pair of seconds, five clear hops to the rear, like a smashed surge-wave off the rock. He was respectful for the remainder of the round. But hammering at the system he had formed, in the very next round he dropped from a tremendous repetition of the blow, and lay flat as a turbot. The bets against him had simultaneously a see-saw rise.

'Bellows, he appears to have none,' was the comment of Chumley Potts.

'Now for training, Chummy!' said Lord Fleetwood.

'Chummy!' signifying a crow over Potts, rang out of the hollows of Captain Abrane on Lord Brailstone's coach.

Carinthia put a hand behind her to Madge. It was grasped, in gratitude for sympathy or in feminine politeness. The girl murmured: 'I've seen worse.' She was not speaking to ears.

Lord Fleetwood sat watch in hand. 'Up,' he said; and, as if hearing him, Kit rose from the ministering second's knee. He walked stiffly, squared after the fashion of a man taught caution. Ben made play. They rounded the ring, giving and taking. Ben rushed, and had an emollient; spouted again and was corked; again, and received a neat red-waxen stopper. He would not be denied at Kit's door, found him at home and hugged him. Kit got himself to grass, after a spell of heavy fibbing, Ben's game.

It did him no great harm; it might be taken for an enlivener; he was dead on his favourite spot the ensuing round, played postman on it. So cleverly, easily, dancingly did he perform the double knock and the retreat, that Chumley Potts was moved to forget his wagers and exclaim: 'Racket-ball, by Jove!'

'If he doesn't let the fellow fib the wind out of him,' Mallard addressed his own crab eyeballs.

Lord Fleetwood heard and said coolly: 'Tightstrung. I kept him fasting since he earned his breakfast. You don't wind an empty rascal fit for action. A sword through the lungs won't kill when there's no air in them.'

That was printed in the 'Few Words before the Encounter', in the Book Of MAXIMS FOR MEN. Carinthia, hearing everything her husband uttered, burned to remind him of the similarity between his opinions and her father's.

She was learning, that for some reason, allusions to her father were not acceptable. She squeezed the hand of Madge, and felt a pressure, like a scream, telling her the girl's heart was with the fight beneath them. She thought it natural for her. She wished she could continue looking as intently. She looked because her husband looked. The dark hills and clouds curtaining the run of the stretch of fields relieved her sight.

The clouds went their way; the hills were solid, but like a blue smoke; the scene here made them very distant and strange. Those two men were still hitting, not hating one another; only to gratify a number of unintelligible people and win a success. But the earth and sky seemed to say, What is the glory? They were insensible to it, as they are not--they are never insensible to noble grounds of strife. They bless the spot, they light lamps on it; they put it into books of history, make it holy, if the cause was a noble one or a good one.

Or supposing both those men loved the girl, who loved one of them! Then would Carinthia be less reluctantly interested in their blows.

Her infant logic stumbled on for a reason while she repressed the torture the scene was becoming, as though a reason could be found by her submissive observation of it. And she was right in believing that a reason for the scene must or should exist. Only, like other bewildered instinctive believers, she could not summon the great universe or a life's experience to unfold it. Her one consolation was in squeezing the hand of the girl from time to time.

Not stealthily done, it was not objected to by the husband whose eye was on all. But the persistence in doing it sank her from the benignity of her station to the girl's level: it was conduct much too raw, and grated on the deed of the man who had given her his name.

Madge pleased him better. She had the right to be excited, and she was very little demonstrative. She had--well, in justice, the couple of them had, only she had it more--the tone of the women who can be screwed to witness a spill of blood, peculiarly catching to hear;--a tone of every string in them snapped except the silver string. Catching to hear? It is worth a stretching of them on the rack to hear that low buzz-hum of their inner breast . . . By heaven! we have them at their best when they sing that note.

His watch was near an hour of the contest, and Brailstone's man had scored first knock-down blow, a particularly clean floorer. Thinking of that, he was cheered by hearing Chummy Potts, whose opinions he despised, cry out to Abrane:--

'Yeast to him!' For the face of Todds was visibly swelling to the ripest of plums from Kit's deliveries.

Down he went. He had the sturdy legs which are no legs to a clean blow. Odds were offered against him.

'Oh! pretty play with your right, Kit!' exclaimed Mallard, as Kit fetched

his man an ugly stroke on the round of the waist behind, and the crowd sent up the name of the great organs affected: a sickener of a stroke, if dealt soundly. It meant more than 4 showed. Kit was now for taking liberties. Light as ever on his pins, he now and then varied his attentions to the yeasty part, delivering a wakener in unexpected quarters: masterly as the skilled cook's carving of a joint with hungry guests for admirers.

'Eh, Madge?' the earl said.

She kept her sight fixed, replying: 'Yes, I think . . .' Carinthia joined with her: 'I must believe it that he will: but will the other man, poor man, submit? I entreat him to put away his pride. It is his--oh, poor man!'

Ben was having it hot and fast on a torso physiognomy.

The voices of these alien women thrilled the fray and were a Bardic harp to Lord Fleetwood.

He dropped a pleasant word on the heads in the curricle.

Mr. Owain Wythan looked up. 'Worthy of Theocritus. It's the Boxing Twin and the Bembyrcian giant. The style of each. To the letter!'

'Kit is assiduously fastening Ben's blinkers,' Potts remarked.

He explained to the incomprehensible lady he fancied he had somewhere seen, that the battle might be known as near the finish by the behaviour on board Lord Brailstone's coach.

'It's like Foreign Affairs and the Stock Exchange,' he said to the more intelligent males. 'If I want to know exactly how the country stands, I turn to the Money Article in the papers. That's a barometrical certainty. No use inquiring abroad. Look at old Rufus Abrane. I see the state of the fight on the old fellow's mug. He hasn't a bet left in him!'

'Captain Mountain--Rufus Mus!' cried Lord Fleetwood, and laughed at the penetrative portrait Woodseer's epigram sketched; he had a desire for the presence of the singular vagabond.

The Rufus Mus in the Captain Mountain exposed his view of the encounter, by growing stiller, apparently growing smaller, without a squeak, like the entrapped; and profoundly contemplative, after the style of the absolutely detached, who foresee the fatal crash, and are calculating, far ahead of events, the means for meeting their personal losses.

The close of the battle was on the visage of Rufus Abrane fifteen minutes before that Elgin marble under red paint in the ring sat on the knee of a succouring seconder, mopped, rubbed, dram-primed, puppy-peeping, inconsolably comforted, preparatory to the resumption of the great-coat he had so hopefully cast from his shoulders. Not downcast by any means.

Like an old Roman, the man of the sheer hulk with purple eyemounds found his legs to do the manful thing, show that there was no bad blood, stand equal to all forms. Ben Todds, if ever man in Old England, looked the picture you might label 'Bellyful,' it was remarked. Kit Ines had an appearance of springy readiness to lead off again. So they faced on the opening step of their march into English History.

Vanquisher and vanquished shook hands, engaged in a parting rally of good-humoured banter; the beaten man said his handsome word; the best man capped it with a compliment to him. They drink of different cups to-day. Both will drink of one cup in the day to come. But the day went too clearly to crown the light and the tight and the right man of the two, for moralizing to wag its tail at the end. Oldsters and youngsters agreed to that. Science had done it: happy the backers of Science! Not one of them alluded to the philosophical 'hundred years hence.' For when England, thanks to a spirited pair of our young noblemen, has exhibited one of her characteristic performances consummately, Philosophy is bidden fly; she is a foreign bird.

CHAPTER XVII

RECORDS A SHADOW CONTEST CLOSE ON THE FOREGOING

Kit Ines cocked an eye at Madge, in the midst of the congratulations and the paeans pumping his arms. As he had been little mauled, he could present a face to her, expecting a wreath of smiles for the victor.

What are we to think of the contrarious young woman who, when he lay beaten, drove him off the field and was all tenderness and devotion? She bobbed her head, hardly more than a trifle pleased, one might say. Just like females. They're riddles, not worth spelling. Then, drunk I'll get to-night, my pretty dear! the man muttered, soured by her inopportune staidness, as an opponent's bruising could never have rendered him.

She smiled a lively beam in answer to the earl; 'Oh yes I 'm glad. It's your doing, my lord.' Him it was that she thanked, and for the moment prized most. The female riddle is hard to read, because it is compounded of sensations, and they rouse and appeal to the similar cockatrices in us, which either hiss back or coil upon themselves. She admired Kit Ines for his valour: she hated that ruinous and besotting drink. It flung skeletons of a married couple on the wall of the future. Nevertheless her love had been all maternal to him when he lay chastised and disgraced on account of his vice. Pity had done it. Pity not being stirred, her admiration of the hero declared victorious, whose fortunes in uncertainty had stopped the beating of her heart, was eclipsed by gratitude toward his preserver, and a sentiment eclipsed becomes temporarily coldish, against our wish and our efforts, in a way to astonish; making her think that she cannot hold two sentiments at a time; when it is but the fact that she is unable to keep the two equally warm.

Carinthia said to her: 'He is brave.'

'Oh yes, he's brave,' Madge assented.

Lord Brailstone, flourishing his whip, cried out: 'At Canleys to-night?'

The earl nodded: 'I shall be there.'

'You, too, Chummy?' came from Abrane.

'To see you dance,' Potts rejoined, and mumbled

'But will he dance! Old Braney's down on his luck; he's a specimen of a fellow emptier and not lighter. And won't be till supper-time. But, I say, Fleet, how the deuce?--funny sort of proceeding!--You haven't introduced me.'

'The lady bears my name, Mr. Chumley Potts.'

With a bow to the lady's profile and a mention of a glimpse at Baden, Potts ejaculated: 'It happened this morning?'

'You allude to the marriage. It happened this morning.'

'How do I get to Canleys?'

'I drive you. Another team from the Esslemont stables is waiting at the Royal.'

'You stay at Canleys?'

'No.'

'No? Oh! Funny, upon my word. Though I don't know why not--except that people . . .'

'Count your winnings, Chummy.'

Fleetwood remarked to his bride: 'Our friend has the habit of soliloquizing in company. I forgot to tell you of an appointment of mine at a place called Canleys, about twenty miles or more from here. I gave my word, so I keep it. The landlady at the inn, Mrs. Rundles, motherly kind of woman; she will be attentive. They don't cook badly, for an English inn, I have heard. Madge here will act as your lady's-maid for the time. You will find her serviceable; she's a bruiser's lass and something above it. Ines informed me, Madge, you were going to friends of yours at the Wells. You will stay at the Royal and wait on this lady, who bears my name. You understand?--A girl I can trust for courage, if the article is in request,' he resumed to his bride; and talked generally of the inn and the management of it, and its favoured position outside the village and contiguous to the river, upon which it subsisted.

Carinthia had heard. She was more than ever the stunned young woman she had been since her mounting of the coach, between the village church and Lekkatts.

She said not a word. Why should she? her object was won. Give her that, and a woman's tongue will consent to rest. The dreaded weapon rest, also when she is kept spinning by the whip. She gives out a pleasant hum, too. Her complexion must be pronounced dull in repose. A bride on her travels with an aspect of wet chalk, rather helps to scare mankind from marriage: which may be good or bad; but she reflects a sicklier hue on the captured Chessman calling her his own. Let her shine in privacy.

Fleetwood drew up at the Royal Sovereign, whereof the reigning monarch, in blue uniform on the signboard, curtseyed to his equally windy subjects; and a small congregation of the aged, and some cripples and infants, greeted the patron of Old England's manfullest display, cheering at news of the fight, brought them by many little runners.

'Your box has been conveyed to your room,' he said to his bride.

She bowed. This time she descended the coach by the aid of the ladder.

Ines, victorious in battle, had scant notice from his love. 'Yes, I 'm glad,' and she passed him to follow her newly constituted mistress. His pride was dashed, all the foam of the first draw on the top of him blown off, as he figuratively explained the cause of his gloom to the earl. 'I drink and I gets a licking--that girl nurses and cossets me. I don't drink and I whops my man--she shows me her back. Ain't it encouragement, my lord?'

'You ought to know them by this time, you dolt,' returned his patron, and complimented him on his bearing in the fight. 'You shall have your two hundred, and something will be added. Hold handy here till I mount. I start in ten minutes.'

Whether to speak a polite adieu to the bride, whose absurd position she had brought on her own head, was debated for half a minute. He considered that the wet chalk-quarry of a beauty had at all events the merit of not being a creature to make scenes. He went up to the sitting-room. If she was not there, he would leave his excuses.

She was there, and seated; neither crying, nor smiling, nor pointedly serious in any way, not conventionally at her ease either. And so clearly was he impressed by her transparency in simplicity of expression, that he took without a spurn at it the picture of a woman half drained of her blood, veiling the wound. And a young woman, a stranger to suffering: perhaps--as the creatures do looking for the usual flummery tenderness, what they call happiness; wondering at the absence of it and the shifty ghost of a husband she has got by floundering into the bog known as Marriage. She would have it, and here she was!

He entered the situation and was possessed by the shivering delicacy

of it. Surface emotions were not seen on her. She might be a creature with a soul. Here and there the thing has been found in women. It is priceless when found, and she could not be acting. One might swear the creature had no power to act.

She spoke without offence, the simplest of words, affected no solicitudes, put on no guilt smiles, wore no reproaches: spoke to him as if so it happened--he had necessarily a journey to perform. One could see all the while big drops falling from the wound within. One could hear it in her voice. Imagine a crack of the string at the bow's deep stress. Or imagine the bow paralyzed at the moment of the deepest sounding. And yet the voice did not waver. She had now the richness of tone carrying on a music through silence.

Well, then, at least, he had not been the utterly duped fool he thought himself since the consent was pledged to wed her.

More, she had beauty--of its kind. Or splendour or grandeur, was the term for it. But it bore no name. None of her qualities--if they were qualities--had a name. She stood with a dignity that the word did not express. She endured meekly, when there was no meekness. Pain breathed out of her, and not a sign of pain was visible. She had, under his present observation of her, beauty, with the lines of her face breaking in revolt from beauty--or requiring a superterrestrial illumination to show the harmony. He, as he now saw, had erred grossly in supposing her insensitive, and therefore slow of a woman's understanding. She drew the breath of pain through the lips: red lips and well cut. Her brown eyes were tearless, not alluring or beseeching or repelling; they did but look, much like the skies opening high aloof on a wreck of storm. Her reddish hair--chestnut, if you will--let fall a skein over one of the rugged brows, and softened the ruggedness by making it wilder, as if a great bird were winging across a shoulder of the mountain ridges. Conceived of the mountains, built in their image, the face partook alternately of mountain terror or splendour; wholly, he remembered, of the splendour when her blood ran warm. No longer the chalk-quarry face,--its paleness now was that of night Alps beneath a moon chasing the shadows.

She might be casting her spells again.

'You remember I told you,' he said, 'I have given my word--I don't break it--to be at a Ball. Your uncle was urgent to have the ceremony over. These clashes occur. The people here--I have spoken of that: people of good repute for attention to guests. I am uncertain of the time . . . we have all to learn to wait. So then, good-bye till we meet.'

He was experiencing a novel nip of torment, of just the degree which takes a partial appeasement from the inflicting of it, and calls up a loathed compassion. She might have been in his arms for a step, though she would not have been the better loved.

He was allowed his escape, bearing with him enough of husband to execrate another enslaving pledge of his word, that begat a frenzy to wreak some

caresses on the creature's intolerably haunting image. Of course, he could not return to her. How would she receive him? There was no salt in the thought of it; she was too submissive.

However, there would be fun with Chummy Potts on the drive to Canleys; fun with Rufus Abrane at Mrs. Cowper Quillett's; and with the Countess Livia, smothered, struggling, fighting for life with the title of Dowager. A desire for unbridled fun had hold of any amount of it, to excess in any direction. And though this cloud as a dry tongue after much wine craves water, glimpses of his tramp's walk with a fellow tramp on a different road, enjoying strangely healthy vagabond sensations and vast ideas; brought the vagrant philosopher refreshfully to his mind: chiefly for the reason that while in Woodseer's company he had hardly suffered a stroke of pain from the thought of Henrietta. She was now a married woman, he was a married man by the register. Stronger proof of the maddest of worlds could not be furnished.

Sane in so mad a world, a man is your flabby citizen among outlaws, good for plucking. Fun, at any cost, is the one object worth a shot in such a world. And the fun is not to stop. If it does, we are likely to be got hold of, and lugged away to the altar--the terminus. That foul disaster has happened, through our having temporarily yielded to a fit of the dumps and treated a mad world's lunatic issue with some seriousness. But fun shall be had with the aid of His Highness below. The madder the world, the madder the fun. And the mixing in it of another element, which it has to beguile us--romance--is not at all bad cookery. Poetic romance is delusion--a tale of a Corsair; a poet's brain, a bottle of gin, and a theatrical wardrobe. Comic romance is about us everywhere, alive for the tapping.

A daughter of the Old Buccaneer should participate in it by right of birth: she would expect it in order to feel herself perfectly at home. Then, be sure, she finds an English tongue and prattles away as merrily as she does when her old scapegrace of a father is the theme. Son-in-law to him! But the path of wisdom runs in the line of facts, and to have wild fun and romance on this pantomime path, instead of kicking to break away from it, we follow things conceived by the genius of the situation, for the delectation of the fair Countess of Fleetwood and the earl, her delighted husband, quite in the spirit of the Old Buccaneer, father of the bride.

Carinthia sat beside the fire, seeing nothing in the room or on the road. Up in her bedchamber, the girl Madge was at her window. She saw Lord Fleetwood standing alone, laughing, it seemed, at some thought; he threw up his head. Was it a newly married man leaving his bride and laughing? The bride was a dear lady, fit for better than to be driven to look on at a prize-fight--a terrible scene to a lady. She was left solitary: and this her wedding day? The earl had said it, he had said she bore his name, spoke of coming from the altar, and the lady had blushed to hear herself called Miss. The pressure of her hand was warm with Madge: her situation roused the fervid latent sisterhood in the breast of women.

Before he mounted the coach, Lord Fleetwood talked to Kit Ives. He

pointed at an upper window, seemed to be issuing directions. Kit nodded; he understood it, whatever it was. You might have said, a pair of burglars. The girl ran downstairs to bid her lover good-bye and show him she really rejoiced in his victory. Kit came to her saying: 'Given my word of honour I won't make a beast of myself to-night. Got to watch over you and your lady.'

Lord Fleetwood started his fresh team, casting no glance at the windows of the room where his bride was. He and the gentlemen on the coach were laughing.

His leaving of his young bride to herself this day was classed among the murky flashes which distinguished the deeds of noblemen. But his laughter on leaving her stamped it a cruelty; of the kind that plain mortals, who can be monsters, commit. Madge conceived a pretext for going into the presence of her mistress, whose attitude was the same as when she first sat in the chair. The lady smiled and said: 'He is not hurt much?' She thought for them about her.

The girl's heart of sympathy thumped, and her hero became a very minute object. He had spoken previously of the making or not making a beast of himself; without inflicting a picture of the beast. His words took shape now, and in consequence a little self-pity began to move. It stirred to swell the great wave of pity for the lady, that was in her bosom. 'Oh, he!' she said, and extinguished the thought of him; and at once her under-lip was shivering, her eyes filled and poured.

Carinthia rose anxiously. The girl dropped at her feet. 'You have been so good to me to-day, my lady! so good to me to-day! I can't help it-- I don't often just for this moment; I've been excited. Oh, he's well, he will do; he's nothing. You say "poor child!" But I'm not; it's only excitement. I do long to serve you the best I can.'

She stood up in obedience and had the arms of her young mistress pressing her. Tears also were streaming from Carinthia's eyes. Heartily she thanked the girl for the excuse to cry.

They were two women. On the road to Canleys, the coach conveying men spouted with the lusty anecdote, relieved of the interdict of a tyrannical sex.

CHAPTER XVIII

DOWN WHITECHAPEL WAY

Contention begets contention in a land of the pirate races. Gigs were at high rival speed along the road from the battle-field to London. They were the electrical wires of the time for an expectant population bursting to have report of so thundering an event as the encounter of two champion light weights, nursed and backed by a pair of gallant young

noblemen, pick of the whole row of coronets above. London panted gaping and the gigs flew with the meat to fill it.

Chumley Potts offered Ambrose Mallard fair odds that the neat little trap of the chief sporting journal, which had a reputation to maintain, would be over one or other of the bridges crossing the Thames first. Mallard had been struck by the neat little trap of an impudent new and lower-priced journal, which had a reputation to gain. He took the proffered odds, on the cry as of a cracker splitting. Enormous difficulties in regard to the testimony and the verifications were discussed; they were overcome. Potts was ready for any amount of trouble; Mallard the same. There was clearly a race. There would consequently be a record. Visits to the offices of those papers, perhaps half a day at the south end of London or on Westminster bridge, examining witnesses, corner shopmen, watermen, and the like, would or should satisfactorily establish the disputed point.

Fleetwood had his fun; insomuch that he laughed himself into a sentiment of humaneness toward the couple of donkeys and forgot his contempt of them. Their gamblings and their bets increased his number of dependents; and imbeciles were preferable to dolts or the dry gilt figures of the circle he had to move in. Matter for some astonishment had been furnished to the latter this day; and would cause an icy Signor stare and rather an angry Signora flutter. A characteristic of that upper circle, as he knew it, is, that the good are dull, the vicious very bad. They had nothing to please him but manners. Elsewhere this land is a land of no manners. Take it and make the most of it, then, for its quality of brute honesty: which is found to flourish best in the British prize-ring.

His irony landed him there. It struck the country a ringing blow. But it struck an almost effacing one at the life of the young nobleman of boundless wealth, whose highest renown was the being a patron of prizefighters. Husband of the daughter of the Old Buccaneer as well! perchance as a result. That philosopher tramp named her 'beautiful Gorgon.' She has no beauty; and as for Gorgon, the creature has a look of timid softness in waiting behind her rocky eyes. A barbaric damsel beginning to nibble at civilization, is nearer the mark; and ought she to be discouraged?

Fleetwood's wrath with his position warned him against the dupery of any such alcove thoughts. For his wrath revenged him, and he feared the being stripped of it, lest a certain fund of his own softness, that he knew of; though few did, should pull him to the creature's feet. She belonged to him indeed; so he might put her to the trial of whether she had a heart and personal charm, without the ceremony of wooing--which, in his case, tempted to the feeling desperately earnest and becoming enslaved. He speculated upon her eyelids and lips, and her voice, when melting, as women do in their different ways; here and there with an execrable--perhaps pardonable--art; one or two divinely. The vision drew him to a headlong plunge and swim of the amorous mind, occupying a minute, filling an era. He corrected the feebleness, and at the same time threw a practical coachman's glance on peculiarities of the road,

requiring some knowledge of it if traversed backward at a whipping pace on a moonless night. The drive from Canleys to the Royal Sovereign could be done by good pacers in an hour and a half, little more--with Ives and the stables ready, and some astonishment in a certain unseen chamber. Fleetwood chuckled at a vision of romantic devilry--perfectly legitimate too. Something, more to inflict than enjoy, was due to him.

He did, not phrase it, that a talk with the fellow Woodseer of his mountains and his forests, and nature, philosophy, poetry, would have been particularly healthy for him, almost as good as the good counsel he needed and solicited none to give him. It swept among his ruminations while he pricked Potts and Mallard to supply his craving for satanical fare.

Gower Woodseer; the mention of whom is a dejection to the venerable source of our story, was then in the act of emerging from the Eastward into the Southward of the line of Canterbury's pilgrims when they set forth to worship, on his homeward course, after a walk of two days out of Dover. He descended London's borough, having exactly twopence halfpenny for refreshment; following a term of prudent starvation, at the end of the walk. It is not a district seductive to the wayfarer's appetite; as, for example, one may find the Jew's fry of fish in oil, inspiriting the Shoreditch region, to be. Nourishment is afforded, according to the laws of England's genius in the arts of refection, at uninviting shops, to the necessitated stomach. A penn'orth of crumb of bread, assisted on its laborious passage by a penn'orth of the rinsings of beer, left the natural philosopher a ha'penny for dessert at the stall of an applewoman, where he withstood an inclination toward the juicy fruit and chose nuts. They extend a meal, as a grimace broadens the countenance, illusorily; but they help to cheat an emptiness in time, where it is nearly as offensive to our sensations as within us; and that prolonged occupation of the jaws goes a length to persuade us we are filling. All the better when the substance is indigestible. Tramps of the philosophical order, who are the practically sagacious, prefer tough grain for the teeth. Woodseer's munching of his nuts awakened to fond imagination the picture of his father's dinner, seen one day and little envied: a small slice of cold boiled mutton-flesh in a crescent of white fat, with a lump of dry bread beside the plate.

Thus he returned to the only home he had, not disheartened, and bearing scenes that outvied London's print-shops for polychrome splendour, an exultation to recall. His condition, moreover, threw his father's life and work into colour: the lean Whitechapel house of the minister among the poor; the joy in the saving of souls, if he could persuade himself that such good labour advanced: and at the fall of light, the pastime task of bootmaking--a desirable occupation for a thinker. Thought flies best when the hands are easily busy. Cobblers have excursive minds. Their occasional rap at the pegs diversifies the stitchings and is often happily timed to settle an internal argument. Seek in a village for information concerning the village or the state of mankind, you will be less disappointed at the cobbler's than elsewhere, it has been said.

As Gower had anticipated, with lively feelings of pleasure, Mr. Woodseer was at the wonted corner of his back room, on the stool between two tallow candleflames, leather scented strongly, when the wanderer stood before him, in the image of a ball that has done with circling about a stable point.

'Back?' the minister sang out at once, and his wrinkles gleamed:

Their hands grasped.

'Hungry, sir, rather.'

'To be sure, you are. One can read it on your boots. Mrs. Jones will spread you a table. How many miles to-day? Show the soles. They tell a tale of wear.'

They had worn to resemble the thin-edged layers of still upper cloud round the peep of coming sky.

'About forty odd to-day, sir. They've done their hundreds of miles and have now come to dock. I 'll ask Mrs. Jones to bring me a plate here.'

Gower went to the housekeeper in the kitchen. His father's front door was unfastened by day; she had not set eyes on him yet, and Mr. Woodseer murmured:

'Now she's got the boy. There 's clasping and kissing. He's all wild Wales to her.'

The plate of meat was brought by Mary Jones with Gower beside her, and a snuffle of her happiness audible. She would not, although invited to stay and burning to hear Gower, wait in the room where father and son had to talk together after a separation, long to love's counting. She was a Welshwoman of the pure blood, therefore delicately mannered by nature.

'Yes, dear lad, tobacco helps you on to the marrow of your story, and I too will blow the cloud,' said Mr. Woodseer, when the plate was pushed aside and the pipe appeared.

So Gower's recital of his wanderings began, more puffs than speech at the commencement. He was alternately picturesque and sententious until he reached Baden; there he became involved, from thinking of a revelation of beauty in woman.

Mr. Woodseer rapped the leather on his block.

'A place where they have started public gambling, I am told.'

'We must look into all the corners of the world to know it, sir, and the world has to be riddled or it riddles us.'

'Ah. Did you ever tell a lie, Gower Woodseer?'

'I played.'

'You played. The Lord be thanked you have kept your straight tongue!
The Lord can always enter a heart of truth. Sin cannot dwell with it.
But you played for gain, and that was a licenced thieving; and that was a
backsliding; and there will have to be a climbing up. And what that
means, your hold on truth will learn. Touch sin and you accommodate
yourself to its vileness. Ay, you love nature. Nature is not anchorage
for vessels like men. If you loved the Book you would float in harbour.
You played. I do trust you lost.'

'You have your wish, sir.'

'To have won their money, Gower! Rather starve.'

'I did.'

'Your reason for playing, poor lad?'

'The reason eludes reason.'

'Not in you.'

'Sight of the tables; an itch to try them--one's self as well; a notion
that the losers were playing wrong. In fine, a bit of a whirl of a
medley of atoms; I can't explain it further.'

'Ah. The tippler's fumes in his head! Spotty business, Gower Woodseer.
"Lead us not into temptation" is worldly wisdom in addition to heavenly.'

After listening to an extended homily, with a general assent and
tobacco's phlegm, Gower replied to his father's 'You starved manfully?'
nodding: 'From Baden to Nancy. An Alsatian cottager at times helped me
along, milk and bread.'

'Wholesome for body and for soul.'

'Entering Nancy I subscribed to the dictum of our first fathers, which
dogs would deliver, if they could speak: that there is no driver like
stomach: and I went head on to the College, saw the Principal: plea of
urgency. No engagement possible, to teach either French or English. But
he was inquisitive touching the urgency. That was my chance. The French
are humane when they are not suspicious of you. They are generous, if
you put a light to their minds. As I was dealing with a scholarly one,
I made use of such ornamental literary skill as I possessed, to prove
urgency. He supplied me with bread, fruit, and wine. In the end he
procured me pupils. I lodged over a baker's shop. I had food walks, and
learnt something of forestry there--a taking study. When I had saved
enough to tramp it home, I said my adieux to that good friend and tramped
away, entering London with about the same amount in small coin as when I
entered Nancy. A manner of exactly hitting the mark, that some would not
find so satisfactory as it is to me.'

The minister sighed. 'There comes in the "philosophy," I suppose. When will you understand, that this "philosophy" is only the passive of a religious faith? It seems to suit you gentlemen of the road while you are young. Work among the Whitechapel poor. It would be a way for discovering the shallows of your "philosophy" earlier.'

Gower asked him: 'Going badly here, sir?'

'Murders, robberies, misuse of women, and misconduct of women!--Drink, in short: about the same amount. Drink is their death's river, rolling them on helpless as corpses, on to--may they find mercy! I and a few stand--it's in the tide we stand here, to stop them, pluck them out, make life a bit sweet to them before the poor bodies go beneath. But come! all's not dark, we have our gleams. I speak distressed by one of our girls: a good girl, I believe; and the wilfullest that ever had command of her legs. A well-favoured girl! You'll laugh, she has given her heart to a prize-fighter. Well, you can say, she might have chosen worse. He drinks, she hates it; she loves the man and hates his vice. He swears amendment, is hiccupping at night; fights a match on the morrow, and gets beaten out of formation. No matter: whenever, wherever, that man goes to his fight, that girl follows to nurse him after it. He's her hero. Women will have one, and it's their lottery. You read of such things; here we have it alive and walking. I am led to think they 're an honest couple. They come of established families. Her mother was out of Caermarthen; died under my ministration, saintly, forgiving the drunkard. You may remember the greengrocer, Tobias Winch? He passed away in shrieks for one drop. I had to pitch my voice to the top notes to get hearing for the hymn. He was a reverent man, with the craving by fits. That should have been a lesson to Madge.'

'A little girl at the greengrocer's hard by? She sold me apples; rather pretty,' said Gower.

'A fine grown girl now--Madge Winch; a comely wench she is. It breaks her sister Sarah's heart. They both manage the little shop; they make it prosper in a small way; enough, and what need they more? Then Christopher Ines has on one of his matches. Madge drives her cart out, if it 's near town. She's off down into Kent to-day by coach, Sarah tells me. A great nobleman patronizes Christopher; a Lord Fleetwood, a lord of wealth. And he must be thoughtful for these people: he sent Sarah word that Christopher should not touch drink. You may remember a butcher Ines in the street next to us. Christopher was a wild lad, always at "best man" with every boy he met: went to sea--ran away. He returned a pugilist. The girl will be nursing him now. I have spoken to her of him; and I trust to her; but I mourn her attachment to the man who drinks.'

'The lord's name?' said Gower.

'Lord Fleetwood, Sarah named him. And so it pleases him to spend his money!'

'He has other tastes. I know something of him, sir. He promises to be a

patron of Literature as well. His mother was a South Wales woman.'

'Could he be persuaded to publish a grand edition of the Triads?' Mr. Woodseer said at once.

'No man more likely.'

'If you see him, suggest it.'

'Very little chance of my meeting him again. But those Triads! They're in our blood. They spring to tie knots in the head. They push me to condense my thoughts to a tight ball. They were good for primitive times: but they--or the trick of the mind engendered by them--trip my steps along the lines of composition. I produce pellets instead of flowing sheets. It'll come right. At present I 'm so bent to pick and perfect, polish my phrase, that I lose my survey. As a consequence, my vocabulary falters.'

'Ah,' Mr. Woodseer breathed and smote. 'This Literature is to be your profession for the means of living?'

'Nothing else. And I'm so low down in the market way of it, that I could not count on twenty pounds per annum. Fifty would give me standing, an independent fifty.'

'To whom are you crying, Gower?'

'Not to gamble, you may be sure.'

'You have a home.'

'Good work of the head wants an easy conscience. I've too much of you in me for a comfortable pensioner.'

'Or is it not, that you have been living the gentleman out there, with just a holiday title to it?'

Gower was hit by his father's thrust. 'I shall feel myself a pisan's chuckpenny as long as I'm unproductive, now I've come back and have to own to a home,' he said.

Tea brought in by Mrs. Mary Jones rather brightened him until he considered that the enlivenment was due to a purchase by money, of which he was incapable, and he rejected it, like an honourable man. Simultaneously, the state of depression threw critic shades on a prized sentence or two among his recent confections. It was rejected for the best of reasons and the most discomfoting: because it racked our English; signifying, that he had not yet learnt the right use of his weapons.

He was in this wrestle, under a placid demeanour, for several days, hearing the shouts of Whitechapel Kit's victory, and hearing of Sarah Winch's anxiety on account of her sister Madge; unaffected by sounds of

joy or grief, in his effort to produce a supple English, with Baden's Madonna for sole illumination of his darkness. To her, to the illimitable gold-mist of perspective and the innumerable images the thought of her painted for him, he owed the lift which withdrew him from contemplation of himself in a very disturbing stagnant pool of the wastes; wherein often will strenuous youth, grown faint, behold a face beneath a scroll inscribed Impostor. All whose aim was high have spied into that pool, and have seen the face. His glorious lady would not let it haunt him.

The spell she cast had likewise power to raise him clean out of a neighbourhood hinting Erebus to the young man with thirst for air, solitudes, and colour. Scarce imaginable as she was, she reigned here, in the idea of her, more fixedly than where she had been visible; as it were, by right of her being celestially removed from the dismal place. He was at the same time not insensible to his father's contented ministrations among these homes of squalor; they pricked the curiosity, which was in the youthful philosopher a form of admiration. For his father, like all Welshmen, loved the mountains. Yet here he lived, exhorting, ministering, aiding, supported up to high good cheer by some, it seemed, superhuman backbone of uprightness;--his religious faith? Well, if so, the thing might be studied. But things of the frozen senses, lean and hueless things, were as repellent to Gower's imagination as his father's dishes to an epicure. What he envied was, the worthy old man's heart of feeling for others: his feeling at present for the girl Sarah Winch and her sister Madge, who had not been heard of since she started for the fight. Mr. Woodseer had written to her relatives at the Wells, receiving no consolatory answer.

He was relieved at last; and still a little perplexed. Madge had returned, he informed Gower. She was well, she was well in health; he had her assurances that she was not excited about herself.

'She has brought a lady with her, a great lady to lodge with her. She has brought the Countess of Fleetwood to lodge with her.'

Gower heard those words from his father; and his father repeated them. To the prostrate worshipper of the Countess of Fleetwood, they were a blow on the head; madness had set in here, was his first recovering thought, or else a miracle had come to pass. Or was it a sham Countess of Fleetwood imposing upon the girl? His father was to go and see the great lady, at the greengrocer's shop; at her request, according to Madge. Conjectures shot their perishing tracks across a darkness that deepened and made shipwreck of philosophy. Was it the very Countess of Fleetwood penitent for her dalliance with the gambling passion, in feminine need of pastor's aid, having had report from Madge of this good shepherd? His father expressed a certain surprise; his countenance was mild. He considered it a merely strange occurrence.

Perhaps, in a crisis, a minister of religion is better armed than a philosopher. Gower would not own that, but he acknowledged the evidences, and owned to envy; especially when he accompanied his father to the greengrocer's shop, and Mr. Woodseer undisturbedly said:

'Here is the place.' The small stuffed shop appeared to grow portentously cavernous and waveringly illumined.

CHAPTER XIX

THE GIRL MADGE

Customers were at the counter of the shop, and these rational figures, together with the piles of cabbages, the sacks of potatoes, the pale small oranges here and there, the dominant smell of red herrings, denied the lurking of an angelical presence behind them.

Sarah Winch and a boy served at the counter. Sarah led the Mr. Woodseers into a corner knocked off the shop and called a room. Below the top bars of a wizened grate was a chilly fire. London's light came piecemeal through a smut-streaked window. If the wonderful was to occur, this was the place to heighten it.

'My son may be an intruder,' Mr. Woodseer said. 'He is acquainted with a Lord Fleetwood . . .'

'Madge will know, sir,' replied Sarah, and she sent up a shrill cry for Madge from the foot of the stairs.

The girl ran down swiftly. She entered listening to Sarah, looking at Gower; to whom, after a bob and pained smile where reverence was owing, she said, 'Can you tell me, sir, please, where we can find Lord Fleetwood now?'

Gower was unable to tell. Madge turned to Mr. Woodseer, saying soon after: 'Oh, she won't mind; she'll be glad, if he knows Lord Fleetwood. I'll fetch her.'

The moments were of the palpitating order for Gower, although his common sense lectured the wildest of hearts for expecting such a possibility as the presence of his lofty lady here.

And, of course, common sense proved to be right: the lady was quite another. But she struck on a sleeping day of his travels. Her face was not one to be forgotten, and to judge by her tremble of a smile, she remembered him instantly.

They were soon conversing, each helping to paint the scene of the place where they had met.

'Lord Fleetwood has married me,' she said.

Gower bent his head; all stood silent.

'May I?' said Madge to her. 'It is Lord Fleetwood's wedded wife, sir. He drove her from her uncle's, on her wedding day, the day of a prize-fight, where I was; he told me to wait on his lady at an inn there, as I've done and will. He drove away that evening, and he hasn't--the girl's black eyebrows worked: 'I've not seen him since. He's a great nobleman, yes. He left his lady at the inn, expenses paid. He left her with no money. She stayed on till her heart was breaking. She has come to London to find him. She had to walk part of the way. She has only a change of linen we brought in a parcel. She's a stranger to England: she knows nobody in London. She had no place to come to but this poor hole of ours she 's so good as let welcome her. We can't do better, and it 's no use to be ashamed. She 's not a lady to scorn poor people.'

The girl's voice hummed through Gower.

He said: 'Lord Fleetwood may not be in London,' and chafed at himself for such a quaver.

'It's his house we want, sir, he has not been at his house in Kent. We want his London house.'

'My dear lady,' said Mr. Woodseer; 'it might be as well to communicate the state of things to your family without delay. My son will call at any address you name; or if it is a country address, I can write the items, with my assurances of your safety under my charge, in my house, which I beg you to make your home. My housekeeper is known to Sarah and Madge for an excellent Christian woman.'

Carinthia replied: 'You are kind to me, sir. I am grateful. I have an uncle; I would not disturb my uncle; he is inventing guns and he wishes peace. It is my husband I have come to find. He did not leave me in anger.'

She coloured. With a dimple of tenderness at one cheek, looking from Sarah to Madge, she said: 'I would not leave my friends; they are sisters to me.' Sarah, at these words, caught up her apron. Madge did no more than breathe deep and fast.

An unoccupied cold parlour in Mr. Woodseer's house that would be heated for a guest, urged him to repeat his invitation, but he took the check from Gower, who suggested the doubt of Mary Jones being so good an attendant upon Lady Fleetwood as Madge. 'And Madge has to help in the shop at times.'

Madge nodded, looked into the eyes of her mistress, which sanctioned her saying: 'She will like it best here, she is my lady and I understand her best. My lady gives no trouble: she is hardy, she's not like other ladies. I and Sarah sleep together in the room next. I can hear anything she wants. She takes us as if she was used to it.'

Sarah had to go to serve a customer. Madge made pretence of pricking her ears and followed into the shop.

'Your first visit to London is in ugly weather, Lady Fleetwood,' said Gower.

'It is my first,' she answered.

How the marriage came about, how the separation, could not be asked and was not related.

'Our district is not all London, my dear lady,' said Mr. Woodseer.

'Good hearts are here, as elsewhere, and as many, if one looks behind the dirt. I have found it since I laboured amongst them, now twenty years. Unwashed human nature, though it is natural to us to wash, is the most human, we find.'

Gower questioned the naturalness of human nature's desire to wash; and they wrangled good-humouredly, Carinthia's eyes dwelling on them each in turn; until Mr. Woodseer, pursuing the theme started by him to interest her, spoke of consolations derived from his labours here, in exchange for the loss of his mountains. Her face lightened.

'You love the mountains?'

'I am a son of the mountains.'

'Ah, I love them! Father called me a daughter of the mountains. I was born in the mountains. I was leaving my mountains on the day, I think it yesterday, when I met this gentleman who is your son.'

'A glorious day it was!' Gower exclaimed.

'It was a day of great glory for me,' said Carinthia. 'Your foot did not pain you for long?'

'The length of two pipes. You were with your brother.'

'With my brother. My brother has married a most beautiful lady. He is now travelling his happy time--my Chillon !'

There came a radiance on her under-eyelids. There was no weeping.

Struck by the contrast between the two simultaneous honeymoons, and a vision of the high-spirited mountain girl, seen in this place a young bride seeking her husband, Gower Woodseer could have performed that unphilosophical part. He had to shake himself. She seemed really a soaring bird brought down by the fowler.

Lord Fleetwood's manner of abandoning her was the mystery.

Gower stood waiting for her initiative, when the minister interposed:

'There are books, books of our titled people--the Peers, books of the Peerage. They would supply the address. My son will discover where to examine them. He will find the address. Most of the great noblemen have a London house.'

'My husband has a house in London,' Carinthia said.

'I know him, to some degree,' said Gower.

She remarked: 'I have heard that you do.'

Her lips were shut, as to any hint at his treatment of her.

Gower went into the shop to speak with Madge. The girl was talking in the business tone to customers; she finished her commission hurriedly and joined him on the pavement by the doorstep. Her voice was like the change for the swing of a door from street to temple.

'You've seen how brave she is, sir. She has things to bear. Never cries, never frets. Her marriage day--leastways . . . I can't, no girl can tell. A great nobleman, yes. She waited, believing in him; she does. She hasn't spoken to me of what she's had to bear. I don't know; I guess; I'm sure I'm right--and him a man! Girls learn to know men, call them gentlemen or sweeps. She thinks she has only to meet him to persuade him she 's fit to be loved by him. She thinks of love. Would he--our tongues are tied except among ourselves to a sister. Leaves her by herself, with only me, after--it knocks me dumb! Many a man commits a murder wouldn't do that. She could force him to--no, it isn't a house she wants, she wants him. He's her husband, Mr. Woodseer. You will do what you can to help; I judge by your father. I and Sarah 'll slave for her to be as comfortable--as we--can make her; we can't give her what she 's used to. I shall count the hours.'

'You sold me apples when your head was just above the counter,' said Gower.

'Did I?--you won't lose time, sir?' she rejoined. 'Her box is down at the beastly inn in Kent. Kind people, I dare say; their bill was paid any extent, they said. And he might do as he liked in it--enter it like a thief, if it pleased him, and off like one, and they no wiser. She walked to his big house Esslemont for news of him. And I'm not a snivelling wench either; but she speaks of him a way to make a girl drink her tears, if they ain't to be let fall.'

'But you had a victory down there,' Gower hinted congratulations.

'Ah,' said she.

'Christopher Ines is all right now?'

'I've as good as lost my good name for Kit Ines, Mr. Woodseer.'

'Not with my dad, Madge.'

'The minister reads us at the heart. Shall we hear the street of his house in London before night?'

'I may be late.'

'I'll be up, any hour, for a rap at the shutters. I want to take her to the house early next morning. She won't mind the distance. She lies in bed, her eyes shut or open, never sleeping, hears any mouse. It shouldn't go on, if we can do a thing to help.'

'I'm off,' said Gower, unwontedly vexed at his empty pocket, that could not offer the means for conveyance to a couple of young women.

The dark-browed girl sent her straight eyes at him. They pushed him to hasten. On second thoughts, he stopped and hailed her; he was moved to confirm an impression of this girl's features.

His mind was directed to the business burning behind them, honestly enough, as soon as he had them in sight again.

'I ought to have the address of some of her people, in case,' he said.

'She won't go to her uncle, I'm sure of that,' said Madge. 'He 's a lord and can't be worried. It 's her husband to find first.'

'If he's to be found!--he's a lord, too. Has she no other relatives or friends?'

'She loves her brother. He's an officer. He's away on honeymoon. There 's an admiral down Hampshire way, a place I've been near and seen. I'd not have you go to any of them, sir, without trying all we can do to find Lord Fleetwood. It's Admiral Fakenham she speaks of; she's fond of him. She's not minded to bother any of her friends about herself.'

'I shall see you to-night,' said Gower, and set his face Westward, remembering that his father had named Caermarthen as her mother's birthplace.

Just in that tone of hers do Welshwomen talk of their country; of its history, when at home, of its mountains, when exiled: and in a language like hers, bare of superlatives to signify an ardour conveyed by the fire of the breath. Her quick devotion to a lady exciting enthusiasm through admiring pity for the grace of a much-tried quiet sweetness, was explained; apart from other reasons, feminine or hidden, which might exist. Only a Welsh girl would be so quick and all in it, with a voice intimating a heated cauldron under her mouth. None but a Welsh-blooded girl, risking her good name to follow and nurse the man she considered a hero, would carry her head to look virgin eyes as she did. One could swear to them, Gower thought. Contact with her spirited him out of his mooniness.

He had the Cymric and Celtic respect of character; which puts aside the person's environments to face the soul. He was also an impressionable fellow among his fellows, a philosopher only at his leisure, in his courted solitudes. Getting away some strides from this girl of the drilling voice,--the shudder-voice, he phrased it,--the lady for whom she

pleaded came clearer into his view and gradually absorbed him; though it was an emulation with the girl Madge, of which he was a trifle conscious, that drove him to do his work of service in the directest manner. He then fancied the girl had caught something of the tone of her lady: the savage intensity or sincerity; and he brooded on Carinthia's position, the mixture of the astounding and the woful in her misadventure. One could almost laugh at our human fate, to think of a drop off the radiant mountain heights upon a Whitechapel greengrocer's shop, gathering the title of countess midway.

But nothing of the ludicrous touched her; no, and if we bring reason to scan our laugh at pure humanity, it is we who are in the place of the ridiculous, for doing what reason disavows. Had he not named her, Carinthia, Saint and Martyr, from a first perusal of her face? And Lord Fleetwood had read and repeated it. Lord Fleetwood had become the instrument to martyrize her? That might be; there was a hoard of bad stuff in his composition besides the precious: and this was a nobleman owning enormous wealth, who could vitiate himself by disposing of a multitude of men and women to serve his will, a shifty will. Wealth creates the magician, and may breed the fiend within him. In the hands of a young man, wealth is an invitation to devilry. Gower's idea of the story of Carinthia inclined to charge Lord Fleetwood with every possible false dealing. He then quashed the charge, and decided to wait for information.

At the second of the aristocratic Clubs of London's West, into which he stepped like an easy member, the hall-porter did not examine his clothing from German hat to boots, and gave him Lord Fleetwood's town address. He could tell Madge at night by the door of the shuttered shop, that Lord Fleetwood had gone down to Wales.

'It means her having to wait,' she said. 'The minister has been to the coach-office, to order up her box from that inn. He did it in his name; they can't refuse; no money's owing. She must have a change. Sally has fifteen pounds locked up in case of need.'

Sally's capacity and economy fetched the penniless philosopher a slap.

'You've taken to this lady,' he said.

'She held my hand, while Kit Ines was at his work; and I was new to her, and a prize-fighter's lass, they call me:--upon the top of that nobleman's coach, where he made me sit, behind her, to see the fight; and she his wedded lady that morning. A queer groom. He may keep Kit Ines from drink, he's one of you men, and rides over anything in his way. I can't speak about it; I could swear it before a judge, from what I know. Those Rundles at that inn don't hear anything it suits him to do. All the people down in those parts are slaves to him. And I thought he was a real St. George before,--yes, ready I was to kiss the ground his feet crossed. If you could, it's Chinningfold near where Admiral Fakenham lives, down Hampshire way. Her friends ought to hear what's happened to her. They'll find her in a queer place. She might go to the minister's. I believe she's happier with us girls.'

Gower pledged his word to start for Chinningfold early as the light next day. He liked the girl the better, in an amicable fashion, now that his nerves had got free of the transient spell of her kettle tone--the hardly varied one note of a heart boiling with sisterly devotion to a misused stranger of her sex;--and, after the way of his race, imagination sprang up in him, at the heels of the quieted senses, releasing him from the personal and physical to grasp the general situation and place the protagonist foremost.

He thought of Carinthia, with full vision of her. Some wrong had been done, or some violation of the right, to guess from the girl Madge's molten words in avoidance of the very words. It implied--though it might be but one of Love's shrewder discords--such suspected traitorous dealing of a man with their sister woman as makes the world of women all woman toward her. They can be that, and their being so illuminates their hidden sentiments in relation to the mastering male, whom they uphold.

But our uninformed philosopher was merely picking up scraps of sheddings outside the dark wood of the mystery they were to him, and playing imagination upon them. This primary element of his nature soon enthroned his chosen lady above their tangled obscurities. Beneath her tranquil beams, with the rapture of the knowledge that her name on earth was Livia, he threaded East London's thoroughfares,--on a morning when day and night were made one by fog, to journey down to Chinningfold, by coach, in the service of the younger Countess of Fleetwood, whose right to the title he did not doubt, though it directed surprise movements at his understanding from time to time.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Cock-sure has crowed low by sunset
Drink is their death's river, rolling them on helpless
Father and she were aware of one another without conversing
Fun, at any cost, is the one object worth a shot
He was the prisoner of his word
Heartily she thanked the girl for the excuse to cry
Hearts that make one soul do not separately count their gifts
Life is the burlesque of young dreams
Make a girl drink her tears, if they ain't to be let fall
On a morning when day and night were made one by fog
Poetic romance is delusion
Push me to condense my thoughts to a tight ball
She endured meekly, when there was no meekness
She seemed really a soaring bird brought down by the fowler
She stood with a dignity that the word did not express
There is no driver like stomach
Touch sin and you accommodate yourself to its vileness
You played for gain, and that was a licenced thieving

[The End]

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