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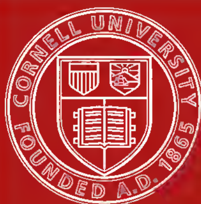

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LEWIS SEYMOUR AND SOME WOMEN

Volume I

THE CARRA EDITION

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF

GEORGE MOORE

LEWIS SEYMOUR AND SOME WOMEN

BY

GEORGE MOORE

Carra Edition

PRINTED FOR SUBSCRIBERS ONLY BY
BONI AND LIVERIGHT, INC., NEW YORK
1922

LEWIS SEYMOUR AND SOME WOMEN

(Carra Edition)

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EPISTLE DEDICATORY

TO

THOMAS RUTTLEDGE

OF

WESTPORT, COUNTY MAYO.

My Dear Tom,

You will begin to receive the Carra Edition in October, begotten almost as much of your management of my property as of my modesty. So prepare yourselves.

Always affectionately yours,

GEORGE MOORE.

This edition consists of 1000 numbered sets of twenty-one volumes each. The first volume is numbered, and signed by the author.

This set is No. ....1720.........

APOLOGIA PRO SCRIPTIS MEIS

When I say that it may be doubted if any English writer owes as much to his American readers as I do, I am not thinking of the Carra edition but of the instinctive and spontaneous appreciation of my books which began in America with the publication of *Confessions of a Young Man*, a book written some thirty years ago; America was forthcoming when England lagged, and that my readers beyond may know how valuable their help was, coming at a time when I was almost without readers in England, I append to this little exordium of thanks the *vera historia* of the literary struggle I have been engaged in for the last forty years.

It was in the beginning of 1880 that a letter came to the rue de la Tour des Dames telling me that I must return to Ireland at once and seek another agent, the reason given by Joe Blake for relinquishing his charge being that owing to the disturbed state of the country he could no longer collect my rents. Joe Blake was a near relative, my mother's brother, and for that was appointed agent at my father's death. I had confirmed the appointment when I came of age, and Joe Blake had supplied me with money from the day I started forth to study art in Paris accompanied by an old family servant, William Maloney, with whom Parisian life found so little favour that he begged to be allowed to leave my service at the end of the year. He missed his beer and music-halls, and to let him go seemed the only way to rid myself of his censorship of my ambition, which was nothing less than a complete remoulding of myself inwardly and outwardly. I wished to think, to speak and to dress like a Frenchman, but was

shamefaced before my valet and continued to wear English clothes as long as he was with me. But when he left my orders were given to a French tailor; I grew a Capoul beard, curled my hair and wore exaggerated collars and neckties, achieving in a few years such a change in my appearance that William Maloney would have passed me in the street without recognising me, and would certainly have declined to re-enter my service if I had proposed to re-engage him. It would have been a point of honour with him to refuse to brush the clothes I wore, and he could not have kept back some contemptuous words about my hat; he might have spoken of it as one only fit for my sister to wear when she went out riding. I had not thought of William Maloney for several years, but he was again in my thoughts, a great rough Irishman whom I easily imagined contented in Joe Blake's service in Ballinfad, having the horses to think about and a meeting at the Curragh to look forward to. Whether he had gone to Ballinfad or into service in London I did not know, nor did it matter; I was thinking of him only because he and Joe Blake represented all that I had tried to escape from — language, religion, ideas. But the past had returned; it had laid hands upon me and would soon undo the work I had done on myself. I shall be as I was, I cried. My evenings in the Nouvelle Athènes are over, never to be resumed; my afternoons in Manet's studio in the rue Amsterdam; my visits to Degas in the rue Fontaine; everything is over. And catching sight at that moment of Manet's portrait of my Polish mistress, I began to ask myself: In whose shop will she hang and what manner of man will buy her? I will run away, leaving everything to be sold, and if I answer no letters Paris will dissolve like a dream; I shall never know how much my tables and chairs and pictures fetched at the sale. Let them go, let them go—I belong to Paris no longer.

In *Confessions of a Young Man* I have told of the almost hysterical grief with which I watched the water widening between me and the shores of the country where my youth was spent, and if I tell it again it is because a story-teller is like an acrobat in this much: he needs a spring-board. Joe's letter was an excellent one; but I need not trouble the reader with an account of my meeting with Joe in Dublin; sufficient to say that I signed his accounts, though my solicitor begged me not to sign them. The literary life is inveterate in me and I was prepared to make any monetary sacrifices to escape from money, an aversion that would have easily led me to my ruin if I had not met Tom Ruttledge in Cornfield and entrusted the management of my affairs to him. In these he was successful from the first, proposing a reduction in rent to the tenants which they accepted, and still more important was his discovery of a timber merchant who paid five hundred pounds for the thinning of the woods, a sum of money on which I was to live in London for two years at least, creeping back all the while into English life and thought; wearing loosely, I said, the skin that I grew in Paris, or sloughing it and joining affinity with my original self. "But can we return to ourselves?" I asked and laid aside the thought petulantly, it seeming certain that the concern of the year was to banish faith for ever in Irish land and get my living in journalism. Thereat I fell to considering my chances, viewing almost aggressively the book of verses I had published whilst in Paris; *Martin Luther,* a drama in five acts in blank verse; and another volume of poems, the proofs of which I had in my pocket. Books that had to be paid for were out of my present humour, and my hopes set on a single poem which had found an admirer in the editor of the *Spectator,* who wrote to thank me for it, expressing even a wish to see me when I came to

London. As Mr. Hutton knew nothing of my long acquaintance with Montmartre he looked upon the stanza:—

> The rose of the past is better
> Than the rose we ravish to-day;
> 'Tis holier, purer and fitter
> To place on the shrine where we pray
> To the secret thoughts we obey,

as being suffused with Celtic genius, and gave me a volume of Swinburne to review for him, a task that I achieved with only moderate success. He gave me other books and I did my best with them, my best, however, leaving a feeling in my mind that my articles were draggle-tailed; and I wondered how it was everybody could produce evenly written copy, though he might be my inferior intellectually. I was only sure of myself in verse, and one day a friend at the corner of Wellington Street and the Strand asked me if I believed myself destined to increase the volume of English poetry. He did not intend to affront me, nor did he; I was even grateful to him for his bluntness, for it helped me to make up my mind, not a difficult thing to do for I had begun to hear myself called to story-telling; and the burden of poetry being discharged I applied myself to the shaping of a novel to be called *A Modern Lover,* turning it over in my mind till one day it took shape suddenly as I left the Gaiety Bar by the swing doors leading into Catherine Street, to which delightful surprise was added the conviction, not less delightful, that I had found at last my real business in life: I was a tale-teller.

He has broken into his last sovereign, I said to myself on my way to Cecil Street, and the dealer who has just refused to buy another sketch sends his shopman after him with an order for a decorative panel representing Venus rising from the sea. But Lewis cannot draw except from

the model, and having no money to pay for one he speaks of suicide to a modest young Methodist who lives in the house; and when he brings the decorative panel to the dealer's shop he is asked to wait, the dealer being at that moment engaged with a customer. And it so happens that the customer has come to ask the dealer if he can recommend an artist to decorate her ballroom. The dealer is fortunately able to supply the young man she is dreaming of; and when the ballroom is finished, Mrs. Bentham buys his pictures and persuades her friends to sit to him for their portraits. And then? This story will run on for about ten years, and in ten years the time will have come to bring in a young woman, Lady Helen, mayhap, who remembers having met Lewis at the tennis party in Sussex. Her family is opposed to the marriage, but Lady Helen will not give way, and once they are married, the family have to get him portraits; and in the end, by a cunningly devised entanglement of circumstance, the three workers have an opportunity of appreciating the artist they have brought into being, which they do according to their different lights.

As I ran upstairs the story of Lewis Seymour continued to shape itself in my mind, and when the wretched text came back to me from Mr. Bentley my hopes drifted on to Mr. Tinsley, who, however, found himself unable to undertake the publication of *A Modern Lover* unless I agreed to pay him his losses up to forty pounds, a large sum, so I thought, for a man to lose who could reckon only upon the five hundred pounds he had gotten for his trees, the rather as no more money would come out of Irish land. All the same, I signed, and whilst the proofs were undergoing correction the thought of having to draw a cheque instead of receiving one began to frighten me; but my fears gave way and almost disappeared, so favourable were the notices of the book, till one day I left Cecil

Street for Catherine Street with the intention of heartening Mr. Tinsley by reading him the review that had appeared that morning in *The Spectator*. But he seemed lost in despondency of all shapes and sizes as he sat at his bureau, and waving aside the review as something of no importance he told me that Mudie had taken only fifty copies and Smith twenty-five, which meant that sooner or later he would call upon me to pay my debt, and being, like every other man, a mixture of cowardice and courage, regret entered my soul that I had not delayed my campaign against Mudie and Smith till I had made my position secure in English letters. The thought was accompanied by another: that if I had delayed and written books in the tradition that Messrs. Mudie and Smith had imposed upon English letters, I should have become part and parcel of Mudie and Smith and would be unable to withstand them. I must break in here to tell that I had already begun to look upon the freeing of English fiction from the apron strings of Mudie and Smith as my job; for its quick accomplishment it would have been better that they had not discovered their enemy so quickly. But what mischief had been done could not be undone, and the struggle that had begun sooner than I wished for, sooner than I expected, would have to be continued by me unintermittently, and in my way and in no other, for I could not change myself. And whilst these thoughts, or something like them, were passing through my mind Mr. Tinsley sat in his armchair, the very type of the middle-class tradesman, a basket of fish behind him which he was taking home to the family in the suburbs. In which suburb I did not know, and it vexed me to find my thoughts straying into such an unimportant question. "Mr. Tinsley," I said, "I suppose you have read the reviews of *A Modern Lover*, every one of which is complimentary?"

and I handed him the two-column article that *The Spectator* had printed that week and tried to persuade him that it would save the book. But he answered with truth that no number of articles could save a three-volume novel if the libraries did not subscribe freely and circulate it. "Then why not break the libraries by publishing at a popular price?" I asked. "I could not have sold your novels at six shillings," he replied, "nor at three-and-sixpence, nor at any other price, for Smith owns all the bookstalls and what he will not circulate he will not sell": an answer that revealed to me the bastions of the fortresses I had undertaken in rash haste to storm. But something had to be done, and on leaving Mr. Tinsley's office I looked round for a hansom and drove to the library in Oxford Street absorbed in the fear that Mr. Mudie might refuse to see me.

"I have called to see Mr. Mudie." The attendant at the counter said he would take up my name, and I paced the waiting-room till a dull, almost lifeless, thick-set, middle-aged man entered. I knew that I should make no impression on him, but we were face to face and I began to speak all I could remember of Zola's *Roman Expérimental,* to which he gave a stupid, listless ear. It may be as well to say here that he dropped a few years later into lunacy, and I almost became aware of his impending end when he put forward the suggestion that I should take Trollope for my model. "I will wreck this big house of yours, Mr. Mudie!" I cried, and seeing me look round the room, and judging me to be measuring the strength of the architecture, a faint smile lighted up his face for a moment, and I began to ask myself if other authors had threatened him before. "My next novel will be issued at a popular price," I cried; "I will appeal to the public." To which he answered that popular prices would suit his business better than the conventional three-volume novel, price thirty-

one-and-six; and I left his emporium to start a few days afterwards for Ireland to write *A Mummer's Wife* in dear Edward's Galway castle. The story that possessed me this time was a better one than *A Modern Lover.* I was thinking of a soft, sentimental woman of the lower middle class, to whose house the manager of a travelling opera comes in search of lodgings and whom the mummer carries out of a world of work into one of pleasure and excitement; a story of decline and fall, with this inference for philosophy: that to change our circumstance is to change a good many of our ideas.

My new publisher, Henry Vizetelly, of whom I would speak here if I had not spoken out my mind concerning him in *Avowals,* seemed impressed by my description of the book. And remember, I continued, "that though adultery is as frequent in England as in any other country, our literary convention is that the people of novels are chaste and never miss church, and any violation of this code will assuredly cause the book to be banned by the libraries. Our appeal must be made to the common-sense of the country; we must publish at a popular price." And opening my manuscript I drew his attention to Kate Ede's enjoyment of every hour of her new life, especially of the long talks before turning into bed and the morning stirrings in a room already warm with sunlight. "Never," I said, "will Mudie and Smith circulate a book in which a man is represented living in lodgings with a woman who is not his wife; remember the subterfuges that Thackeray had to stoop to, and the many books that have been written to prove that Becky never side-stepped." "But you tell me your book is soberly written," interjected Henry Vizetelly. "Be that as it may, Mudie and Smith will take objection to it and gain credit for so doing," I answered: a prediction that came to pass, despite the fact that the book was earnestly acclaimed

by the entire Press. But Mudie and Smith were autocrats and stood shoulder to shoulder, never allowing a copy into the library or upon the bookstalls, and it was to outwit them that I arranged for my next book, *Muslin,* to appear in a newspaper, saying to myself: "Smith will not dare to ban a newspaper, and if he does not refuse to sell *The Court and Society Review* on his bookstalls, his librarian can hardly refuse to admit the book into the library." It was with this argument in my head that I called upon Mr. Faux, who answered that the gentleman in charge of the stalls sold what he liked, and that he, Mr. Faux, being in charge of the library, distributed what he liked. "But will you tell me, Mr. Faux, what your objection is to *Muslin?*" Mr. Faux answered that the character of Alice Barton represented part of his objection to the story, saying: "She does not believe in the divinity of our Lord and refuses to go to church——" "But her character is exemplary," I interjected. "Quite so," he replied; "but there is a girl in your book who has a baby, an unmarried girl who is a believing Christian. Your point, I suppose, is that religious teaching is worse than useless; a view which I do not think would be accepted by the majority of the subscribers to our library." And then his tone changing from grave to gay, he began to gossip about the books he had banned, telling indecent stories to which I listened in amazement, it seeming to me strange that a man's private life should differ from his public. I heard afterwards that publishers collected indecent stories for his amusement and that if he had not heard them before, they were rewarded with large orders. And recalling this interview to my remembrance, I can see in my thoughts, and distinctly, a tall, thin, sallow, unhealthy-looking man, with a large mouth full of shaky false teeth, a bald crown covered with

faded hair, ambiguous blue eyes that lighted up when certain words were pronounced, and a name in accordance with his character: *Faux;* he pronounced it *Fox,* thereby trying vainly to escape from the by-name that some original French ancestor had earned for qualities which an inexorable law had transmitted to his descendant of 1880.

My next book was *Confessions of a Young Man,* and the excuse that Mr. Faux gave for banning it was that Mr. Wilson Barrett, an actor of some celebrity in those days, was spoken of as playing to the gallery, but as my books continued to be received with favour the prejudice that Mudie and Smith had stirred up against me was beginning to decline, the twain being looked upon as stupid fellows; and I can only think it was the despair caused by finding himself obliged to refuse to supply a book that everybody wanted to read that provoked Mr. Faux to take the Press into his confidence, for one day when a reporter came to ask him to give his reasons for banning *Esther Waters,* he answered: "For certain pre-Raphaelite nastiness that Mr. Moore cannot keep out of his writings"; an answer that counsel would be puzzled to justify, so I was told, and was pressed to begin an action. Smith will not allow the case to go into Court; he will apologise and pay. But I could not be persuaded, though the pleasure of interrogating Mr. Faux in the witness-box tempted me; instead of a lawyer I called in an accountant who, after checking the sales and reckoning the rebate that Smith's monopoly allows him to ask and get, sent in a report that Smith had lost probably fifteen hundred pounds by refusing to deal in *Esther Waters.* It was after the publication of these figures that I had the satisfaction of hearing that the partners of the firm, whilst congratulating themselves at having escaped a mulct in damages, sent word to their

librarian that it would be well in the future to avoid heavy losses by banning books, especially books that Mr. Gladstone was likely to read and to express his approval of in *The Westminster Gazette.*

Till the publication of *Esther Waters* I had lived in a small corner of the Temple, giving two days of the week to writing articles. *Modern Painting* was written on Tuesdays for *The Speaker,* a newspaper that represented the liberalism of the 'nineties, and every evening I went forth, usually alone, to spend three or four shillings in one of the City inns, *The Cock, The Rainbow,* or *The Cheshire Cheese.* A hard, industrious life mine was for many years, one that astonished Thomas Ruttledge, who called at 8, King's Bench Walk one hot summer day and found me writing in my shirt-sleeves. It came to my ears some months afterwards that Tom had said he had never known anybody so frugal as George, an appreciation that surprised me, for I was not aware that my conduct was exceptional. A man on an errand is conscious of little else, and it was not for weariness of a strait life that I left the Temple to live in a commodious flat in Victoria Street, where I could keep servants, but in the hope that easier conditions of life would enable me to accomplish the overthrow of Mudie and Smith, whom I identified with the slavery of English literature. Zola had often told me that the libraries would give way as soon as the demand for my books compelled them to do so, and not before. "Mudie has surrendered to *Esther Waters,*" I said, "and Smith will hold up his hands at the next book if it be a success." But the thought of writing popular literature was repugnant to me, and I sat asking myself which I would choose: a great work of art or the freedom of literature. The answer came: for a great work of art I would consent that Mudie and Smith should live, yes, and thrive. And amused at my

own wantonness I continued the composition of *Sister Teresa* to succumb very soon to a temptation more malignant than the first, for after hearing Yeats and dear Edward talking continually of a Celtic Renaissance, it had come to be believed by me that the English language was threadbare, falling to pieces like an old coat, and soiled with wear; and I began to dream of exchanging my lot, the overthrow of Mudie and Smith, for the revival of an old language that too frequent child-bearing had not over-worn.

We play with a thought as with a snake; it coils and uncoils, a seemingly harmless thing, till suddenly its coils tighten and we are overcome. I sold my flat in Victoria Street, and often stopped in my walks in Dublin to ask myself if it were the destiny of the Irish language to bring forth a new literature. But the struggle of the artist with the patriot could end only in the overthrow of the patriot, and whosoever would read the story of the match can do so in the volumes entitled *Hail and Farewell.* For me to remember that there was a struggle is enough for the purpose of this apologia, and I return to *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa,* to tell how after altering these books in every edition, Continental, English and American, I came suddenly into a resolution to rewrite them from the first pages to the last, thereby wasting two years, for the new versions disappointed me as soon as they were printed, which is strange, for I excel in corrections, and the only explanation I can give of my failure is that a superficial subject had better be written superficially. Be this as it may, Evelyn left me no peace; she continued to intrude herself upon me during the whole of my stay in Ireland, claiming my attention for some new aspect of her character, without, however, persuading me to follow her again; and it was in the hope of ridding myself of her that I refused all proposals for a collected edition that

included the two books, whereupon publishers withdrew from a proposition which, in their own words, was not a practical one. Even if these books were left out, I said to myself, there would be a hiatus which I should feel, and if, after all, the public should prove right!

It was about a year ago that Mr. Liveright wrote to me about the collected edition, and when he came to see me in London he demanded not only *Evelyn Innes* but a number of trivial books and a long list of short stories and articles. "But even if all that your industry could discover from ancient files of newspapers were published," I said to him, "a great deal would still remain uncollected." Mr. Liveright bowed before my argument, which indeed was unanswerable, and so did my old friend, Mr. Edmund Gosse, to whom I went at the end of the week. Mr. Gosse answered me: "You are quite right to reject certain volumes as casual and unrepresentative, but since you ask me, I do not think that it is possible for you to omit *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa,* for they form a large part of your literary thought and development. You asked for my opinion——" And feeling myself pressed from every side, I said: "My dear Gosse, when I ask you for an opinion it is to take it. To-morrow I will sign an agreement with Mr. Liveright for twenty volumes, and the agreement shall not only include the two volumes, *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa,* but I promise you that they shall be published from the original editions, without the alteration of a comma. After all, the public liked them in their first versions, and as I do not like them in any of the versions it is better that somebody should be pleased. I think that is reasonable. Everything comes to pass if one lives long enough, and here am I accepting public opinion about a book. It is true, Gosse, that you have made yourself the spokesman of it, else I should have listened contemptuously, and I shall make you pub-

licly responsible for the inclusion of these two books into the canon." "My dear Moore, you have not changed your mind; you have merely conceded a point, that is all." "*Les Concessions d'un Enfant du Siècle,*" I answered plaintively, and Gosse began to improvise an amusing book, till breaking off suddenly, tired of the joke, he asked me if I thought of omitting any of the books I had written in Ireland; and I answered him that I was particularly satisfied with the books I had written in Ireland, Ireland having thrown me back upon primitive people. "Among whom your talent is more at home than among the cultured," he interjected. "*The Untilled Field,*" I said, "came out of my memories of the peasants that collected about Moore Hall;" and we discussed the advisability of publishing *The Lake* in the same volume, both having come out of the same inspiration. But I am repeating or paraphrasing what has already been said in the preface to the new edition of *The Lake;* and of the three volumes of autobiography entitled *Hail and Farewell* I can only say that whilst writing these books I dreamed the Syrian story conceived from end to end in a five-minutes' conversation with W. K. Magee in the National Library, trying it in the form of a play so that I might save myself the tedium of a long journey to Palestine, it becoming plain to me at last that the story could not be written even in the form of a play without my seeing the country. "You have been wishing," a wise friend said to me, "to write this book for years; go to Palestine; the season is coming in for the journey." I think she uttered a warning that the journey would become more difficult to me every year, and I owe to her *The Brook Kerith,* for January 1914 was the last possible moment for me to visit Palestine, whence I returned in May (two months before the War), the long ride through the desert from Jerusalem to the desolate

shores of the Dead Sea, and the longer ride from Jerusalem to the harp-shapen lake in the north, having set my story flowing, here a trickle, there a pool, with suddenly a cascade of story from the face of the high rock. A pretentious imagery, I fear, but a true one, for during my journey home and the fifteen months that I spent writing *The Brook Kerith,* the story continued to pour into my mind without interruption, the incident that I could not find in the evening revealing itself to me in the morning, and so on and so on till the last proofs were corrected, without, however, attaining the language I had in mind, neither an archaic nor a modern language; for this I had to wait for the Carra edition. Of course mistakes can be discovered always if sought, and on this note of warning I turn from textual revisions to the fright the book caused, the absence of the usual ringlets that Jesus had worn, from Dürer to Holman Hunt, stampeding the critics. Again and again the book was returned to the editors who had sent it out. It would seem that the critics had expected something of the eighteenth-century abbé that Renan painted from himself in the looking-glass with some remembrances of his sister Henrietta, and it was noised in Fleet Street that the Jesus of *The Brook Kerith* was a beggar-man that Joseph met by the lake shores hurrying to Capernaum to Peter's house, in which he lodged. Peter's lodger—what a profanation! But a way out had to be discovered, and that is why eulogies were printed of the opening chapters, with many regrets that Mr. Moore was not able to continue the book as he began it. But at the end of three weeks the critics discovered suddenly that every Christian sect was speaking of the restraint and reverence with which the book was written, whereupon the opening chapters, which were thought so charming three weeks ago, became long and tedious, and it was not till Jesus appeared that the story began to hold the reader. And

what a vision of old Palestine when he returned to the Brook Kerith after the crucifixion to resume his shepherd's life, leading his flock over the hills from pasture to pasture, and what drama and clash of character when Paul came to the cavern of the Essenes seeking refuge from the Jews, who sought to drown him in the river Jordan! But whilst I tell of the shifting views of the journalists the reader is asking himself how Mudie and Smith regarded *The Brook Kerith,* and I am in the sad plight of not being able to tell him, my interest in these firms having dwindled till they were well-nigh forgotten. And their names might not have appeared in this Apologia if *The Brook Kerith* had not roused a new enemy as malignant as they, a convert to Rome, who applied to the magistrate at Bow Street for a warrant against the book on the grounds of blasphemy, which the magistrate refused to grant, saying it had long been decided that British subjects were free to accept Jesus as God or man as it pleased their fancy; he seems to have pointed out that if *The Brook Kerith* were forbidden, some ten or twenty, maybe a hundred thousand volumes would have to be interdicted, to which the applicant (so it was reported in the evening papers) replied that he would not have objected to the divinity of Christ being denied in a scientific book, but *The Brook Kerith* was a story. And whilst readers no doubt lay back in their chairs wondering what spite, malice, envy, hatred, direct or derivative, could have propelled a man on to such a forlorn quest as a warrant for the interdiction of a Syrian story related from a different point of view from the one which some churchmen think prevails in the synoptic gospels, I lay back in mine, asking myself how much money the applicant had had to pay for wasting the magistrate's time; and upon inquiry I learnt that the application probably cost him ten pounds. But

he must have known, said I, that the application would be dismissed; his solicitors must have told him; so why did he insist upon throwing away ten pounds? For the sake of an advertisement, perhaps. Whereupon I began to congratulate myself that my publisher was a man of restraint, for had he been more go-ahead he might have arranged for a copy of *The Brook Kerith* to be soaked in paraffin and burnt in Hyde Park in front of a cinematograph camera. If this had happened, I should have had to begin an action at law. Mr. Werner Laurie was, however, satisfied with the advertisement given to him gratuitously by Rome's convert—Rome gathers them all into her fold, especially those whose careers are behind them; and the application for a warrant faded from my mind till a music-hall singer brought an action against my publisher, Mr. Heinemann, for the use of the name, Lewis Seymour, in the title of my book: *Lewis Seymour and Some Women.* An old enemy or a new one, I said, and one that comes in strange guise, for the suggestion of success among the ladies should not be distasteful to one who gets his living *on the 'alls.* And thought linking into thought, it came to me to consider blackmail as a motive, but as time went by without bringing a proposal from Mr. Seymour's solicitors to settle the alleged libel out of court, the motive of blackmail was superseded by the advertisement motive; but this, like the blackmail motive, had to be dropped: For no fruitful advertisement can be gotten from a libel case dismissed with costs. "But you don't know that it will be dismissed with costs." "It will be, or the art of fiction will become extinct"—my words to Mr. Heinemann. "A new enemy has come up or an old one in disguise," I continued, "for this case does not square with the Artemus Jones case. The plaintiff only acquired the name of Lewis Seymour some three years ago, and he was three when *A Modern Lover* was published." "So the name is the

same in both books?" Mr. Heinemann inquired, and I answered that it was; whereupon Mr. Heinemann mused, and to awake him from his meditation, I said: "The story is the same; but the text was so poor that I had to rewrite it."

And during the months that had to pass before the case came into court, we often wondered in Bedford Street what the grounds for complaint would be, and when I called at Sir George Lewis's office and the case was discussed between us, I remember his saying: "If Lewis Seymour gets a verdict he will be in the position to bring another action." "How is that?" I asked. "By changing his name to Tom Jones he will be able to get a good mulct from the publishers of Fielding's novel, and novelists will have to call their characters A, B, C, D, or 1, 2, 3, 4." "But he cannot get a verdict," I interjected, and Sir George spoke of the possibility of the case being tried by a stupid jury and a weak judge. "And then," I answered, "we shall have to go to Appeal, else the art of fiction will become extinct in England, which is impossible, stories being as natural to man as breath. A verdict for Lewis Seymour must be reversed by the Court of Appeal; why then should he persist in this action? His solicitors must have told him that he will be defeated in the end if not in the beginning. A music-hall singer is rarely a rich man. Who then is putting up the money?" Sir George was unable to answer my questions, and when in course of time it came for me to go into the witness-box, I found myself confronted by a little, round, dumpling Jew, who began: "Now, Mr. Moore, you are a very superior sort of novelist, aren't you? All the same, I venture to think you would like to increase the number of your readers." "On the contrary," I answered, "I try to limit them;"

whereupon the little man began to fumble among his papers. After an interval he raised his head, and looking me full in the face, he said: "You tell the court that your aim is not to extend the number of your readers but to reduce them?" I acquiesced. "Now what does Mr. Heinemann say to that?" he inquired. "Mr. Heinemann is my publisher and not my literary confidant," I answered, and the judge informed Mr. Lewis Seymour's counsel that my conversations with Mr. Heinemann could not be taken as evidence. "You must put your question to Mr. Heinemann when he goes into the witness-box," he said to the little man, who again buried his face in his brief, and whose next question was: "You will admit that *Lewis Seymour and Some Women* is a suggestive title?" "Every good title," I answered, "is suggestive." "I do not mean suggestive in a general sense," he replied, "but in a particular." "The title is suggestive of men and women," I said, mentioning for his instruction that nearly all prose narrative in literature was about men and women, a view that Mr. Justice Darling developed in his address to the jury, making too much of the fact that my literary conventions were not those of Anthony Trollope, an almost aggressive attitude, which he would not have adopted towards the book if Mr. Heinemann's counsel had asked me how the original book, *A Modern Lover,* was received by the Press, for I should have been able to tell him that it was received everywhere with approbation, in *The Spectator* in a two-column review, an honour that a first novel seldom receives, and, a still rarer honour, in an article in *The Fortnightly Review.* As it cannot be disagreeable to Sir Henry Norman to be mentioned as the writer of the article, I will take this opportunity to thank him for it; and after this brief interruption in our narrative, I return to tell how the inadequate intelligence of our counsel obscured the case so completely that the jury

would have retired to consider their verdict with the very vaguest notion of the story they had been listening to all day, and the music-hall singer might have gotten his verdict, if Mr. Justice Darling had not rescued our case from the darkness into which the irrelevant speeches and the irrelevant cross-examination of Mr. Lewis Seymour and his two witnesses, a chauffeur and a hairdresser, had dragged it. His references to different writers, to Fielding and Thackeray, Dickens and Eliot, and to their use of names, were interesting and instructive, and it is to be regretted that the newspapers printed no adequate report of his speech, for sooner or later another case of a like kind will come into the Law Courts, and should the jury prove stupid and the judge weak, a verdict may be returned that will have to be revised in the Court of Appeal. As the jury retired to consider their verdict one of them reminded the judge as he went by that they had not read the book. "You have heard enough of it," the judge answered, and a few moments after the twelve returned with a verdict of no libel and no damages. "But shall we get our costs?" Mr. Heinemann asked Sir George Lewis, who answered that he would make every effort to get them; but a few days later he wrote to say that there was no chance of our getting our costs from Mr. Lewis Seymour, and two hundred and seventy-five pounds was generously subscribed by friends of literature, the larger portion being paid by Mr. Heinemann and me.

"But why, my dear George Moore," the reader asks, "do you stoop to rake up the details of a sordid law case?" "Because, dear reader, I think it necessary to draw your attention to the instinct that prompted me to tell Mr. Seymour's counsel that it was my intention to limit the circulation of my books rather than to increase

it." When I spoke the words I did not know how this was to be done, but the oftener I pondered them the clearer it became to me that my instinct had taken me by the hand. For thirty years I had resisted Mudie and Smith, a persecution sometimes violent and libellous, always continuous, and as Mr. Heinemann refused to believe that a new enemy had come to take their places, I said: "Well, we have nothing but our instincts to guide us; we must trust to them," and I brought the volume entitled *A Story-Teller's Holiday* to Mr. Werner Laurie with a few lines taking leave of the general public.

My apologia may be said to end here, but the occasion to speak of one's life work does not occur twice in a lifetime, and I would tell the reader that he is asked to begin the series with *Lewis Seymour and Some Women,* an admittedly youthful work, because *A Mummer's Wife,* my second book, is the book of a man. At one stride I had come into whatever talent I brought into the world; a stepping-stone was needed, and as none other but *Lewis Seymour and Some Women* presented itself I began to remember that though the craft of the writing be rudimentary, Mrs. Bentham, the maternal mistress, is among the rudiments of the world, and for that reason, perhaps, was not discovered by Trollope, Black, or Henry James, of whose portrait of a lady I would remind the reader, asking him to consider if she who flies from Florence (or was it Rome?) because an admirer kisses her (I think he succeeds in kissing only the brim of her hat), represents as deep humanity as Mrs. Bentham. And after having considered the portraits of two ladies, the critic will do well to pass on to *A Mummer's Wife,* for he will meet in this book a man in all his instincts and habits, a great hunch of unintellectualised humanity, about whom he may only say in disparagement that a better corre-

spondent for Dick Lennox than the almost hag who sends him hexameters would have been a beautiful girl in her teens; her love of Dick would have added an accent, one that might have revealed him more fully. But I refrained from remoulding this book, even from sharpening the minor characters, and I pass on to *Muslin* to tell the critic that he will find a hint of Esther Waters in Alice Barton. *Spring Days* will take him from Dublin to Sussex to make the acquaintance of some young women who have begun to look round, to the great distress of their parents; in *Esther Waters,* the scene is laid partly in Sussex, and he will find himself among servant girls, owners of race-horses, trainers and jockeys, and when the scene moves from Sussex to London he will watch by a bedside in Queen Charlotte's Hospital. In *Evelyn Innes* he will assist at the rehearsals and performances of Wagner's operas, and in the next book, *Sister Teresa,* he will penetrate into convents. Again the scene will change to Ireland, and this time the show will be peasants going forth to dig in lonely fields, returning home in the dusk, their loys over their shoulders, peasants driving pigs and bullocks to the fair on week-days, and peasants going to the grey church whose bell calls over desolate lands for worship. From *The Lake* the reader will learn how the Irish priest lives in single strictness, how he sometimes flies from it or takes to drink; in *Hail and Farewell* he will shake hands with dear Edward, and in *Memoirs of My Dead Life* he will read many love stories. The very name of *The Brook Kerith* evokes prophets, and in *A Story-Teller's Holiday* he will listen to yarns told by an Irish vagrant in his own rustic English. In *Confessions of a Young Man* and in *Avowals* (the volumes are printed together), the reader will hear some of the greatest painters of the nineteenth century talking of Impressionism

in the Nouvelle Athènes, and in Victor Hugo's house in the rue Blanche he will catch some echoes of Banville improvising at the poet's dinner table. In these and other books there will be a great number of courtesans of high and low degree; in *Héloise and Abélard* troubadours and relic-sellers foison, and in *In Single Strictness,* my last book up to the present, sex is revealed in perversities, women who do not love men and men who do not love women.

A great variety, no doubt, cries a reader, but style demands uniformity rather than variety. My dear reader, it is you who must decide whether the variety is moulded into one thought. But, the caviller insists, are all these books works of art? That your intentions may have been to write works of art I doubt not, but are they? Answer me yes or no, and not by equivocatory replies that you are debarred from opinions and such like. Your question, caviller, demands the definition of what art is, one that Tolstoy asked in vain, discovering, however, by persistent questions that he had come to detest art. But though art may not be defined, it is easily recognised, and there will always be some who will stop like the dowser and point, saying: "Here, and not there;" and these will tell the people in time to come how little or how much Apollo has guided my hand. But if I cannot claim art for my books I may be allowed to have accomplished yeoman service by returning from the conventions of *Vanity Fair* and *The Small House at Allington* to those that inspired the writing of Shakespeare's plays and the Bible. Conventions there must be; we find them in savage as well as in civilised life; but man's instincts are always invading the moral law, and may loosen the conventions of prose narrative still further, and this Apologia serve as a rallying cry for seekers of a thoughtful and personal prose.

George Moore.

PREFACE TO LEWIS SEYMOUR AND SOME WOMEN

A MODERN LOVER was the book of a young man who, in a moment of inspiration, hit upon an excellent anecdote, and being without literary skill to unfold it, devised a strange text out of his memories of Balzac, Zola, and Goncourt.

This is a severe but just appreciation of my first prose work, formed after looking through it with a view to republication.

"Extraordinary," I said to myself, "is the power of the anecdote; though imperfectly written and illustrated with characters only faintly sketched, this first book has survived the vicissitudes of thirty-five years." And I fell to thinking of a story that I heard from Granville Barker when he lay in bed in Dublin recovering from typhus fever: how, cycling, one day, he had overtaken a tall, gaunt man at the foot of a hill—Furnivall, who, being old, had stepped down from his machine, and Barker, desirous of talk, stepped down from his; and pushing their machines in front of them, they discoursed literature, probably one of Barker's plays—something that he had written or was minded to write. Barker relates that he tarried over the mentality of his characters, and that Furnivall cried out: "Get on with the story: it's the story that counts."

Furnivall is right. Style and presentation of character and a fine taste in the selection of words are secondary gifts; and secondary gifts may be acquired, may be developed at least, but the story-teller comes into the world fully equipped almost from the first, finding stories wherever he goes as instinctively as the reaper in the cornfield discovers melodies that the professor of counterpoint and harmony strives after vainly in his university. In like manner Robert Louis Stevenson strove after

stories, suspecting all the while that his were not instinctive melodies. He says in one of his essays that the nearest equivalent to literature in music is the story. I should be puzzled to give a reason for my belief that a doubt regarding himself is implicit in these words, but I feel them to be full of suspicion that his gift of story-telling was not as natural as the reaper's, who sings a song in the morning in the cornfield and tells a story at night, hushing the fireside, for his is a heartfelt story, significant of human life as it passes down the ages, an artless thing, a wayside weed, but one that we turn to and find a pleasure in when wearied of artificial flowers. Stevenson's are cunningly fashioned and coloured, for he was a great man of letters with every literary gift but one that he could well have done without, so well, indeed, that we must all regret the time he wasted among islands, lying about veiled in grey and azure haze, peopled with dummy pirates and slave-drivers: poor substitutes, indeed, for his own winning personality. As long as he was faithful to himself he wrote with a teeming fancy; but as soon as he left thc circle of his own experience he wandered in wastes so desert that it may be doubted if Arabia could furnish more barren spots than his stories, and I offer up thanks that he did not try to introduce a narrative into *The Amateur Emigrant.* Everything is there: atmosphere, characters, wit, humour, fine perception of life; but all these admirable qualities would have been destroyed by one drop of story. "How extraordinary!" we say, and fall to thinking. But however closely we look into Robert Louis Stevenson's talent, we find that we cannot unriddle it and say why a man of such high literary attainments should show himself inferior again and again to the ignorant harvester. The good fairy came in at the window with her presents, and as soon as she had laid them by the child's cradle she departed; but no sooner was she out of sight than the wicked fairy descended by the chimney, and, standing

by the cradle, said: "I cannot take away the gifts that the good fairy has given thee, but I can blight them for ever in thine eyes. Thou shalt never write a story that does not seem toshery to thee." If this fairy-tale explanation of a strange stint be deemed inacceptable by grown-up people, to satisfy them we will say that the personality of Robert Louis Stevenson was so intense that the light he shed blinded him to all other human personalities.

Without human feeling and sentiment, story-telling becomes almost meaningless; and not finding these qualities in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, The Master of Ballantræ, Catriona,* and *Weir of Hermiston,* I railed against the admiration of my friends for a truly great literary genius, and strove to discredit him in my critical writings. But if our acquaintance, instead of beginning with these dry books, had begun with *Travels with a Donkey,* all would have been different. We would have become friends. My life would have been enriched, and I should have had the pleasure of saying to his face: "I have just read the most entrancing book in the English language." But Fate was not kind to me. It was only last year that I read *Travels with a Donkey.* Immediately afterwards I read *The Inland Voyage,* and my pleasure in this second book was no less than my pleasure in the first. After that I read all Stevenson's essays, and look forward to writing an essay in which I shall try to reveal the genius of Robert Louis Stevenson as I see it now. . . . The little monosyllable "now" reminds me that I have indulged in a long digression, and that my present purpose is a preface to *Lewis Seymour and Some Women*—a much less delectable task than an essay on Robert Louis Stevenson, for *Lewis Seymour and Some Women* is a story, and stories do not need prefaces, but stories cannot be published without publishers, and publishers like prefaces, so here goes.

Three women undertake to work for a young man's welfare: a work-girl, a rich woman, and a lady of high

degree. All contribute something, and the young man is put on a high pedestal. One worshipper retains her faith, one loses hers partially, and one altogether. "An anecdote that the folk behind me invented, and that the artist in front of them developed, and so true and beautiful," I said, "that it has carried a badly written book into my collected works." And many days were passed in doleful meditations and qualms of conscience that the religious man who can appreciate the fear of those that have sinned against the Holy Ghost, but is without sympathy for those that have sinned against Apollo, will not understand. Our gods are different, but our trouble is the same no matter from what source it proceeds. Again and again I took up *A Modern Lover* and threw it from me after reading a page, saying, "Such jargon as this is beyond hope of revision"; and weary with argument and striving with myself, I turned quickly out of my secretary's room, leaving the poor girl alarmed lest a morbid sense of literary imperfection should impinge upon and undermine my usual excellent health. But we are so constituted that we cannot remain permanently unhappy. And one day, while bathing, it occurred to me suddenly that though it was impossible to revise the text of *A Modern Lover,* a new novel might be written round an anecdote which appealed to my æsthetic sense to-day as much as it did when I first discovered it thirty-five years ago. "A new book," I said, "may be remoulded about it—a book that will need a new title, *Lewis Seymour and Some Women.* A delightful title, if not as original as my many other titles, full of suggestion"; and the new book having taken possession of me, I stepped out of my bath with all kinds of lovely scenes rising in the imagination, and so impatient to be written, that I dried and dressed myself hurriedly and ran downstairs to begin the dictation while the rashers were roasting.

After breakfast the dictation was resumed, and the composition flowed on steadily and easily, swayed by the anecdote; descriptions and dialogue rolled themselves into my secretary's notebook like a summer sea over a long white strand with here and there a rock around which the tide swirled day after day—halcyon days of fifteen hundred, two thousand, sometimes two thousand five hundred words in the day. A joyous composition *Lewis Seymour and Some Women* was, surely; begun and finished in three months, written out of the heart's abundance without interruptions of barren days of doubts. I take my hat off to *A Modern Lover,* for it was to it, my first book, that I owe my last literary happiness, and fall to telling that it was not till the last pages were written that trouble began again. Not till then did I ask myself if the book I had written could be described as a new book. Which is it—an old-time lamp with a smoking wick that I have endeavoured to trim, or a new lamp full of oil and burning brightly?

My heart gave back no answer; but at last a friend said: "However much you may change the book, some will say you have not changed it enough." "And if I were to publish it under the title of *A Modern Lover?*" I asked. My friend answered: "If you were to do that, as many critics would say that you were foisting a new book upon the public in place of an old one—a thing, it would be said, you had no right to do." "But your answer, dear friend, doesn't carry me any further"; to which he answered: "Is *Lewis Seymour and Some Women* to you a new book or an old book revised?" "To me it is a new book from end to end." "Then," he said, "call it a new book, only tell your story clearly in your preface, omitting no detail."

This I have striven to do, and I hope the small but select circle of readers who find pleasure in my writings will approve this decision, arrived at after due consideration by myself and competent authority.

LEWIS SEYMOUR AND SOME WOMEN

CHAP. I.

"YOU can have it for fifteen shillings."

"I dare say, but I don't intend to buy any more water-colours of you."

"You have hardly looked at this one. . . ."

"No, I really can't; I have at least a hundred and odd drawings by you, and half of them aren't even numbered."

"If you don't buy this one I'm afraid you'll never have the chance of buying another."

At these words the picture dealer, a tall gaunt man, white-haired and bold, turned and stared at a tall thin young man whose melting eyes had often provoked his sympathies. There was a strange glitter in these dark blue-grey eyes, and the young man seemed to be aware of the influence his eyes could exercise, for he opened them very wide and fixed them upon Bendish. His eyes had wheedled many a sovereign out of the picture dealer, and the young man's high forehead, prominent at each temple, had somehow put a belief into Bendish's mind that Lewis Seymour would discover a new genius to the world one of these days. He had been expecting him to break out into an altogether original style of painting for the last three years, but Lewis had so far failed to realise Bendish's hopes, and the painting that he was now offering for sale did not differ from the two hundred water-colours that had preceded it. "Why should I buy?" the old man was asking himself, and reading hesitation in

the dealer's eyes, Lewis Seymour repeated his words:

"You had better buy now, for I'm afraid you will never have a chance of buying another."

"You mean, Mr. Seymour, that if I don't buy your drawing you'll fling yourself over one of the bridges. How many times do you think I've heard that story, and where do you think I'd be if I had listened to it every time it was told? In the workhouse."

"I suppose that is so," Lewis answered; "all the same, what I say is nearer the truth than you think for." And he looked into old Bendish's piercing eyes inquiringly. "He thinks he can get it for seven and six," Lewis said to himself; and while watching Bendish's long gnarled nose, he held his tongue in the hope that silence might exasperate him to suggest a price. But the picture dealer had conquered the light temptation to succour the young man that had oppressed him, and he pretended a close investigation of a pile of engravings, holding each up to the light for a moment, and then throwing it back into the heap.

"He is trying to pretend he is busy so that he may get rid of me," Lewis muttered, and his heart began to fail him: "or it may be that he will not buy at any price. But how can this be," he said to himself, "for he would always buy at a price."

His need was greater to-day than it had ever been, and in his nervousness he looked round and began to wonder how much money Bendish had spent upon the multifarious and incoherent collection piled about the walls: to ask himself what taste or principle guided the picture dealer in his purchases. Why that Virgin in red and blue draperies? And if he liked that kind of picture, why did he buy that set of racing sketches? And if he liked the racing sketches, why did he buy that group of peasants collected before an altar bowing before the Host that the priest, standing under a canopy, exhibited

to the congregation? Lewis recognised this picture as a possible *Goya*, but did Bendish? And if he liked that picture, why did he buy those modern pictures—the pictures of the school that called themselves "The Moderns"? How did he reconcile Goya with Thompson, from whom he had bought a hundred pictures and sketches? And to please old Bendish and to persuade him to purchase his water-colour, Lewis began to speak of Thompson, the leader of the modern movement. And it seemed to him that the trick was about to succeed, for Bendish broke the depressing silence at once. "Thompson," he said, "has come along wonderfully," and he held forth saying that if the new school calling themselves "The Moderns" ever succeeded in gaining the public taste, the Fitzroy Square collection would excite the envy of the *dilettanti* of Europe.

Lewis looked at him and wondered. How could a man talk of a new artistic movement, and at the same time buy every sort of rubbish if the seller abated his price sufficiently? "He is as ignorant of art as a carp," he said to himself; "he wouldn't know a *millet* from a *Corot*, a *Raphael* from a *Rubens*, and yet his pleasure is to collect pictures. But what is his ignorance or his wisdom to me if he will not buy from me?" And he waited an occasion of getting back to the subject of his water-colour drawings.

At last his chance came: the old man changing the conversation, abruptly asked him why he had deserted the new school? This was not so; as Lewis explained he could show a drawing as modern as anything Thompson had done, and he searched his portfolio. But the drawing he drew forth failed to persuade Bendish out of his ugly humour; and Lewis was forced to throw himself upon the old man's charity.

"I shall not be able to live through the next week if you do not advance a few shillings."

"I shan't buy any more at present," Bendish returned, and he spoke so sharply that Lewis felt that he would be prejudicing future chances if he persisted. But had he any future beyond the next few hours? A look of horror and helplessness passed over the young man's face; he said nothing, but took up his drawings, leaving the old man still fumbling through his portfolios in the failing light.

It was not raining, but there was a mist about, and occasionally a leaf fluttered down into the sloppy street.

"I can bear it no longer," he muttered; "the struggle is too great. It is frightful. Life is not worth it. The most I can hope for is a bare existence; life isn't worth the struggle." At the same moment he experienced in imagination the chill of the water and its taste. "But, after all, the moment isn't a long one. Can I face it? And if I can't?"

His resources were exhausted, his clothes were pawned, and he did not know who would lend him a sixpence; he had borrowed till he had turned every friend into a creditor, and he remembered that everybody avoided him.

"There is no hope, not a particle." He only saw the passengers along the street as phantoms, and he walked like one in a nightmare till the light, which the flaring windows of half a dozen public-houses threw over the wet pavement, awoke him, and he realised again, and more bitterly, that he was lost. A few moments after he was caught in a crowd that poured through the entrance of a fashionable theatre, and the clear voices of two young men sounded shrill in his ears.

They were in evening dress, and the white cravats and patent-leather shoes brought back to him the dream of life and pleasure and luxury he so ardently desired, and out of which fate was hurrying him. "But is it true that I'm going to the river . . . to the river," he repeated, unable to believe that the river was the only

possible loosening of the coil in which he was entangled; yet it did not seem to him that he was going to die that night, and, losing sight of his own personality, suddenly he began to see the scene as a picture to be called "Suicide."

"In the foreground," he said, "just out of the way of a fashionable crowd going into a theatre, two young men discuss whether they shall seek amusement there or elsewhere, whilst a ragged wight stands reading a notice posted on the walls:

"Two Pounds Reward.

"Yesterday, at nine o'clock, a young man drowned himself from the parapet of Waterloo Bridge. The above reward will be paid to anyone giving such information as will lead to the recovery of the body."

The idea fascinated him, and he wondered if it would be possible to make plain in a picture that the poor man reading the notice recognised the fact that dead he was was worth two pounds, but alive he was merely an outcast, in whom no one took the least interest.

He continued to think of his picture all the way down Catherine Street till he came to the Strand, and remembered suddenly that the river was not many yards away. Should he jump from the parapet or steal down a flight of steps to the water's edge? Again his thoughts drifted, and looking at the women as they went by wrapped up in silk, the rose-colour of their feet visible through the open lace stockings as they stepped from their broughams, he began to wonder how it was that none of this elegant sensuality was for him. All these people had money, and there must be many among the fashionable crowd that would like to save a young artist, perhaps a man of genius. Such things had happened before, and he looked into the faces going by, hoping to awaken the

heart of the richest and most beautiful woman to his necessity. If he could only make his necessity known; but that was what he could not do. It seemed to him that a certain woman was about to speak, but a man followed her, and they went into the theatre, leaving him in his misfortune; and still wondering what the spectacle meant, he stood looking vacantly into the passing faces, hoping to awaken pity in a passer-by, though he knew there was no hope.

At last he was hustled into the street, and then, waking up suddenly, he found he had to cross it to avoid being run over. But would it not have been better to have allowed the omnibus to pass over him? It would have saved him from the pain of coming to a decision. Be that as it may, he was nearer the Thames than he was before. He was in Wellington Street, and at the end of it within a few yards was the river.

"I suppose I am going to drown," he said, "or else go to the workhouse—one or the other"; and leaning his arms on the parapet, he examined the countless crustations of the stone sparkling in the rays of the electric light. But in a moment remembering himself, and thinking his conduct unworthy of a man who contemplated committing suicide, he looked down into the whirl of the water, and it began to seem to him that he really desired peace, and he wished that somebody as miserable as he were by, determined to drown herself, any woman or young girl for preference. They might bind themselves together with a scarf. He dwelt on the idea, thinking it a beautiful one, saying to himself: "To-morrow or to-day—what matters, since death is the end of all?" And then, the magnetism of the water taking possession of him, he fell to thinking that his last day had come and gone; he saw monuments, bridges, and lights in a mist that seemed to descend, and in turn to pass into the river. Clutching on to the parapet, he tried to climb

over it; but a policeman's step warned him in time, and while waiting for the officer's disappearance into the mist, he remembered that the day was Friday: to-morrow Gwynnie Lloyd would have fifteen shillings; and thinking she would not refuse to share it with him, he stood irresolute, much relieved at the respite, though somewhat disappointed to find that he lacked courage to free himself from the disagreeable coil; for after all, though she might lend him five shillings, Gwynnie could not support him. He would have to apply himself to the task of getting his own living. But he had tried, and failed. Ah, if it hadn't been for that policeman, the trouble would all be over . . . by now.

CHAP. II.

"I WONDER if I should have had the courage?" he asked as he threaded his way through the crowds of girls and boys who filled the roadway. "That I shall never know. But something may happen to my advantage between this and next week. Old Bendish may not be in such a bad humour"; and he fell to laying plans till he reached his lodging, a room above a hardware shop. The landlord was now bargaining with an old woman who would not give the price he asked for a kettle. He moved aside to let Lewis pass, and his little daughter ran forward, tottering under the weight of a large yellow cat.

"When are you going to paint my picture with pussy, Mr. Seymour?"

"To-morrow, perhaps, if you are a good girl," Lewis answered; and with a nod to his landlady, he went up the staircase and on the top floor struck a match. The match showed two doors almost facing each other, and as he unlocked his the other opened and a girl's voice asked:

"Is that you, Lewis?"

"Yes; come in." And shading the match with his hand from the draught, he succeeded in lighting his tallow candle that stood on a table covered with paints and brushes. "You have been waiting for me, Gwynnie?" he asked, and she guessed from his manner that he had not sold his sketches. "Bendish would not buy anything; he may next week—you know how capricious he is. I told him if he didn't advance a few shillings that I should have to drown. But he didn't seem to care, and if it hadn't been for a policeman——"

"Do you not know, Lewis, that God forbids us to destroy ourselves?"

"Does He? Where? Not in the Bible. You're a good sweet girl, Gwynnie; we're young and in good health, but all is useless for the want of a few pounds."

"Have a little patience," said Gwynnie, trembling at the idea of losing Lewis.

"Patience!" Lewis replied, sinking into a chair. "Have I not had patience? I've been patient to the last shilling. Here is the last."

Gwynnie would have liked a good cry, but she felt it was her duty to help him.

"Never mind," she said, trying to assume a cheerful voice; "I shall have fifteen to-morrow, and you are sure to sell something soon. And now," she said, restraining her tears with difficulty, "you'll promise me never to attempt such a wicked thing again. You say you're fond of me; if you were you'd not talk of drowning yourself. What should I do without you?" She continued to persuade him, and he promised to begin her portrait next morning.

"A fancy sketch," she said, "something that will please—a fairy, a sixteen-year-old fairy."

"Are you sixteen?" he asked, and he studied the lines of her figure: a rosebud, it seemed to him, just beginning to brighten, and to swell in its leaves.

"Yes, I'm sixteen," she answered.

A step was heard on the stairs, a knock came at the door, and without waiting for an answer, the stranger pushed the door open and entered.

"I have something for you, a commission," he said, distorting his long mouth into a laugh, and showing a quavering tooth. "I called in at Mr. Carver's to-day, you know, in Bond Street, and found him in an awful fix: he has an order to supply some decorative panels; he promised that one should be ready by Monday—in fact, it will be of no use if it isn't. The gentleman he relied on to do them is ill, another is out of town. 'Lewis Seymour is our man,' I cried. 'Right you are,' he answered, and I've brought you the panel, and I'm going to pay you liberal; you'll have more to do if it suits."

"How much?" asked Lewis.

"Well, this is what I want done," Mr. Jacobs said, taking the panel from out of a piece of paper: "I want you to paint me a Venus rising from the sea with a few Cupids, and it must be at Mr. Carver's on Monday at twelve o'clock."

"How much is it to be—a fiver?"

"A fiver!" repeated Mr. Jacobs, "you're joking." It was arranged that three pounds was to be the price, and Mr. Jacobs was about to go, when Lewis said:

"Could you let me have a trifle in advance? I'm very hard up."

"I really couldn't—I've only a few coppers on me; besides, it's Mr. Carver who will pay you; but I'm sorry not to be able to oblige."

"Couldn't you manage half a sovereign?"

"No, no," cried the old man testily; "I'd sooner give the panel to someone else"; and seeing that he would not give him anything, Lewis fetched the light to show him downstairs.

"On Monday morning at twelve—no mistakes. It 'ull be no use later. And mind you make it look 'fetching': it's for a gentleman who likes them young," said Mr. Jacobs, as he shuffled downstairs.

"Well, Lewis," Gwynnie exclaimed, "didn't I tell you it would all come right? Three pounds, and prospects of more work—isn't it fine?"

"Three pounds isn't much—he ought to have given me five; but never mind, let's have some supper on the strength of it."

"It's foolish to be extravagant just because you've had a bit of luck; that's what gets you into such trouble."

"I've a shilling to-night, and you'll have fifteen to-morrow, and I shall have three pounds on Monday; it's all right. A couple of sausages and a pint of porter?"

Gwynnie demurred, but she did not insist, for she was afraid to damp his enthusiasm.

"I'll fetch them," she said, and while she was away he began to dream his composition and to think of some drawings he would be able to make use of. He thought of some engravings, and in a few minutes Gwynnie returned with the sausages, to which she had added a couple of baked potatoes. And as they supped he tried to explain to her what the picture would be, but she did not seem to like it, and he railed against her prejudices. "One would think you were a Quaker, whereas thou'rt but a Methodist," he said to her, at which they both laughed and then bade each other good-night.

CHAP. III.

IT was at eight o'clock next morning that Gwynnie and Lewis parted. Gwynnie went to the shop in Regent Street where she was employed, and Lewis pulled forward his easel. He thought that he would be able to

dodge up a very plausible birth of Venus by fitting the legs of one drawing on to the body of another, and he could arrange a pair of arms tossing back a cloud of hair, from an engraving. At first it seemed as if he could do this, but after working a couple of hours he began to feel dissatisfied with the movement; and then after much rubbing out he thought he had got the hang of the thing. But as soon as he began to model, the drawing began to seem faulty. He shifted the arms, raising and lowering them, thinking every minute he was coaxing the figure into rhythm, till at last, half mad with fear and disappointment, he scraped the panel clean.

There was no use in trying any more; he couldn't do it without a model, and he had no money to pay for one: there was an end of it, and leaning back in his chair his thoughts reverted to suicide. If he had had the courage to take the plunge it would be all over now. . . . Gwynnie would be bringing home fifteen shillings; he would borrow five to hire a model. A great waste of money that would be, for she was just the model he wanted, but she wouldn't sit. "So I shall have to borrow five shillings"; and he walked up and down the room expecting her about six, and it was about half an hour after six when she bounced into the room, her face rippling with smiles that disappeared as her eyes fell on the panel.

"Why," she exclaimed, "what have you been doing to-day, Lewis? Where's the picture?"

"I spoilt it—it wouldn't do. I wiped it out."

"Oh, Lewis, how could you!" and her eyes filled with tears.

"I'm as much cut up about it as you, but it is no good, I can't do it without a model, and was thinking of asking you to lend me a few shillings to pay for one."

"Of course I will," she answered, putting her hand in her pocket. Alas! Her purse was not there, and

pale with fright she said: "I'm afraid my pocket has been picked." And divining his thoughts, Gwynnie flung her arms about his shoulders exclaiming: "Lewis, you promised me never to think of anything so wicked again!"

"My dear girl," he said, putting her arms aside, "I'm thinking of nothing; we're very unlucky, that's all."

"You've made up your mind to kill yourself."

"Well, what if I have? I can't wait till starvation finishes me."

"Lewis, how can you? What should I do without you?"

"It's no use making this fuss! Will you sit for this picture? Or else, even if I don't drown, I shall starve!"

"Take off all my clothes and stand naked before you? Anything——"

"Yes, anything but what will save me!"

"I'd do anything for you, Lewis; but——"

"You know," he said, taking her hand, "that I love you, Gwynnie, and that I wouldn't ask you to do anything I thought wrong. I assure you it is only a question of art, nothing more. It can't be wrong to save our lives. Remember, neither you nor I have any money; and you heard what Jacobs said—that this would bring other orders, and then we shall have lots of money, and shall be able to marry. You know I love you——"

"How do you mean I must sit, Lewis—quite naked?"

"It is better to sit quite naked than half naked."

"But perhaps my figure isn't good enough?"

"Yes it is. You've a very pretty figure."

"You're not to speak like that, Lewis, if it is only a question of art. But you won't think I'm a bad girl if I do sit for you?"

"Bad girl?" he replied. "Good heavens! You're sitting so that we may save our lives."

"Yes, that it is," she said.

"You will have to sit a long while."

"That won't matter."

"But it will," he answered; "sitting is very tiring. I do hope you won't mind."

"I will sit for you as long as you require me. When——"

"We had better begin about eight. But the room will be very cold in the morning. If I had some money I'd go out and buy some coal."

Gwynnie searched again in her pocket, and found two shillings. She gave them to him, saying:

"I suppose you've had nothing to eat?"

"I've been at work all day," Lewis answered, "and haven't had time to feel hungry. We'll go out and have some supper together."

"I don't think I should care to go out again."

"But, Gwynnie, you haven't had any dinner."

"Yes, I have; and if I'm to sit to you to-morrow I'd better go to bed. You say that sitting is tiring. At eight, then. Shall I knock at your door, or will you knock at mine?"

CHAP. IV.

WHEN Lewis knocked at her door she answered, "In a minute, Lewis"; and she came across the landing holding a coarse shawl about her shoulders and body. Her legs and feet were bare, and Lewis, dissembling any interest in her appearance, hoped that she would not find the room too cold.

"No; the room is quite warm. I'm ready when you are," she answered; and placing her in the centre of the room where the light would fall upon her directly, he stood waiting for her to throw her shawl away. She seemed irresolute, but, as if ashamed of herself, she

threw her shawl aside almost disdainfully and waited for him to begin his painting, never suspecting that he would have to place her in the pose, and that to do this he would have to come near and to handle her.

It seemed for a long time that she would not be able to take the pose; she was so nervous that she could hardly understand what he said to her. Her nervousness made him nervous, but it was she that compelled him to try again and again till the pose was found.

"Now," he said, "if you can stand like that. Do you think you can?"

"Yes, I think I can," she answered; but those who are not professional models will stand still for a quarter of an hour or so, and then fall suddenly from their full height without a word of warning, and Lewis, being aware of this, watched carefully; and at the first quivering of the muscles of her face, threw her shawl over her shoulders and helped her to a chair.

When the faintness had passed off she cried a little, but was consoled at hearing the drawing was going on beautifully; and leaving her to recover, Lewis returned to his drawing and sat considering it thoughtfully till Gwynnie could take the pose again. It seemed to him that she did so a little reluctantly, and that it caused her perhaps a bitterer pang than before; but we are always ignorant of what is passing in another's mind—Gwynnie was as indifferent now as a pack-horse.

Having assured himself by measuring that his drawing was in proportion, he took up his palette, and if Gwynnie had been able to hold out till three o'clock he could have finished it all from nature; but although she took long rests of twenty minutes, she had after two o'clock to go to her room, and lie down.

He had still to paint in the sky, sea, the Cupids, and he worked till he began to fear he might spoil his picture if he continued it any longer.

He carried it to the lightest part of the room, and it seemed to him to be one of the best things he had done. "Things done under difficulties are often the best," he said as he looked at it from the right and then from the left side. "The drawing is all there," he said—"it only wants a little finishing," and if he could get Gwynnie to give him half an hour to-morrow before she went to business, he could finish it to his satisfaction; but, remembering how much she had suffered for him, he began to grow sentimental, and determined not to ask her. It might be safer to complete it from memory; he had gotten the essentials. It was certainly one of the best things he had done, and it was strange to have painted his best picture the day after he had thought of drowning himself. Everything pawned, and not a shilling in the house—lots of men had done away with themselves for less cause. It was very probable that he would not have been able to bear up any longer, but it was all right now. Gwynnie had done him a great service—there was no doubt about that—and vowing she should be compensated, he began to consider his project of marrying her, for she was one of those women who would think that the only man she could marry was the man who first saw her naked. "Every man and woman is different," he said, "yet we are all alike in essentials. But what are essentials?" His meditations on the subject were brought to a close by his belly, which told him sharply that he had eaten but a crust of bread all the day long. And Gwynnie, too, had eaten nothing; so he resolved that they should go out together and have some supper. But Gwynnie slept so soundly that he hesitated to awaken her, and went out with the intention of returning in half an hour.

But Lewis's half hour was a long one, and before he came back Gwynnie awoke—partly from cold, partly from hunger. She had not eaten anything for nearly

twenty hours, and to quench hunger she drank a little water which relieved her, and groping her way into the studio sought for the matches. Many broke under her hand, but at length one flared up and she lighted a candle, and stood looking at the picture she had sat for—recognising herself in it; anybody who had seen her would recognise her in it. Her first thought was to smear out the likeness, but in doing this she might spoil the picture, thereby making herself answerable for Lewis's life.

She came back once or twice to bid good-bye to the studio, where she had found some happiness and a struggle. It cost her many a pang to go, but she felt that if she stayed other temptations would result from what she had done; and, fearful of her own strength to resist, she sought safety in flight.

CHAP. V.

AND when Lewis jumped off his bed next morning, and when he had admired his picture—the drawing, the colour, the composition—he remembered Gwynnie. Where was she?—And not finding her in her room, he supposed that she had gone to work; and having gotten the time from a lodger, and finding it later than he thought (for it was ten o'clock), he bought a paper collar, brushed his clothes, tied his necktie so as to conceal the shabbiness of his shirt, and started for Bond Street with his picture under his arm.

He was told that Mr. Carver would see him when disengaged; at present he was, as Lewis could see, showing some pictures to a tall, aristocratic-looking woman, who, judging from the dealer's obsequious politeness, was a well-known customer.

As she raised her arm to point out some merits or

defects in the picture before her, the movement dragged the long sleeveless grey cashmere mantle closer to her figure, and showed the shape of her broad shoulders and delicate waist; the fur border made the hand look smaller even than it really was. A somewhat coarse, large mouth contrasted strangely with the delicate refinement of the nose and the beautiful temples, broad and white. Her black hair wound up hastily, a graceful untidiness slipped from under the dark velvet hat, and she looked so aristocratic and dignified in her clothes and demeanour that it seemed to Lewis impossible that anyone could exist whose right it was to kiss her lips and call her by her Christian name.

The picture dealer was now busy trying to sell to her a Venetian mirror which hung on the wall opposite, and the lady examined it so attentively that Lewis thought she was going to buy it, but, as he looked from her to the mirror itself, he saw with surprise that she was examining him. Their eyes met for a moment, and then she turned to ask Mr. Carver some questions anent a small picture which stood on a tall Chinese vase in the far corner. And to exhibit the little picture in a better light Mr. Carver carried it over to where Lewis was sitting, asking Lewis politely to move a little on one side, and then, holding the picture under the light, he began:

"Yes, Mrs. Bentham, this is a very sweet landscape by Corot; I can guarantee it. I had it of a man who bought it from the artist himself—you know his signature?"

She made some casual remarks, and then her eyes wandered from the picture to Lewis.

The women who like rugged men would have said that his hands were too long and white, his eyes of too soft a blue, and that the languid poses his limbs fell into naturally were too girl-like. But beauty in rags touches

the heart and imagination, and already Mrs. Bentham felt singularly curious to know who he was.

The occasion was ready at hand. She had seen him unpacking his picture; it was there before her.

"Oh, what a charming picture!" she said; "and how prettily the Cupids are grouped round the Venus! An expensive picture, Mr. Carver; are you going to buy it?"

"It is a commission I had from a gentleman; he ordered it to fit a corner of a smoking-room," replied Mr. Carver.

Mr. Carver was a large, stout man, and, like most men of his calling, he was observant, and having caught Mrs. Bentham more than once looking at the young painter, suspected already that she was interested in him.

But afraid to introduce him because of his shabby appearance, he resolved, seeing that Mrs. Bentham still continued to look at Lewis, to adopt a middle course.

"You see, Mr. Seymour," he said in his pompous way, "listeners do sometimes hear good of themselves."

Lewis blushed, and Mrs. Bentham pretended to look a little confused.

"I'm sure I think the picture charming," she said, half to Lewis, half to the dealer.

Lewis's heart was in his mouth, and he nervously tried to button his collar.

"I should like to buy this picture," said Mrs. Bentham, as she advanced to examine the Cupids more minutely; "but don't you think there's too much sea and sky for the size of the panel?"

Lewis blushed red, and felt so ashamed of his clothes that he could scarcely say a word.

Mrs. Bentham was disappointed at his obstinacy, and, after another attempt to get him into conversation, she turned away, thinking him a very uninteresting young man. But at this moment Lewis caught Mr. Carver's eyes upon him, and as a gleam of sunlight awakens a bird,

he recovered himself. And the spell being broken, he chattered pleasantly.

"Ha, ha!" thought the picture dealer, as he played with his watch-chain. "So, Mrs. Bentham, you like my painters better than my pictures. Well, never mind; I dare say I shall be able to turn your tastes to my advantage, no matter how they lie."

For a moment his face wore the expression of a man who has done a good action, but as he talked to his shopman it grew more reflective. An idea had struck him. He remembered that some time ago—some six months ago, but that didn't matter—Mrs. Bentham had asked him if he knew an artist who would, under her direction, decorate her ballroom from a series of drawings she had collected for the purpose; she had never put her delightful scheme for the decoration of her ballroom into execution, and Mr. Carver felt that the golden time had come for her to do so.

A few prefatory remarks on decorative art were necessary before he reminded her of her ballroom, and suggested Mr. Seymour as the very person to whom such a work might be confidently entrusted. Æsthetics were Mr. Carver's foible, and Lewis had aroused Mrs. Bentham's sympathy; the idea that she might help him was already stirring in her heart, but she was not prepared for so swift a transition from her dream of possibilities to an actual opportunity. The vague desire, in which she had found pleasure a moment earlier, frightened her when it took shape in Mr. Carver's suggestion, and she received it with silent astonishment, mingled with desire and fear, for if she gave this commission to the young man she must ask him as a visitor to Claremont House, and the dealer began to think that his desire had outstripped hers. And this was so, but their desires were, all the same, travelling along the same road. And being a man of ready wit, he was pleased to let the question rest for the present and

to talk about Corot. But the idea of the decorations seemed to sing in Mrs. Bentham's ears, and afraid that her silence had wounded Lewis, she returned to the subject of the ballroom. She glanced at him, she hesitated, and eventually, not knowing well what to do, she promised to call again in the course of the afternoon, and wishing them both good-morning, got into her carriage and vanished like a good fairy.

Lewis stood looking after her in amazement, until Mr. Carver tapped him on the shoulder.

"Well, my young friend," he said, affecting an American accent, "I guess you are in good luck; you've only to play your cards well"; then, pulling his long whiskers, he leaned over and whispered: "She has seven thousand a year, and has been separated from her husband for the last ten years."

Lewis did not answer, not knowing quite what the dealer meant.

And after watching him for a few moments, his head thrown back in the fashion of a picture he had once possessed of Napoleon surveying the field of Austerlitz, he said:

"I'm afraid you're too green; but if you weren't——"

He did not finish his phrase; he seemed to see a conquered world at his feet. At last, awaking from his reverie, the dealer said, surveying Lewis attentively:

"You owe me a big debt of gratitude."

"Which I will repay you one of these days if I get on as well as you seem to think I shall. But do you think she'll give me the work to do that you and she were speaking about?"

"Oh, that I can't say!" said Mr. Carver, murmuring like one waiting for an inspiration; "but I think it quite possible that she may interest herself in you—that is to say, if I speak of you as perhaps I may be tempted to do."

Lewis ventured to hope that Mr. Carver would be so tempted.

At last he went over to the till, and taking out three sovereigns, gave them to Lewis.

"This is what I owe you. Call here to-morrow morning; I shall see her this afternoon, and will speak to her on the subject."

Lewis thanked him for his kind intentions, and asked him if he were satisfied with the panel.

"Oh, perfectly, perfectly! It is very satisfactory indeed."

"Then you will give me another to do?"

"Yes, I shall have two ready for you to-morrow—that is to say, if nothing comes of the matter in hand," he added.

And stunned with the shake the sudden turn of Fortune's wheel had given him, Lewis walked towards the Strand, wondering how it was that Mr. Carver knew so well what Mrs. Bentham would do.

As he turned into Pall Mall he met Frazer, one of a group of painters who styled themselves "The Moderns." And Lewis continued to relate his adventure till he noticed that Frazer was absorbed in contemplating the lights and shadows in the streets; then he stopped.

The day was sloppy, but the sun shone between the showers, and the violet roofs of Waterloo Place glittered, scattering around reflections of vivid colour. A strip of sky, of a lighter blue than the slates, passed behind the dome of the National Gallery, the top of which came out black against a black cloud that held the approaching downpour.

"You say that my sunset effects are too violet in tone. Look yonder!" exclaimed the enthusiast; "isn't everything violet—walls, pools, and carriages? I can see nothing that isn't violet."

Lewis admitted that there were some violet tones in

the effect, but denied that it was composed exclusively of that colour.

As they walked the violet question was argued passionately, but whereas Frazer's whole soul was in the discussion, Lewis was thinking if he should invite his friend to come with him to a bar-room and have something to eat.

And Frazer, who had had only a dried herring at a fish-stand for dinner the night before, assented, hoping that he might be able to bring Lewis back to the fold, for Lewis had been a "Modern" once, about a year ago.

"Where shall we dine? The Gaiety bar?"

The place was full of people lolling in groups and couples along a counter, with girls all arow behind the counter, their clear voices, as they gave an order, ringing above the long murmur of the conversation.

At last Lewis cried "Here!" and flopped down into one of the crescent-shaped nooks beneath the cathedral windows.

He ordered a copious lunch and much whisky and water, the sight of which attracted some academy students who were talking to the barmaids, and with whisky to drink and Frazer to chaff, the academy students did not feel the time passing; and when they had got the enthusiast to say that the only painting of any interest was what "The Moderns" were doing, they could contain themselves no longer and giggled into their glasses. Frazer never lost his temper, and, regardless of the mirth he occasioned, continued to pour forth his aphorisms. At last the hilarity was cut short by the appearance of Thompson coming down the great saloon bar with Harding, the novelist, whose books were denounced by the Press as being both immoral and cynical. Places were made for the two leaders of the modern movement, and Lewis began at once to tell them about his adventure.

"So you are going to decorate walls," said Thomp-

son drily, "with extracts from Boucher, and you are going to do it together—she with her palette and you with your brush? Well, I hope the collaboration will succeed."

"I suppose you would like me to paint ballet-girls and housemaids over Greek walls. If the room is Greek, the decorations must be Greek—at least, it seems so to me."

"Naturally," replied Thompson languidly (he had not much belief in Lewis's artistic future). "But don't you think there is a way of giving a modernised version of Greek subjects that would be quite as archæologically correct as the Greek seen through Boucher? Do what he did: take an old form and colour it with the spirit of the age you live in."

The remark awakened a hundred thoughts in Lewis's mind, and he remained thinking.

"But," said Harding, "he will succeed much better by joining the woman than by working with us. The age is dying of false morality and sentimentality, and neither you nor I can do anything to help it, nor a host like us. These women with their poetry, their art, their aspirations, have devoured everything like a plague of locusts; they have conquered the nineteenth century as the Vandals did Europe in the sixth. Later on, I dare say they will arrive at something; at present they are a new race, and have not yet had time to digest what they have learned, much less to create anything new."

"Not created anything new!" exclaimed an academy student; "what do you say to George Sand, George Eliot, and Rosa Bonheur?"

"That you have chosen the three I would have chosen myself to exemplify what I say. If they have created anything new, how is it that their art is exactly like our own? Who could tell that George Eliot's novels are a woman's writing, or that 'The Horse Fair' was not painted by a man? Women have not as yet been able to

transfuse into art a trace of their sex; in other words, they haven't been able to assume a point of view of their own. For instance, no one will deny that woman's love must be different from a man's; and if that be so, George Sand failed, for in no single instance did she paint woman's love as different from what we conceive it to be. And what splendid chances she missed. Female emotion is an unknown quantity in art, but to analyse it an original talent would be required, and that is what they have not, and I'm afraid never will have. They arrange, explain, and expand, but they do not create; they do not even develop a formula—they merely vulgarise it, fit it for common use. They are not fathers in art or even mothers."

"Quite so," exclaimed Frazer; "and if all modern art is sentimental, it is owing to women, whose one interest in life is sentimentality. Sentimentality entered art in the nineteenth century. Even Shelley could not escape from it; his poetry is no more than loverisings thinly disguised."

"But don't you think love beautiful?" asked Lewis. "How could anyone write poetry without it? It is the soul of poetry. Even Swinburne, whom you so much admire, writes constantly about love."

"Never!" said Frazer. "It would puzzle you to discover a trace of sentiment in his poetry unless, perhaps, in the poem entitled, 'The Leper'; but then it was a leper who was sentimental."

The conversation turned on women, and everyone, including the academy students, who spoke to each other, explained to his neighbour what his individual opinions were upon the subject. Lewis believed in passion, eternal devotion, and, above all, fidelity. He could not understand the sin of unfaithfulness; without truth there could not be love, and how a man could make love to his friend's wife passed his comprehension. Frazer declared

that in that respect only he had never feared his friends, and Thompson vowed that an artist cannot do better than to marry his cook: he makes sure of his servant's honesty, and, who knows, finds a good model in her when the dishes have been washed up after dinner. "Now, Eliza! as soon as you've put the coffee on the table get your clothes off; I shall be in the studio in five minutes."

Lewis, indignant, cited a number of successful painters and authors who had devoted their lives to love as well as to art, his remarks drawing forth a long discussion regarding the rival merits of Michael Angelo and Raphael, Wordsworth and Shelley. At last the conversation returned to its starting-point, and the possibility of creating a new æstheticism was again under discussion.

"I'm weary of argument," said Thompson; "people won't understand or can't understand, and yet the whole question is as simple as A B C."

"Well, what is your A B C?" asked an academy student.

"This," replied Thompson: "ancient art was not, and modern art is, based upon logic. Our age is a logical one, and our art will not be able to hold aloof any longer from the general movement. Already the revolution is visible everywhere. It accomplishes nothing in music that it does not do in literature; nothing in literature that it does not do in painting. The novelist is gaining the day for the study of the surroundings; the painter for atmospheric effects; and the musician will carry the day for melodious uninterrupted deductions, for free harmony, which is the atmosphere of music."

This profession of faith touched the heart of a musician who had joined them, and he exclaimed: "Just so; and yet it is impossible to explain to people that that is Wagner's whole principle."

There being no other musician present, the conversa-

tion went back to the novel, and somebody asked Harding why he always chose such unpleasant subjects.

"We do not always choose what you call unpleasant subjects, but we try to go to the roots of things; and the basis of life being material and not spiritual, the analyst inevitably finds himself, sooner or later, handling what this sentimental age calls coarse. But, like Thompson, I'm weary of the discussion. If your stomach will not stand the crudities of the moral dissecting-room, read verse; but don't try to distort an art into something it is not, and cannot be. The novel, if it be anything, is contemporary history, an exact and complete reproduction of social surroundings; the novel is, in a word, environment. The poem, on the other hand, is an abstraction, and bears the same relation to the novel as the rich, ripe fruit which you relish when your hunger is satisfied does to the roast beef."

"Believe before it is too late," exclaimed Frazer, warmly, to the academy students; "the die has been cast; what has to come will come. It will not be Mr. Hilton's Venus, nor Mr. Baring's pretty mothers, that will retard the coming of the modern art. A bombshell is about to break, and you open your umbrellas; but have a care, the bombshell will destroy without mercy all things, both the small and great, that oppose it. I say this as much for Mr. Hilton as for Mr. Baring, as much for Mr. Channel, as much for Mr. John Wright and Mr. Arthur Hollwood—I say it for all who aspire to live in the future."

This speech, which was given with all the vigour of a prophecy, threw a chill on the conversation. Some tittered at the enthusiast's vehemence; Thompson and Harding testified in a few words their approval of the opinions expressed. Lewis, who only half understood, and was possessed of a strong prejudice against all sudden events, felt uneasy at the prospect of bombshells against

whose fury umbrellas would prove of no avail. At the end of an uneasy silence everybody began to speak quietly to his neighbour of the quality of the whisky and the disagreeableness of the weather, until the conversation turned on Bendish. He was criticised and defended, "good for a 'quid' or a 'thin 'un.'"

"He'll always buy at a price, and we want more men like him," was Frazer's remark. But Lewis, who remembered his last visit to Fitzroy Square, was of a different opinion, and he wished that Frazer would cease to propound theories, commercial or æsthetic, and allow him to ask Thompson what his opinion really was about Mrs. Bentham and the decorations.

"An adulterous horizon opened up before me the moment you told us of his visit to Sussex," Thompson said.

Lewis resented this criticism, and seeing that the chances of finding a sympathetic listener were becoming smaller and smaller, he began to think of going. It was just seven o'clock; Gwynnie would be due at half-past; he could just manage to get home in time to meet her. So, bidding his friends good-bye, he started off at a sharp pace, not staying his steps till he came to the Waterloo Road. Three days ago there was not one among the many that lived behind that long line of dismal windows with whom he would not have changed places; now he pitied them. Yesterday he had been one of them; to-day he knew her, and never again would he see the shop with the old iron and china piled about the walls. All this had gone by for ever and he walked so enrapt in his dream that he forgot to speak to Dinah, and asked his landlady abruptly if Miss Lloyd had come in, and on being told she had not, he opened his window, and resting his arms on the wall fell to thinking of the fine fortune that had befallen him. He was going away to decorate a ballroom in a country-house standing, no doubt, in the middle of some great park. He had often seen gate

lodges, and wondered what the houses were like that stood at the end of the long drives; and now he was going to live in one of these houses among rich furniture, tall pictures, and a pack of men-servants—butlers, valets, and footmen; on every landing there would be housemaids, and outside there would be gardeners and grooms and coachmen; and when his day's work was done he would walk out on the terraces to meet Mrs. Bentham, who . . .

The dream he was weaving suddenly fell into little pieces; it was only a dream, for how could he go and live in that house? He had only three shirts, a couple of pairs of old trousers, and the cracked pair of shoes he stood up in. Even the servants were better dressed than he, and they would laugh at his clothes and talk about them in the servants' hall. But he would not be there to hear them laugh; he could not imagine himself dining in the servants' hall, nor yet with Mrs. Bentham; but in the housekeeper's room, perhaps, for there would be a housekeeper. If he only had money to buy a pair of boots and some socks, for his hardly held together. He had no collars, and he needed neckties. At least ten pounds would be required. Ten pounds represented a fortune to him, and he asked himself where he could get ten pounds. Carver might advance the money; if he didn't what would become of him? He would continue in his life of poverty in the room above the hardware shop, painting small pictures which he might sell sometimes, and which more often he would find himself unable to sell. A life of rags, of hunger, of cold, and, of all, a life of solitude.

But what had become of Gwynnie? She was very late coming home this evening.

CHAP. VI.

ON leaving Pall Mall Mrs. Bentham drove to see her father, who lay bedridden in a large bleak house in the neighbourhood of Cavendish Square. She was an only child and had been in charge of all his properties for many years, paying his bills and carrying out his wishes regarding new plantations and the different structural alterations that he dreamed in his wheel-chair, his wig on a small table and a napkin on his lap. On seeing his daughter he put on his wig and called to the servant to take away what he was eating, and remembered the ball-room—his last whim.

"I wonder, my dear Lucy," he said pettishly, "you don't find some artist to do those decorations: you know I want to have that room finished."

"My dear father, the room has been painted in light blue and straw colour."

"I told you," said the old man joyfully, "that that was the right colour, and you wouldn't believe me. I hope it is a light blue turning to mauve. If you have carried out my idea, it will be the prettiest room in Sussex. I shall make an effort and try and get down there when the decorations are done; but you must see about an artist to do the pictures—why, there are dozens of clever young men starving about London who would do them. Can't that man, Mr. Carver, whom you are always talking about, find you one?"

"It is curious," answered Mrs. Bentham reflectively, "you should speak of it, for not half an hour ago Mr. Carver introduced me to a young man who he said would do the work splendidly."

"Then why don't you have him down to do it?" asked the old man. "I may go off any day, and I want to see

that room finished before I die; it is really very selfish of you."

Mrs. Bentham assured him that there was not the slightest chance of his dying for many a year, and that she would be very glad to have the young man down to do the decorations; but, as she was staying there at present, she did not see how it was to be done—unless, indeed, she asked him as a visitor.

"Why not ask him as a visitor? What is the objection? Does he drop his *h*'s, or are you afraid of your servants?"

"No, he doesn't drop his *h*'s. I was only thinking that people might begin to make remarks."

"And what if they do? The world is always making remarks. You will see to it, Lucy, won't you?"

"I will, father, I will."

"And return at once," he called back as she was passing out of the door to go to Mr. Carver and to tell him to write to the young man immediately. She had, in her father's desire to see the ballroom finished, an excuse for asking Mr. Seymour to Claremont House, and one which her cousin, Susan Thorpe, would find it hard to gainsay. But then there were the county people to be taken into consideration; and when she thought of Lewis's compromising face, she heard a thousand disagreeable remarks and petty sarcasms ringing in her ears. She changed her position nervously in the brougham, and apostrophised the injustice of the world's opinion and the falseness of a woman's position in modern society, finding, every instant, a new reason for taking her father's advice. She remembered that Mr. Seymour spoke like a gentleman. The stories she had heard of young men who die for the want of a friend, of a helping hand, unknown, on the bosom, as it were, of a million beings, in the middle of a crowd weary of the gold they do not know what to do with, thronged her mind; and, irritated by the thought

that he might be one of those miserable ones who starve while the person who wishes to succour them is considering the most proper way of extending his or her friendly hand, she called to her coachman to drive to Bond Street, resolved, if the references were satisfactory, to give him the decorations to do.

"Is Mr. Carver in?"

"Yes, ma'am"; and Mr. Carver came forth.

"I've decided," she said.

"I'm very glad to hear it, for I'm sure you have done the right thing. If he only gets a chance. If his luck be not against him. Luck, you know, Mrs. Bentham——"

"But who is this young man?" she asked.

Regarding Lewis Seymour's antecedents Mr. Carver had little information to supply, but he threw himself at once into the Napoleonic pose, and talked just as if he had known Lewis in his cradle. Lewis was the son of a country doctor in Essex; both his parents were dead, and he had come to London to seek his fortune. So much Mr. Carver had found out, for he found out something concerning everybody he was ever brought in contact with; and on this slight knowledge he embroidered ingeniously till Mrs. Bentham decided that Lewis should be sent down next Thursday to Sussex, Mr. Carver charging himself with all the arrangements.

CHAP. VII.

"A LETTER for you, Mr. Seymour." It was from Mr. Carver, asking him to call about eleven, and by taking a hansom he would only be able to get to Mr. Carver's in time. It never would do to miss that appointment; besides, Bond Street was on the way; he would go on to Regent Street afterwards and try to find out what had

become of Gwynnie—it was only a question of five minutes' difference; Mr. Carver would not keep him longer. He must know his fate.

His fate was to hear that it was all arranged: he was to go down to Claremont House the day after to-morrow, to stop there until he had finished the decorations—a three months' job, for which he would receive two hundred pounds.

Mr. Carver, in the Napoleonic pose, watched his astonishment with a tender interest akin to that which an inventor takes in his new patent.

"But who is Mrs. Bentham? You say that she is separated from her husband?" asked Lewis, emboldened a little by his success.

"One of the biggest swells in London, my dear boy. I can tell you 'twas a lucky day for you when you put your nose into my shop."

Mr. Carver had no doubt that in the course of this adventure something would occur which would enable him to turn the weaknesses of human nature to his profit. He did not know what, but he was sure that something would happen. Something always did; at least, that was his experience of life. The only thing of which he was uncertain was Lewis's power of restraint, of conducting himself at Claremont House properly. Therefore, with the air of one who has never spoken to anything less than a baronet, Mr. Carver proceeded to give Lewis what he considered many useful hints as to how he should behave himself. He told him that he would meet all the best people, who would tear him to pieces as monkeys would a newspaper; but to be forewarned is to be forearmed, and Mr. Carver advised him to be very reserved, and, above all, very polite to everybody—from the lap-dog upwards.

It was part of Lewis's nature to believe that women were always in love, and he tried to find out cautiously

what opinion Mr. Carver held on the matter of Mrs. Bentham's affections. But Mr. Carver only eyed him sharply, and advised him to be very careful, to look before he leaped, and, better still, not to leap at all, but to let things untie themselves gradually; and, as a trainer gives the jockey the final instructions, he explained to Lewis the perils he must avoid, and the circumstances he must take advantage of.

As he told him of the grand people he would meet at Claremont House, Lewis looked in despair at his broken boots and stained trousers, till at last, interrupting the list of grand names with which the dealer was baptising him, he asked boldly for a small advance of money.

"Of course—of course; I see," replied Mr. Carver, looking him up and down.

Lewis thought the inspection rude, but forgave it when he was handed five ten-pound notes.

Then, in his turn, Lewis looked Mr. Carver up and down, from the large plaid trousers to the red cravat—an attention which put the dealer in a good temper for the rest of the day, it not occurring to him that the painter might be looking to see what to avoid rather than what to copy.

And then, after having signed a bill, and listened to a little more advice on the subject of dress, Lewis was free to call a hansom and drive to Regent Street. She had been at work all the day before: he drew a deep breath of relief. There was no longer any reason for supposing she had committed suicide. Still, it was extraordinary she had not returned home; and he continued to question the forewoman until she would listen to him no longer; all she knew was that Miss Lloyd had been at work yesterday, and had gone away with a lady friend.

"But do you know her friend's address?" insisted Lewis; "I shall be so much obliged——"

"I assure you I haven't the least idea, but if you will leave a message or a letter, it shall be given to Miss Lloyd."

Lewis asked her to say he had called, and, with a sense of having done his duty, drove off, remembering that Gwynnie, after all, was her own mistress, and had a right to hide herself if she pleased. Anyhow, he was sure of one thing: she had not committed suicide, and, comforting himself with the assurance, he drove to a tailor's.

All that day and the next were spent buying shirts, coats, trousers, collars, neckties and boots, and as he walked along the streets he was on the lookout to see how the upper ten thousand were dressed, and how their coats were buttoned, and the kind of scarves they wore, and tried to find out what the differences were that distinguished them from the middle classes.

It was necessary for him to know these things, for he felt he would be seriously compromising his position if he went down to Mrs. Bentham's dressed like a shop-boy.

He fancied that Mr. Carver had hinted that it was not merely his talents as an artist that had induced Mrs. Bentham to give him the commission to decorate the ball-room, and it afforded him much pleasure to hope that she was interested in him.

The time at his disposal necessitated orders to Mr. Halet instead of to Mr. Johnson; but, his figure being well-proportioned, he was easy to fit, and the clothes, with a few alterations, almost satisfied him. He bought two suits of country clothes—short jackets and coloured trousers—to which he added a velvet coat for painting in. Evening clothes were indispensable, and these, at least, he would have liked to have gotten from a first-class tailor, but it was not possible: he had to start the following day, and had to buy everything, from a portmanteau to a toothbrush. There was not a minute to spare. At

the last moment, when everything was ordered, he found himself obliged to start off again to buy some silk shirts. "Silk shirts go with a velvet jacket," he muttered, as he hurried west again. A great deal of money was also spent in scent, powder, nail-polishers. Although he had had but little opportunity in his life of becoming acquainted with such luxuries, he divined their uses as if by instinct, and his white, feminine hands, as they strayed over the shop counters, seemed to love the touch of all things connected with the toilette-table.

Yet, notwithstanding his occupations, he found time to inquire again at the shop in Regent Street after Gwynnie. She had not returned, nor had her friend; and Lewis went away thinking he ought to take more trouble to find her, but he assured himself that time was lacking; his hours were numbered. It was unfortunate, but what was he to do? Over and over again he asked himself the question.

"You'll tell Miss Lloyd, Mrs. Cross, that I was sorry not to see her before leaving?"

"And your address, sir?"

"I'll write—I'll write," he said, and as he drove away, Mrs. Cross stood at the door and followed the hansom with her eyes.

"I'm sure, 'Arry, that young gentleman was someone great, or will become someone great."

'Arry did not answer; he went on arranging the jugs and basins and tin saucepans in his window, so as to attract his customers, evidently thinking that his wife's prediction did not call for reply.

Dinah, however, left off teasing the yellow cat, and, hiding her golden curls in her mother's coarse apron, began to cry.

CHAP. VIII.

"WHAT an extraordinary adventure!" Lewis said to himself, as he leaned back in the comfort of a first-class carriage; "I wonder what father would think of it all, if he could only know!" And Lewis continued to consider what his father's opinion would be of his son if he were sitting opposite in the railway carriage, hearing Lewis telling that he was going to stay with a grand lady in Sussex and decorate her ballroom. He was afraid his father would hardly appreciate the adventure, so dead to all æsthetic interest was he, and Lewis fell to thinking what might be the spiritual personality of the tall, gaunt man with bristly hair who, in Lewis's childhood, was so much appreciated at Santry as a healer, and about whom a legend had collected because of a laboratory he had built and in which he had wasted a fortune. He might even say two fortunes, for his father had brought to Santry some money of his own, and it was not until he had spent all his money upon chemical experiments that he had thought of a rich marriage as a way out of his difficulties. He did not like to think that his mother had been married for her money, but he could understand that a man absorbed by his desire to solve a chemical problem would not hesitate to help himself out of his difficulties by a money marriage; and his mother had five thousand pounds on her wedding day, a sum of money that the Oylers had given with reluctance, they being prudent business folk and full of suspicion of anyone who had not only wasted money in fruitless experiments, but time that he might have devoted to his patients. "So they were always insinuating," Lewis said to himself as he watched the country passing, trees advancing and retiring, till he again took up the thread of his life, which always seemed to him a magical skein which some mystic hand was weav-

ing into a wonderful pattern. "If father knew that I was going down to decorate Mrs. Bentham's ballroom, and that I met her at the moment of my greatest need in a picture dealer's shop, he could not fail to remember how he jumped out of a chair in which he had been sitting munching a cigar for more than an hour in silence, till the sight of me painting at the table filled him with such rage that he could not contain himself; and he seized my poor little paintings, crumpled them up and threw them into the fire. Why, he didn't know himself, possibly because some experiments had failed."

Lewis would almost have liked to call his father back into life, so that he might see that his painting was likely to turn out more successful than the chemistry—he would have liked to have got one back on his father, "but if I were to call him back into life," he murmured to himself, "it would be difficult to know what to do with him afterwards: to call him out of the grave merely to tell him that I'm getting on would seem to him something more than cynical." And, ashamed of himself, he began to watch the rolling hills and woodlands breaking up into fields one after the other, with trees starting out of the hedgerows so beautifully that even those who have lived in southern England all their lives never look upon it without thinking how much more fortunate we are to live here than in any other country!

As soon as the fields and the hedgerows were blotted out of sight by some high embankment or by the disappearance of all country as the train rushed into a tunnel, Lewis's thoughts returned easily to his early life, and he thought of the fateful day when his father had been found dead in the laboratory. Suicide was spoken of, and it might well be that his father had thought that his death would be the greatest benefit he could confer upon his wife and son for, truth to tell, they had never been what people call happy together. Lewis had admired his

father, that tall, gaunt man, who spent his evenings and a great part of his nights in his laboratory engaged in fantastic attempts to solve problems that might never be solved; an alchemist of old time his father appeared to him, a romantic figure, but he had made their lives cheerless and lonely beyond measure, and "if he had lived he would have insisted upon my entering a bank," and he doubted his strength to resist his father. "His death set me free to follow my painting, and it seems to be leading me into a fair prospect. If that woman were to fall in love with me!" Such good fortune as this seemed to him more than he could hope for, a tale straight out of the "Arabian Nights." But why should he not be the hero of a story; and to convince himself that this might be possible he looked again into his life and remembered how he had started off from home, the day after his father's funeral, to paint all the windmills and willow banks under which donkeys are tethered so that they may be painted; and when a great number of these had been turned into water-colours he had ventured into a park where he had no right to go and had encountered a very stern man therein, the gamekeeper, who told him that if he were to catch him there again he would have him up before the magistrate. He had been bidden to take up his water-colours and be off, a command he had hastened to obey; the man accompanied him to the gate to see him off the premises, but on their way thither the lady of all the fair domain passed them, driving her cream-coloured ponies, and, noticing Lewis's picturesque appearance, asked her gamekeeper to tell her who he was; and on his story being made known to her she said: "You are free to come into my park to paint whenever you please; and will you, when you have finished some sketches, bring them up to my house?"—an invitation he had hastened to avail himself of. And he remembered her admiration of the group of beech trees with wood

pigeons picking at the mast. She had liked his bridge and his portrait of her gardens; and after her commendations everybody within ten miles of Santry bought something from him, believing him to be for sure a future Academician.

The years between his father's and his mother's deaths were living years. His father's death had given him life; but the houses he was invited to and the pleasant things he heard said about himself were not more pleasant than his evenings sitting by the fireside with his mother relating his adventures to her: a pleasant and amiable springtide were these two years, and when his mother fell ill and died he remembered that he learnt what grief is. It was only natural that it should be so, for his mother's character was in harmony with his; a pretty mother, truly, a kind mother, a winsome mother, and he recalled the tenderness with which they used to bid each other good-night at the foot of the staircase. She was a bit of an artist; and he fell to thinking of a certain water-colour she had done. It used to hang in the parlour on the right of the fireplace—a view of the green, with an old house, since pulled down, in the foreground. Her love of art was another tie that bound them, added to which was the sense that in losing her he was losing everything. If she had lived she might have discovered that the corn business in Santry was not prospering, and have saved something out of the wreckage, but he had no taste for business, and, believing that uncles would not cheat their nephews, did not trouble to inquire into his affairs, and the first he heard of his uncle's failure was from the lawyer. A terrible reverse to hear of, that one is penniless at the outset of one's career—penniless all but three hundred and fifty pounds, all that remained of a comfortable competence. But his pictures had been bought by the entire countryside. The *Essex Telegraph* had said he was a promising young artist, and, knowing

nothing whatsoever of life, he had come to believe that London would fall at the first sound of his clarion. The head master of the Training School at Santry had not altogether shared this belief, and Lewis smiled over his memory of the letter that his first instructor in the art of drawing and painting had given him to Thompson, a painter who the head master said seemed to be coming along. He had not seen anything of Thompson for many years, but his name was often in the papers. He was being talked of, and "The Moderns," too, were being talked about—the new school, the training master explained, and Thompson, his old schoolmate, was at the head of it. He did not know what his work was like, but Thompson was a clever fellow, "and you'd do well to look him up." Lewis could hear himself saying "The Moderns" all the way up to London, and he had gone to see Thompson the morning after his arrival, expecting to find nymphs bathing in his studio, or fleeing from fauns, or maybe a single figure loosening her girdle. He hoped she would be loosening it for the pleasure of the ardent youth fallen on his knees behind her; but instead of nymphs he had been shown a picture of a housemaid cleaning steps, her end turned towards him. And the next picture that Thompson produced was of two acrobats in pink hose about to knit themselves into some strange device or perhaps to spring from a trapeze. Thompson had enjoyed his surprise, and Lewis remembered with some acrimony Thompson's remark: "You expected to see nymphs; well, all painters begin with nymphs and a few end with housemaids."

"How can housemaids be turned into art?" was his innocent question; and Thompson answered it:

"To Apollo all things are possible"—a saying that seemed to savour of the Bible. It had left him asking himself what Thompson meant, and afraid to untie the parcel. But Thompson's bark was worse than his bite.

"Your drawings," he said, "are what we call skilful, and I've no doubt that any one of them will open the doors of the Academy to you."

"But would you advise me to enter the Academy schools?"

"If your bias be for nymphs and satyrs, certainly; if for housemaids, no." And this remark had confounded him again.

He had never been able to bring himself to admire Thompson's work, yet had never doubted that Thompson was a clever man—a misdirected one, if you like, but still a clever man, who, if he had applied himself to any other art but painting, would have done well in it; for, after all, his art is a search for the beautiful rather than the curious. "But beauty is merely a convention, and art is always seeking new conventions. A convention wears out like a coat; and before it begins to look threadbare, one must look out for a new garment. A jacket is better than an old coat," Thompson would say; and, of course, everything can be argued. A truthful story is a well-told story, a lying story is an ill-told story; but he had heard enough of that kind of thing, and was not to be taken in by it any more. And he fell to thinking that it was partly through listening to Thompson and that idiot Frazer that he had been brought to the Waterloo Road, and very nearly to suicide. He would have come to suicide long ago if it hadn't been for old Bendish. Bendish had, however, failed him at last, and if it hadn't been for Gwynnie he would have had to take the plunge. If it had not been for Gwynnie he would be now at the bottom of the river, but corpses float and some waterman would have fished him up. He would be lying now in the mortuary with a trickle of water flowing over his face: a horrid face presented itself before his imagination, and to rid himself of the spectacle he began to argue that Thompson might very well choose such a subject

for his next Academy picture. Well, he preferred nymphs, and was going to paint them—satyrs and nymphs and Cupids and garlands, masks and arrows, while Gwynnie's fate was to remain in London striving after fifteen shillings or a pound a week. He was sorry, but he couldn't hold himself in any way responsible. Why had she run away? All the same, it seemed hard to think that she who had done so much should be left behind. But if she hadn't run away he would not be going to Claremont House, and to marry her might condemn him to the Waterloo Road for all the days of his life. Perhaps all had happened for the best, and he watched the rich landscape fleeting by till a stately mansion appeared among the trees. He was going to some such mansion. The landscape in his dreams unfolded like a scroll. The footman who met him at the station confronted him like a dream, and the brougham into which he was invited to enter was another dream. And he sat on the blue cushions like one in a dream, afraid to think lest thought might disperse his dream. But he was wide awake and was sitting in her brougham! Her skirts had rustled in it and her feet had rested on the footstool before him, and in a sudden divination of her body, the intoxicating odour of his future life rose to his head like the perfume of a flower crushed and smelt in the hollow of the hand.

CHAP. IX.

A LONG, narrow, grey building, pierced with many windows, a sort of Noah's ark; and at the end of a long terrace two ladies leaning over the balustrade. The sun was setting, and the carriage drew up at the front door: a small, unpretending entrance, unapproached by steps, and opening into a passage rather than a hall. The footman took down Lewis's portmanteau, and the butler un-

packed it for him, putting his morning suits, shirts, collars, and pocket-handkerchiefs away in a large mahogany wardrobe, and laying out his evening clothes with wonderful precision on the clear-curtained iron bed. While he did so, Lewis sat at the window watching the ladies walking across the terrace towards the house. The evening had grown chilly, and they had drawn their shawls more tightly round their shoulders.

Then the servant brought him some hot water, and told him that dinner would be ready in half an hour. If he would like a bath, he would find the bathroom next door, the first door on the left; and, determined to enjoy himself, he washed, dried, powdered, and scented himself with care, and, full of misgiving, tried on the evening clothes. His trousers seemed to him too wide, the waistcoat seemed to him vulgar, but he could only hope that no one would suspect they were ready-made; and it was with a sense of delight that he drew on his silk socks, tied his white necktie, and brushed—standing before the tall glass—his rich brown hair.

At last he was dressed; the footman led him into the drawing-room, and there he found Mrs. Bentham, who received him with a smile, and who introduced him to Mrs. Thorpe, her cousin. . . .

Dinner was announced, and Mrs. Bentham asked him to take in Mrs. Thorpe. He had never been anywhere except to a few luncheon parties in Essex, and was conscious of Mrs. Thorpe's eyes, and fancied she would make use of any little slip to his disadvantage; so he did not take the bread out of his napkin till he had seen Mrs. Bentham take hers, and during the whole meal he ate and drank after first observing one of the ladies.

When the moment came for the ladies to rise from the table, Lewis did not know how to act; he had heard that gentlemen stopped behind, but was not sure if the rule applied when there was but one. Mrs. Bentham, as if

she guessed his embarrassment, asked him to follow them into the drawing-room, unless he wished to smoke. "My cousin doesn't like the smell of tobacco, but you can smoke in the library." He did want to smoke, but was delighted to say he didn't, for he dreaded the eye of the butler, knowing that that splendid man would read him like a book.

Mrs. Thorpe sat silent in her wicker-work chair behind a screen, which protected her from the draught; and once more Lewis felt that she was at least a potential enemy, and that he must win her over to his side. But he was wrong in supposing that Mrs. Thorpe was his enemy. The old lady was merely a little alarmed at what she could not but consider eccentric behaviour on the part of her cousin, and could not accept Mr. Vicome's desire to have the decorations finished as a very valid reason for picking up a young man and bringing him down to stay with them. She thought the decorations of the ballroom should have been put into the hands of a respectable firm, who would send down a man who would find a lodging in the inn. What did the poor old gentleman want with decorations? she asked herself. He could not even come and see them when they were done. But there was no use thinking of that now the young man was here, and her hope was that his appearance, which was startling, would not create any scandal. He seemed innocent enough; and if he did not stay too long all might be well.

Mrs. Thorpe was dressed entirely in black cashmere, which fell loosely about her spare figure. She wore a white cap, under which appeared some thin white hair, suggestive of baldness. The arms were long and bony, and the brown hands were contracted and crooked—in fact, they seemed like a knitting-machine perpetually in motion; it was the exception to see them still.

As she took from time to time a needle out of her cap, she would look from Lewis to her cousin, and then her

eyes would return to her stocking. But at last her curiosity to know who Lewis was, tempted her out of her silence, and as an opportunity presented itself, she asked him some questions about his early life, and, knowing it would be dangerous to tell lies, he gave a pleasant version of the truth, telling of the straits his father's improvidence had reduced them to, and how he, Lewis, had lived all alone with his mother till she died. His uncle had failed at the same time, and then there was nothing for it but to go to London with three hundred and fifty pounds and " earn my living."

The picture he gave of how he had lived with his mother recalled to Mrs. Thorpe her son's childhood and early manhood, and her eyes filled with tears of pity for Lewis's loneliness.

And Mrs. Bentham, too, listened to the story, interrupting it to ask a question from time to time, her attitude growing more abandoned as she remembered her own life: a husband whose vices had forced her in the third year after their marriage to ask for a separation. She might have had a divorce, for her husband had on more than one occasion used violence towards her, but as she never expected to wish to marry again, and as separation was more favourably viewed by society at large, she had accepted the equivocal position of living apart from her husband; and she remembered how she had persuaded Susan Thorpe to come and live with her.

And, believing that she was asked to share, not relinquish, the quietude she cherished, Mrs. Thorpe had consented to come and live with her cousin, whom she believed to be broken-hearted.

But it is only age that can enjoy solitude—youth can but coquette with it; and as the memories of her past life faded, Mrs. Bentham commenced to weary of Claremont House. She was grateful to her cousin for the sacrifice she made in coming to live with her, but she felt that she

must see people: the world drew her like a magnet, and her desire to return to the world was hastened by outward events. Her father gave over to her the control of the Claremont House property, and on her uncle's death, which occurred about the same time, she inherited five thousand a year, strictly tied up, and independent of her husband's control. She could not spend her income living alone with Mrs. Thorpe and giving tea to an occasional visitor. She had taken a house in London, but after half a dozen seasons she began to weary of acquaintances, and friendship was impossible. Love she had not dared, and had sent all the men away as soon as they began to speak of love.

Lewis continued to tell how he had come to London to seek his fortune, drawing a poetic picture of the work he had done, hinting at the straits he had found himself in. He had very often not known where the next meal was to come from. At these words Mrs. Thorpe stopped knitting, her hands fell on her knees, and she looked at him, carried away by his story. Mrs. Bentham thought she had never heard anybody talk so attractively. He was a man of genius who required protection, and she felt an immense desire rise up in her mind to protect, to help, to watch, and to guide him towards that success of which he spoke so simply; it would be part of herself, part of her work, and if she lived to see him a great man she would not have lived in vain. She did not reflect that she was a young and handsome woman and that even if she could content herself with this quasi-maternal feeling, he, who was only ten or eleven years her junior, would not accept what must seem to him either too much or too little.

Mrs. Thorpe, who had understood little of Lewis's talk of "The Moderns," returned with interest to the story of his early life, and asked him to tell her more about his mother; but Mrs. Bentham was too much oppressed with

her thoughts to listen very attentively to the details of the story, which she already knew in outline, so she let them talk as they would, and every now and then the curtains blew out, filled with a hawthorn imperfumed breeze.

She thought of her childhood—of the time when she used to cry for loneliness as she played with her toys in the echoing stone passages. She considered the difference it must make in a girl's existence to have a mother to consult and to confide in. She recalled a hundred details of her early life: her governesscs, her aunt's reprimands and her visits to the melancholy room where her father sat in his wheel-chair. Her thoughts drifted, and she passed on to the time when she was taken to her first ball. How different it had been from what she had expected it would be! They had but few friends, and her relations were all old people, at whose dinner-parties her frocks and smiles had often seemed strangely out of place. And it was at one of these dismal dinner-parties that she had met Mr. Bentham—a good reason for remembering that dinner-party—and mistaking him for an incarnation of all that is noble and brilliant, she had married him—married him, dreaming a girl's gay dream of lifelong purity and love.

Her thoughts turned from the memory of her married life, and as she sat staring into the shadows, which struggled for mastery with the moonlight, she felt herself falling into a delicious torpor. An immense temptation seemed to float about the purple gloaming; a thousand little wishes came into the twilight, but they disappeared into the darkness as she tried to define them. At last the sound of Lewis's voice addressing her broke the current of her thoughts, and though she knew he had talked to Mrs. Thorpe till he could talk no more, she did not gratify him with her attention, but asked him if he could sing. He did not wish to sing, but he had a light tenor of which he was proud, though not unduly, and Mrs.

Bentham played his accompaniments, till Mrs. Thorpe put away her knitting. Mrs. Bentham had to accompany her cousin, but when she bade Lewis good-night, a mutual emotion interlocked their fingers for an instant.

"Breakfast will be at nine," she said, "and after breakfast I'll explain my idea of the decorations, and you'll tell me if I'm wrong."

CHAP. X.

HE entered his pleasant bedroom, and, remembering he had never been in so pleasant a room before, he stopped, for the chintz curtains rustled in the breeze that came and went, filled with the scent of lilies. A moment after it was the fragrant tobacco plant that enchanted him, and after it came a mingling of scents so sweet and so overpowering that he sank into a chair, asking himself if he were sure that he was not enchanted. And for a long while he sat, afraid to go to bed, for he could not put aside altogether the dread that he might awake in the Waterloo Road. If that were to happen he would walk straight down to the river and drown, for after the dream he was still dreaming he would not be able to endure common life. But where was she? Lying awake, perhaps, under a tester thinking of him, the brocaded curtains falling in great folds over carved wreaths and Cupids; or was she dreaming of him, her thick hair flung over the pillow in disorder? If the mood were to take her to come into his room, love would be wonderful indeed in the warmth of the fine scented linen; and since so many wonderful things had befallen, why not this last miracle? He lay expectant for a while, and in a few minutes was talking to a chamber-maid in Mrs. Bentham's house, and she tempting him to leave Claremont House and return with her to London to the shop in

Waterloo Road; a faint dream from which he awoke suddenly, and, seeing the harmonious room about him, with the moonlight coming through the flowered curtains, he said: "It was only a dream after all—it was only a dream! But isn't Claremont House a dream?" he asked himself, and then fell asleep again among the smooth white linen that lay in profusion about him, and did not awake again till the door passing smoothly over the carpet awoke him.

The footman brought in a jug of hot water, and he heard the man say that breakfast would be ready in half an hour in the dining-room, but if he wished to have breakfast in his room it would be brought up to him on a tray.

At these words Lewis began to see himself as the real hero of a fairy-tale, and, distracted with a hundred plans for winning the sleeping beauty of the woods, he dressed quickly, and found the ladies in the dining-room. Mrs. Bentham, recovered from the languor of the night before, fell to talking at once of the decorations, and his mood being that of a lover, he could not fix his thoughts on the principles of composition as they were known to the Greek artists that had decorated Pompeii, at least not in the dining-room and in front of Mrs. Thorpe. At last Mrs. Bentham proposed to show him the ballroom which she had been forced to build, for the old rooms were so small that it was impossible for her to give a large party in them.

"But are the walls prepared to receive paint?"

She answered that they were, and they walked round the room, Lewis falling in with Mrs. Bentham's idea that what was required was a figure painted in the centre of each panel, with an appropriate arrangement of leaves and flowers encircling it.

But there was a choking sensation in his throat, and he experienced much difficulty in answering all her questions.

She seemed further from him than she had ever been before. "Was he losing her?" he asked himself. "Has she been thinking it over, saying to herself that she brought me down here to paint pictures for her, and for nothing else?"

They had been round the room two or three times, and every panel had been discussed, and were standing by the window engaged in admiring the view.

"Shall I show you the drawings I have collected for the decorations?" she said abruptly.

"I shall be very glad if you will, and together we shall be able to choose those that seem most suitable." So they went to the couch and took out of the portfolios Venuses and Cupids to no end; masks, quivers, flowers, tendrils, all kinds of fruit in profusion; and out of this stock Mrs. Bentham proposed to select, and the whole morning they sat side by side.

Sometimes they turned a batch of engravings over, bestowing on each a glance; sometimes they would linger over and admire a bit of drawing or a lucky bit of composition; sometimes they would alight on a picture that contained matter so suitable to their purpose that Lewis would make a hasty arrangement on a sheet of Whatman's paper with a pencil. Now and then a somewhat too coarse revel of nymphs and satyrs would come up, and Mrs. Bentham's remark, that while looking through these engravings she felt on the brink of a precipice all the time, seemed not altogether without warrant. "But despite the danger we must continue our search," she said; and before lunch she had made plain her ideas, and chosen the drawings that she considered would be most serviceable to him.

"Do you think you'll be able to carry it through? What do you think?" she said, and they stood looking at each other.

"Carry it through!" he cried. "Of course I shall,

with your help"; and he was almost glad when Mrs. Bentham told him that she and Mrs. Thorpe were going out to drive, and that he would have the whole afternoon to consider his projects.

Although Nature meant him more for the lover than the artist, she had not denied him a certain amount of enthusiasm, and his fingers itched to cover the great blond panels with Cupids, masks, flowers, fruit, and wreaths.

And inspired by the desire of art for its own sake, and urged by the desire to win a woman with his art, he worked on till the light died, and the footman came to tell him that dinner would be ready at eight, and it was now half-past seven.

"Mrs. Bentham told me to tell you, sir, that she has some company this evening."

"Why did she ask people to dinner?" he wondered as he went upstairs. "It looks as if she was afraid to be alone with me. Or has she asked these people to dinner to put me to the test, to find out how I appear to the county? And, of course, if the county don't look favourably upon me, I must be thrown over."

CHAP. XI.

AN hour later he entered the drawing-room, and was introduced to Lord Senton and Mr. Day, and when Mrs. Bentham began to speak of the decorations Lewis felt himself under the inquisition of the eyes of these two gentlemen. He felt that Lord Senton looked upon him as a tradesman, one who should have been sent to dine in the housekeeper's room, one whose place was with the upper servants. Mrs. Bentham, too, seemed to place Lord Senton above him, and Day, the secretary, seemed to him to enjoy his discomfiture. Never had he felt more miserable than he did that evening; and his misery in-

creased in his room, and it seemed to him that he would not get any sleep that night, so keenly did he feel Mrs. Bentham's cruelty. He was so unhappy at breakfast next morning that he could not summon up courage to ask Mrs. Bentham if she were coming into the ballroom, and his heart misgave him when, on rising from the table, she said: "I shall not see you this morning; I've much business to attend to." That afternoon she went out riding with Lord Senton. Lewis was disappointed, but his work interested him, and it was exactly what he could do best. His fluent talent combined easily nymphs, Cupids, masks, and flowers, and at the end of his third week he had finished his compositions. A scaffolding was put up, and Mrs. Bentham declared herself ready to superintend.

She had not been out to ride with Lord Senton for some days, and when Mrs. Thorpe asked why, she laughed and said she was a little wearied of him, and did not wish to see him again for some time. "I've been wondering what was the matter with you, Lucy," Mrs. Thorpe said. "Never have I known you so irritable as you have been for the last fortnight."

"Have I really been out of humour? I didn't notice it," Mrs. Bentham answered, laughing. "Well, that young lord is very monotonous, and the long stretches of country looking so lovely set me thinking of my painting, and is not this an occasion to return to it? I have neglected it too long, and merely, you remember, dear, because I couldn't manage trees. But Mr. Seymour tells me——"

The women parted at the door of the ballroom, and Lewis talked to her from his scaffolding. She chatted, and laughed, and told stories. It amused her to talk to him as he sat painting. Sometimes he would turn his back on the great white wall, and sit facing her, smoking a cigarette, while she told him some ridiculous story about

Lord Senton, or asked him for advice about her drawing, and during these conversations he was conscious that he was advancing himself into intimate relations. She thought him very handsome, and every day his drawings revealed to her prospects of a genius that one day all the world would acknowledge.

And it was about this time they began to speak of what love is, and is not. It was Lucy that introduced the subject oftenest, and it was she, whenever the conversation seemed likely to take a serious turn, or become personal, that changed the subject dexterously. And so they were like friends who dared not venture on the slightest liberty, but who showed by a thousand little things that they longed to pass over all restrictions.

But if the mornings were pleasant, the evenings were delightful; and while Mrs. Thorpe knitted, the lovers (for they were already lovers in thought) sang together; and if they were not singing they sat discussing painting and literature. She had never been mentally intimate with a man before, and it often seemed to her that a new world was opening up into her view.

"To-morrow," she said, "I shall not see you in the afternoon; I must pay some visits"; and there was an accent of regret in her voice that alarmed her chaperon. Lewis was, however, not displeased to devote an entire afternoon to his work—an afternoon free from interruptions. He had that morning completed the composition destined to fill the panel above the chimney-piece—a nymph seated high in a bower made of a few tendrils and roses, with a ring of Cupids dancing round her to the music of a reed flute which she played. As soon as breakfast was over he set to work to lay in the face, shoulders, and hair of the nymph, taking care to keep it very light in tone.

He worked steadily as long as there was light, never stopping but to light a cigarette. "Eight hours I've

been working," he said to himself. "Eight hours upon that scaffolding"; and, feeling a little tired, he walked on to the terrace and abandoned himself to the happy consideration of his accomplishment till the carriages appeared round a bend in the drive.

The ladies had paid several visits, and to their surprise the whole county knew about the decorations, and hoped that Mrs. Bentham would give a ball.

"So you will make the acquaintance of the whole county, Mr. Seymour," Lucy said, laughing. "Everybody has heard about you, and is looking forward to seeing you. Lord Senton has, I think, been abusing you to Lady Marion. She told me he said he didn't like you, and that there must be something nice about anything that Lord Senton dislikes."

"But who is Lady Marion?" Lewis asked, a little perplexed.

"The dearest old lady in the world; very learned, and very interested in art."

"But, my dear," said Mrs. Thorpe, suddenly stopping her knitting, "we have forgotten to tell him about Lady Helen. Do you know, Mr. Seymour, that you will see one of the most beautiful girls in the world? All St. Petersburg went mad about her last season. You are sure to fall in love with her."

Lewis said he would be enchanted to see the most beautiful girl in the world, but hoped he would not fall in love with her. "That would be a calamity," he added.

"Why would it be a calamity?" Lucy asked.

Before Lewis could find an answer to this question Mrs. Thorpe, who seemed to have Lady Helen and Lewis terribly mixed up in her head, said:

"I'm thinking, Lucy, what a pretty picture Mr. Seymour could paint of Lady Helen. You ought to ask her to sit to him."

"I shall be delighted to do so, but I don't know that

Lady Helen will have time to sit; she is leaving the country very soon." "And I've no time to begin a portrait," Lewis interjected. "I'm too much occupied with the decorations."

"Portraits and decorations don't mix, do they?" Lucy asked. "Has any great decorator been also a great portrait painter?"

Lewis spoke of Tintoretto, but admitted that he did not seem to have taken portrait painting very seriously.

CHAP. XII.

A LITTLE after two o'clock, before Lucy or Mrs. Thorpe had finished dressing to receive their visitors, Lord Senton and Mr. Day drove up in a dog-cart.

Lord Senton, a tall, languid young man, with weak eyes, a fair moustache, and a rose flush in his cheeks, walked like a tall greyhound of distinctive breed, and by his side his secretary, Mr. Day, trotted, a snappy little mongrel who had little by little succeeded in gathering up all Lord Senton's business, making of it a sort of private possession. He ran his lordship's racing-stables and he intrigued against his lordship's women, advising him against this one and advocating the advantages of another; doing all sorts of odd jobs with a series of disagreeable little barks and yelps. Lord Senton's friends regarded him as an abomination, and he chuckled as each friend dropped away, for to get Lord Senton in his power completely it was necessary to isolate him.

"I don't know what is happening," Senton said; "she has put me off three times. I'm certain she'll never go out to ride with me again, but will pull down stables and build studios or something of that kind. What do you

think of this young man who has come down here to paint decorations for her?"

"Well, Lord Senton, I cannot tell you really what I think of him until I see more of him. As soon as a chance occurs I will try to get five minutes with him."

"And do you think you will be able to find out anything about him?"

"I think I shall," he answered; and he would have said more, but at that moment a carriage passed round the sweep containing an old lady in mauve and two girls in pink dresses who shaded their faces with blue and pink sunshades.

"Here are the Ormrod girls," said Mr. Day.

"How boring," Senton answered. "I wish we could get away. Do you take them on, Day."

"Don't you think you'd like to talk to the girls for a few minutes before Mrs. Bentham comes down," Day asked, "while I take on the old lady?"

Before this point could be decided, Mrs. Ormrod and her daughters were announced. They were people of some slight consideration in the county, having owned property for some three or four generations, and being related distantly to the Marquis of Hetherington, an important nobleman, yielding but little in position and influence to the Duke of Richmond, who spent three months every year at Westland Manor, and invited baronets, and the best county families to honour him with a three days' visit; the small landowners, militia officers, vicars and curates were invited to dinner, and their position in the county was determined by the tone the noble Marquis adopted in addressing them.

The Marquis's eldest sister, Lady Marion, had married a Mr. Lindell, a county gentleman who had died many years ago; Lady Alice, the second sister, had married Sir Richard Sedgewick; he owned a large property in Sussex, but lived principally in London. The third

sister, Lady Henrietta, had married a diplomatist, Lord Granderville, and her daughter, Lady Helen, was spoken of as the belle of the season. Her photographs were published in all the papers, and the gossips related that her mother intended her for Lord Senton. She was only back a few months from St. Petersburg and already it was mooted that she was a great trouble to her mother, and would probably marry according to her own inclinations.

These were among the first to arrive, and very soon afterwards carriages drove up in quick succession, and emptied their cargoes of pink muslin and jerseys at the hall door. The word tennis was heard all over the drawing-room, and Mrs. Bentham, observing a great desire on the part of the younger people for tennis, proposed they should go out on the terrace.

The courts were in beautiful order—a turf of fine grass like velvet, that the tennis players felt admiringly with their feet. A fault must be found, and somebody said, "A 'smash' will be impossible in these courts in two hours' time." "Quite true," somebody replied: "those at this end will not be able to lift their eyes." There was plenty of shade, however, for the onlookers, for at the far end three splendid cedars and some spreading beeches formed a tent, in whose shade the white cloth of the tea-table glittered like a bank of snow; and it was there the company collected and talked as they watched the game. The elders were more interested to hear Lady Marion talk; and she had begun to express her views regarding Russian intrigues in Persia to her sister, Lady Granderville, whose thoughts were on her daughter, rather than on politics.

"I'd rather that Granderville were sent to one of the Colonies as Viceroy. I've been thinking out," she said, "a project for trained nurses which, I believe, is needed seriously; but I suppose we shall go to St. Petersburg.

Helen likes Dutch society, but she is difficult to understand. . . . By the way, have you heard about this young man who is staying here decorating Lucy's ballroom? One of the Ormrod girls, Ethel, caught sight of him, and her description of him is that he would make a very good-looking girl."

"Ethel Ormrod always puts a disagreeable colour on everything she says. The young man is good-looking—that she cannot deny; so she finds fault with him because he looks as if he wasn't able to carry a very heavy trunk."

Lady Helen, who overheard her aunt's remark, said: "I quite agree with Aunt Marion; one doesn't want a man to look like a stevedore."

"My dear Helen!" Lady Granderville uttered; and then relapsed into a sort of plaintive silence.

"Now, what have I said wrong, mother?" Lady Helen said.

"Nothing, dear," Lady Marion replied. "But I can't help wondering where you got that lemon-coloured hair from; no one else in the family has it." And the women fell to talking about Lady Helen's hat, and it was agreed that it matched the embroidery flowers on her dress.

She was among the whitest of women, with hardly a trace of colour in her face, only a faint rose flush showing; but round the eyes a darker tint announced a nature that would probably cause Lady Granderville trouble later on. The head, placed on a thin neck, fell into varying attitudes, and the waist, which one could span with one's hand, and the slight hips, recalled a Bacchus rather than a Venus.

"Why do you stand, Helen? Why don't you sit down?"

"Whether I stand or sit, mother, I'm always doing something wrong," Lady Helen answered, and she was about to turn away and to leave the group, but was stayed from doing so by the approach of Mrs. Bentham.

"I hear, Henrietta, that you are going to Russia?"

"I'm afraid we are, Lucy."

"Why afraid, Lady Granderville?" Mr. Swannell chimed in.

A political conversation with Mr. Swannell, who accompanied Mrs. Bentham, was a thing to be avoided, and Lady Granderville answered abruptly; but undeterred by her remark, he turned to a group of young men who crowded to listen, and addressed himself to them, saying that Russia was the everlasting menace. But in the midst of a fine period he noticed that everybody was looking away from him, and at the same moment he heard one of the girls say: "I'm sure it is he. Did you ever see anybody so peculiar in your life?"

The peculiar person was Lewis, and as he walked down the pathway the sun turned the brown hair that fell on his neck to gold.

"He walks like a girl," said Ethel Ormrod.

"I don't know what you mean, Ethel," her sister replied; "most people would think that he walked very gracefully."

There was a momentary lull in the tennis, as he joined the groups assembled about the courts, and Mrs. Bentham introduced him at once to Lady Marion, for she knew that half the county took its opinion from that old lady—and she did well, for what with her sister's whining stories and little worries, and Mr. Swannell's political commonplaces, Lady Marion was in a humour that allowed her to see little else but good in Lewis.

"I hear you are decorating Mrs. Bentham's ballroom," she said.

"I have not yet finished my first panel, but all my sketches are done," Lewis answered; and Lady Marion asked him if his sketches were original.

"Inasmuch," he answered, "as I take Cupid from one

engraving, and a nymph from another, and put them together."

The footmen were handing round ices, and Lewis asked Lady Marion if she would come with him to the tent and choose an ice for herself; or, if she would tell him which ice she preferred, he would get it for her.

Lady Marion said that she would go and have a look round. "And, perhaps, strawberries and cream might tempt me, or some claret cup, or lemonade. I think I'll go with you and have a look round," she said.

As she rose from her chair Lady Helen came forward to speak to her aunt, and Lady Marion said:

"Mr. Seymour, let me introduce you to my niece, Lady Helen Trevor."

"Dear me, what a fool Marion is," Lady Granderville said to herself; "she introduces that man to Helen simply because he can gabble about pictures; and now Helen's chanccs of being agreeable to Lord Senton are done for—that fellow won't leave her the whole afternoon. Really, Marion is too thoughtless."

Her annoyance at her sister's thoughtlessness increased when she saw that Lady Marion had asked Helen if she would care to come with her to the tent; and when Helen, instead of walking by Lady Marion, walked on the other side of Lewis, this attracted everybody's attention, including Lucy's, who sat down by Lady Granderville and tried to speak to her of indifferent things; speaking, however, so disconnectedly that Lady Granderville guessed that she was thinking of Mr. Seymour, and began to wonder if it was possible that Lucy was in love with her painter.

"I hope she is," she continued in her thoughts, "for she will keep him out of Helen's way." "A sort of buffer-state," she said aloud.

"Like Belgium," Lucy answered.

"Belgium, did you say?" Lady Granderville interjected. "I hope we shan't be sent there. But I hear

Mr. Seymour is decorating your ballroom, and is doing it beautifully."

At once Lucy began to speak of Lewis's gift for decoration, "in other words," she said, "for filling a space." The words "filling a space" were not lost upon Lady Granderville.

"She is picking up his jargon," she said; and both women waited for Lewis to reappear.

He came forward a few minutes afterwards with Lady Marion and Lady Helen on either side of him, and the three walked towards Lady Granderville, as if with the intention of rejoining her. But on their way thither, to Lady Granderville's annoyance, Helen led Lewis towards a seat under the cedars.

"How determined she is," Lucy said to herself; and she would have gone forward to carry Lewis off, if she could have escaped from her guests.

A match between Miss Ormrod and Miss Fanshaw was just going to begin; and to avoid the friends in whom she had no interest, and the rays of the sun which were stealing under her long-fringed parasol, Lady Helen rose and walked through the pleasure grounds with Lewis.

. . . A mother watched her daughter, a mistress her lover, and the two women's faces told with what uneasiness they saw what was happening. Even the tennis players forgot their games and looked after the great beauty that the young painter was now leading away to some secluded corner of the park. The girls, less discreet than the young men, exchanged glances and whispered among themselves; and Lord Senton, annoyed, foolishly asked Mrs. Bentham when she was going out riding with him again.

Lucy gave an abrupt answer, and moved away from him as if it had become her duty to speak to some other guests.

"I wonder what she can see in that painter, to go off with him like that?" Lord Senton said to Day; and both sat watching the retreating figures, neither of which had any suspicion of the attention which both were attracting.

A turn brought them to the river. "Always flowing," Lady Helen said. "Let us sit here, and tell me about your painting. When shall I see your pictures?"

"As soon as I have anything to show I shall be delighted. I have only just started a panel," he answered.

Lady Helen did not reply, but sat listlessly drawing on the ground with her parasol. At last she said: "I suppose that if a man has an art to which he is devoted, he can dispense with all other interests. In books lovers are all painters and poets, but I don't think artists care much about women."

"But you are a poetess, Lady Helen. Does that mean, therefore, that you have no interest in the men you meet?"

"Very little in the men I meet," she answered.

"But you dream?" he said.

"We must all dream," she answered; and her voice had in it that accent of regret so dear to youthful hearts.

Neither spoke; each struggled with an emotion that was almost pain.

"You are going to Russia, Lady Helen?"

"Perhaps; but one returns from Russia," she replied. "Let us hope so," she added, lifting her eyes.

And then the conversation fell into commonplace, and they talked of things that did not interest them, listening all the while to the river bubbling past them. At the end of a long silence Lady Helen said, "My mother will begin to wonder what has become of me."

Lewis's lack of knowledge of social conventions and customs prevented him from answering her, and they turned back meeting Mrs. Bentham and Mrs. Thorpe

in the path coming towards them, and they returned up the pathway.

"Lady Granderville sent me," Mrs. Thorpe said, "in search of you. She says she is thinking of leaving."

"Mother no sooner arrives than she begins thinking of leaving," Lewis heard Lady Helen say; "particularly when anybody else is being amused."

Lewis would have wished Lady Helen to have spoken any other words but these, for already he had begun to fear he had been guilty of an indiscretion, of an imprudence that might result in his dismissal, and, foreseeing his departure next morning, in the luggage cart, perhaps, he tried to defend himself, telling his patroness that Lady Helen had proposed they should walk to the river. "I couldn't tell her that I could not accompany her, could I? Be just."

"I suppose," she said, "that you admire her very much. Have you been making love to her?"

"We were only talking about painting and poetry; she writes poetry, and wanted to know my opinion," he answered. "She asked me if I would give her some lessons in painting," his vanity prompted him to add, but no sooner were the words spoken than he regretted them.

"Give her lessons?" she repeated; "very well, you will have plenty of time, for I don't think I will take any more off you."

These words made it plain to Lewis that if he could persuade Lucy to condone his conduct and forget it, he would one day be admitted to her bedroom.

"I could not do else than follow her," he said, "without seeming rude."

"Are you sure you don't love her, Lewis?"

"Sure I do not love her, Lucy! A quarter of an hour ago I saw her for the first time, and in a few days she'll be going to St. Petersburg."

CHAP. XIII.

LUCY did not answer him, and he began to ask himself if he should have refrained from using her Christian name, and vowed he would attribute the indiscretion, if she considered it one, to the emotion of the moment.

An hour later, as he stood on the steps watching the visitors drive away, he said to himself: "As soon as the last has departed I will ask her if she is angry with me, and beg of her to forgive me." But among the last guests to depart were some friends whom Lucy succeeded in persuading to stay to dinner, and these stayed on anon; it was nearly eleven o'clock before their carriage drove away, and then Lucy bade Lewis a formal good-night and he went up to his room, asking himself if a walk in a wood and ten minutes spent by a river's brink with a young girl would cause him to be thrown out of Claremont House. "Our lives do not depend upon such trifling circumstances as these," he said, and began to think the matter out, discovering new arguments which he would advance when Lucy spoke to him again on the subject. He would tell her that Lady Helen had asked him to walk in the wood with her—which was true. "How could I refuse?" he would say. "You wouldn't have me rude to one of your guests?" An admirable argument, this seemed to him to be, and he hoped she would come down to breakfast next morning: she sometimes appeared at breakfast and sometimes she didn't. Alas! the first thing the butler told him next morning was that Mrs. Bentham would not appear before luncheon—a piece of news that set him conjecturing, asking himself if she wished to avoid him; and all the morning he expected a note from her telling him what the trains to London were. He knew she would not write such a letter, but he could not stay the thoughts that floated through

his mind and prevented him from applying himself to a Cupid's head. He stopped to listen, his face brightening at the sound of footsteps and darkening when they died away. He lit a cigarette and put his palette aside, saying: "I can do nothing till I have spoken with her." At last the door opened—it was she. "I have been waiting for you," he said.

"But I thought," she answered, "we were agreed as to the composition?"

It was a great relief to Lewis to hear Lucy say these words, for he knew now that he was not going to be turned out of Claremont House, and sent back to the garret that would seem ten times more like a garret now than it had ever done. Having tasted the flesh-pots of Claremont House, he felt he must go on tasting. Another thing, if he were sent back to his garret there would be no Gwynnie Lloyd to relieve his solitude—he would have to endure it alone.

"But I thought we were agreed as to the composition?"

"Yes; you agreed with me," he answered, "that a nymph in the panel over the fireplace should press a dove to her bosom, and that a Cupid should stretch forth his hand with an insistent gesture that the nymph must give the bird to him. That was the motive," he said.

"Yes, and a very pretty motive, too," she said. "I am looking forward to seeing it. You have a movement for the nymph, I suppose?"

"Yes," he said, "I found a drawing that gives me very nearly the movement I want."

"Let me see it"; and when Lewis found the drawing Lucy said: "Yes, you have got your nymph."

"I'm glad you think so," he answered.

"And a Cupid will be easily found."

"Why do you say that?" he asked. "You are laughing at me. Why are you laughing at me?"

"But I'm not laughing"; and they walked over to the window and stood watching a flock of sheep that had collected in the shade of a great elm.

"If you are not laughing at me, you are angry with me."

"Angry with you? Why should I be angry? Because you have not been working very hard this morning?" she asked.

"If I haven't been working it is because—I told you yesterday that I did not love Lady Helen."

"But why should that make me angry?"

"I said that I only loved you."

"And you've found out since then that you told me an untruth?"

"You aren't angry with me because I said I loved you?"

As Lucy was about to answer him, a step was heard, and Lewis handed Lucy an engraving and asked her if she thought well of it.

A moment after the butler entered; he handed Mrs. Bentham a telegram, and said that Lord Senton was in the drawing-room.

"His lordship is going to London by the two o'clock train and would like to know if he can do anything for you in London."

Before answering, Mrs. Bentham opened the telegram. "My father is very ill, Mr. Seymour; I shall have to go to London."

"What shall I tell Lord Senton?" the butler asked.

"Tell his lordship that I will be with him in a minute."

"So you're going up to London with Lord Senton," Lewis said, and there was a little agony in his voice that made Lucy forget her father for a moment.

"My dear Lewis, Lord Senton is nothing to me and never will be, except a neighbour. But a neighbour he is, and as we are going up to London the same day there

is no reason why we should not travel together. It would look rather marked if we didn't."

CHAP. XIV.

HE could see Lord Senton from one of the windows of the ballroom following Lucy into the brougham; and, his heart misgiving him, he sat like one overcome, till a knock at the door awoke him from his sad reverie. "Come in," he cried, and was surprised to see Day.

"Are you sure I may come in?" he asked. "Artists, I know, don't like to show unfinished pictures; but I won't look at them. I just called to ask you if you would care to come for a drive."

Lewis did not answer, and Day, interpreting his silence, said: "Ah, I see you are too busy. May I look? A very nice young woman you are sketching up there. She'd do: oh, yes, she'd do very nicely"; and Lewis looked down upon the small, spare, vulgar little man, who stood in the middle of the floor, his legs wide apart, his hands thrust in his pockets.

"Have you got any cigarettes?" he asked.

Lewis had to find cigarettes for him, and when these were given to him he sought a seat on the couch, removing the engravings, Lewis thought, somewhat unceremoniously.

"It will be some months before you have finished this job," he said.

Lewis answered that he could not say when he would be finished. "Painting sometimes seems to go very quickly, and sometimes it seems as if one could not make any progress at all," he answered boldly.

Day sat staring round the walls. "I suppose you will have a nymph here and a Cupid there; and what will you put over yonder?"

"Probably a garland of flowers," Lewis answered.

"I wonder how you can think of all these things. And Mrs. Bentham—does she help you with your painting? I've heard she is pretty handy with her box of water-colours."

"Mrs. Bentham comes into the ballroom in the morning, and we talk the decorations over together; but she doesn't do any of the painting."

"No; I don't mean that," Day replied carelessly. "I suppose she saw one of your pictures on exhibition, and that is how you made her acquaintance?"

"Well, no," Lewis answered quite simply. "She saw some of my work in a picture dealer's shop, and the picture dealer recommended me. It was Mr. Vicome who wished to have this ballroom done; but he seems to have fallen seriously ill, and he may not live to see it finished."

"If he dies," Day said, "Mrs. Bentham will inherit another five thousand a year. She will be the richest woman in Sussex. I wonder if she will marry again? Her property and Lord Senton's overlap; if they were to make a match of it, their land would stretch as far as the eye could see."

"Do you think she will marry Lord Senton?" Lewis asked.

"I wouldn't be surprised; they have gone up to London together"; and the mongrel watched Lewis, reading his face like a book. "Ah, now I've got what I wanted," he said to himself. "You, too, are an aspirant; and it wouldn't surprise me if you succeeded in cutting out Senton. I'd like to get one of her farms, and may be able to get it through you"; and on this thought Day's manner changed, and though he did not become less vulgar, he became more kindly, and his admiration of Lewis's designs deceived the painter, and the two men parted on friendly terms, Lewis regretting that he hadn't the time to go for a drive that afternoon: he must go back to his

painting. "We are dependent upon the light," he said; and Day waved his hand, and Lewis was soon upon the scaffolding again, regretting the interruption that had prevented him from finishing a piece of drapery. "It's a long job," he said, "six large panels, twelve feet by six, and a number of smaller ones; and although the decorations are slight, they take time"; and he rang the bell for the carpenter and the page-boy, for having made his compositions according to scale, he could enlarge them by means of a square; the carpenter applied the rule and the page-boy held the strings. "That'll do," he said; "thank you. I'll ring when I want you again."

He worked all day, going to his work immediately after breakfast and returning to it after luncheon, leaving the house very seldom—never, unless sent out by Mrs. Thorpe, who feared he was undermining his constitution. At five o'clock he rang for a cup of tea, but ten minutes' rest was the most he allowed for tea; and laying aside his cup, he picked up his palette and continued to cover large surfaces with paint till the butler came to tell him that it had struck half-past seven, and that dinner was at eight.

He and Mrs. Thorpe dined together, and after dinner he played backgammon with her, and when she was tired of the game, he told her anecdotes about his father's chemical experiments, and how all their fortune vanished up the chimney of his laboratory, and how he, Lewis, had lived with his mother for many years till she died.

"After her death I went to London to seek my fortune; and for a long time my fortune consisted of doing little water-colour paintings and carrying them about from dealer to dealer, trying to find one who would give me a few shillings for them. Very often I sold my sketches for five shillings, and very often had no stockings on my feet, and had to ink them to disguise the truth from the dealer."

His gentle manner and sincerity won the old lady's heart, and long before Mrs. Bentham returned she had begun to look upon him as one of the family, and was quite surprised and pained when he spoke of leaving for Paris as soon as the decorations were finished.

"But, my dear Mrs. Thorpe, I have much to learn. As soon as I know my craft we'll be able to judge if I have anything new to say."

Mrs. Thorpe, who had already passed on to the conclusion that the decorations would be finished by the end of the week, reminded him that Mrs. Bentham would be very disappointed if she returned to Claremont House and found him gone; at which he laughed, saying that the decorations would not be finished for another three months; moreover, he had never contemplated running away to Paris without seeing her. "It is her money that will take me there," he said; and she replied that she was sure that Lucy would be very sorry.

On words very like these they often bade each other good-night, and it seemed to Lewis, as he went up the staircase to his room, that life was coming to him in a very pleasant fashion. "Yes," he said to himself, "it is pleasant enough now, but as soon as the decorations are finished and Mrs. Bentham returns, I shall go to Paris and invest my money in education. I can't paint, but I can learn to paint. We shall always be friends, Lucy and I. Perhaps more than friends; of course, if that should happen, it will not be necessary for me to go to Paris." On this he fell to thinking of the last words she had spoken to him, and wondered if he should write to her "My dear Lucy," or if on paper he should still keep to the formality of "Mrs. Bentham." "She might like to hear me call her Lucy, but might not like to see it in black and white." He was handed a letter next morning, and the news that Lucy's father was much better, and that she was returning to Claremont House

at once, was very welcome news, and, having expressed some satisfaction at Mr. Vicome's recovery, he retired to the ballroom.

She would have many things to tell him, and he would have the decorations to show her. On the whole he had a good deal to show, for he had worked hard; and if he were to start working at once he might get in some more Cupids, if not in paint, in charcoal, some garlands and some leaves, before she arrived. But his thoughts were too much absorbed in the pleasure of meeting Lucy for him to make much progress in his work that day; and after luncheon he was walking about the drive, wondering if he should set off on foot and meet her at the station. It occurred to him to take a slow train up and wait for her at the junction. The thought of returning in the train with her enchanted him, but the enchantment quickly wore off. She might look upon it as a liberty, and, perhaps, it would not be well for him even to go to the station to meet her or even to be found walking in the drive. It would, perhaps, be better for him to await her pleasure in the ballroom. The time would pass quickly if he were to apply himself to his work; but he couldn't bring himself to take up his palette, and the hours wore away tediously; but they wore away, and about five o'clock the wheels of the brougham were heard on the gravel sweep. "Now, will she come into the studio or sit talking to Mrs. Thorpe?" he said to himself. "If she goes to Mrs. Thorpe, I shall not be able to resist the temptation, and shall go to her."

She came into the ballroom in great eagerness to see him and the decorations, and it did not seem to him certain which she most admired—him or his work.

"How you have been working! Is it possible that you have done all this by yourself? You must have worked all alone on that scaffolding, hour after hour. Did you miss me?" But, as if the words seemed to her too

intimate, she added: "Did you miss my visits in the morning?"

"I missed our talk very much; it is so much pleasanter to work with somebody standing by that one can turn to for advice and encouragement."

"How prettily you say things, Lewis!"

"But talk to me about yourself," he interjected suddenly.

"After tea we will talk. I must get my things off now, and there are several things I have to see to; so good-bye for the time being."

She left him, his thoughts dancing and all his blood tingling in his veins, certain at last that if he were to lay his arm about her she would not shield her lips with her hand, and the final intimacy could not be delayed much longer. He expected that she would make it plain to him that she wished him to kiss when she returned. But nothing happened. She seemed to have drifted a little away from him; and during the night he experienced many misgivings. Next day her manner was not reassuring, and he asked himself if it were possible that she only thought of him as a young man of talent whom she would like to encourage and help for her own pleasure or vanity. He thought of her age; perhaps she had thought of that, too, and had come to think of an older man.

One day they were standing by the window, and for his desire of her lips he could not talk of the decorations any longer, and began to tell her suddenly that he loved her; and she, fearing that his words would precipitate an act on his part that would oblige her to send him away, so she thought, began to prepare a little sermon; but at the moment of speaking her voice died off her tongue, she swayed a little, and a moment after was in his arms. Her leaned-back head lay upon his shoulder—his lips were upon her lips, and her lips were upon his, and, worst of all, she had no power to close them. He

drew her towards him, and she forgot to disengage herself from his arms—forgot to tell him that he must not speak to her of love, and they sat on the sofa side by side.

"I cannot help myself," she murmured, and drawing him towards her, she kissed him.

"We must go away together," he said.

"Go away together? What do you mean?"

"If you kiss me you love me," he answered; "and if you love me you will marry me."

"But I am married; what you ask is impossible. You don't know my husband. To punish me he would not ask for a divorce. Don't let us speak on this subject again; otherwise we cannot remain friends."

"Friends!" he exclaimed; "there can be no friendship between us. You have made me love you, and if you can give me nothing else but friendship I will leave you and your decorations to-night."

His words bewildered her. "Leave here to-night; leave this house and the decorations!" And before she could find other words to answer him he rushed out of the room.

"Going upstairs," she said to herself, "to pack his portmanteau. But he cannot go to-night; there is no train. To-morrow he may think differently, so there is hope."

CHAP. XV.

THE room in which she had spent so many charming hours stared at her: nymphs, Cupids, flowers, and tendrils, some completed, some barely indicated with a few black lines. A group of Cupids quarrelled over some masks and arrows. Each panel contained an episode in the comedy of love, a blurred incomplete dream, and she tried to comprehend it all as an allegory of her own

life, attaching special significance to the nymph gathering a wounded bird to her bosom. But all that was over and done with now. Lewis would leave her to-morrow, and her life would sink back into arid circumstance. It did not seem to her that she had ever been alive till she had met him, and now that she had given him up life seemed to her more like a desert than ever and the people in it extraordinarily insignificant. How different to-day from yesterday! By her father's bedside she had been thinking of Lewis, and of the day when she would be free to return to Claremont House to consult with him how a Cupid, a basket of flowers, a mask, a wreath, would light up a composition. She remembered lying awake at night thinking that perhaps she had made a mistake when she had said that the basket of flowers should be on the right side of the nymph instead of the left. Of course Lewis knew better than she, and her hope had been for many an hour that her mistake had not annoyed him and caused him to think less well of her judgment in matters of art. She remembered, too, how she had, while out driving, thought the drive too long, and looked forward to seeing the progress he had made during the afternoon, asking herself all the while if he had succeeded in painting the satyr—the one blowing the reed-pipe. And how pleasant it was to have him at dinner, to hear him talking across the dinner-table, to know that he was in the house, to hear his step, the sadness of the footfall as he left the house, the joy he brought back when she heard it returning, the hope that awakened as he came into the drawing-room, and the hope that died when she heard him going towards the ballroom! All this life that had once been so real was now about to disappear. But to keep it, and how? Was it a reality outside of her, or was it something within herself? "I suppose I'm in love with him," she said suddenly and aloud. "This fever which possesses me, which I would maintain at any cost, is love.

Strange, is it not? But strange or simple, there it is, and he must not leave the house," she said, and thanked God there was no train that night. One more night at least he would have to spend under her roof; of that she was sure. He must stay on—for how long she did not know—even if she had to beg him to stay.

Could it be that he was packing his portmanteau? And unable to restrain her curiosity she lingered on the staircase. If he was packing his portmanteau she would hear him moving to and fro, but she heard nothing, which was not astonishing, for Lewis had hardly ascended the stairs before his heart began to fail him. If he were to leave Claremont House without finishing the decorations, he would be in the same plight as he was when he came to Claremont House. She would not be obliged to pay him for unfinished work, for work which he had declined to finish; and he sat wondering, asking himself how he could retrieve his mistake. If he might retrieve it by going to Mrs. Thorpe and telling her everything that had happened? For a moment this seemed to him to be a way out of the difficulty, but on thinking it over he remembered that, if he were to take Mrs. Thorpe into his confidence, he would have to tell her that he had kissed Lucy. It would be better to go direct to Lucy and tell her he was sorry.

It was an agony to wait thinking that every moment the butler might come upstairs to tell him that the brougham was at the door to take him to the station. The footsteps in the passage were the butler's, but he had come to tell him that dinner would be ready in about twenty minutes. So perhaps after all he was not going to be sent away. Nothing was certain, but— As he left his room he met Lucy coming from her room, and he began the conversation with: "Dinner is a little early to-night, Mrs. Bentham."

"Only a few minutes, Lewis."

His name on her lips put courage in his heart. And during dinner he remembered having mentioned three months as the probable period it would take to finish the decorations, but he thought he could finish them in two. There was a good two months' work on the walls still; in two months he would broach his project to Lucy, and during these two months he hoped to persuade her out of her scruples, which amounted to no more than fear of discovery and subsequent divorce.

And, biding his time, choosing one evening as they were sitting, all three together, by the fireside, he began to speak of Paris and its schools of art, and how necessary it was for him to go there.

Mrs. Thorpe dropped her knitting. "Going to France when you leave here, Lewis? But I thought you had given up that idea?"

"But why should I have given up the idea? I have a great deal to learn; I know that. I don't know how to paint, but I can learn to paint. Could I find a better investment for the money you are kind enough to pay me for the decorations?" he said, turning to Lucy. He watched her face, and his reading of it was that she was thinking of the many temptations Paris presents to a young man, and how easily a young man's character might be undermined by the Parisian sirens.

"She doesn't like the idea that another woman should get me, yet she hangs back," he said to himself; and then aloud: "But, my dear Mrs. Bentham"—he never used her Christian name before Mrs. Thorpe—"I have to paint pictures."

"But you are painting pictures here on the walls."

"And beautiful pictures," Mrs. Thorpe interposed.

"Decorations, mere decorations," Lewis answered. "I must learn to paint portraits."

"And cannot you do that," Mrs. Thorpe asked, "without going to Paris?"

"But, Mrs. Thorpe, there is no reason why you shouldn't come to Paris, you and Mrs. Bentham, is there?" And he turned to Mrs. Bentham, and she answered:

"No, there is no reason. If we go to Paris we shall certainly look forward to the pleasure of seeing you."

The bodily possession that he desired so ardently still seemed a long way off, but it seemed certain to him now, "for people do things in Paris that they would not do in London," he said to himself, and asked Mrs. Thorpe if she would like to play a game of backgammon.

CHAP. XVI.

SOON Lucy began to think how her ballroom might be used as an advertisement of Lewis's talent, and it occurred to her that a ball would introduce him to a great number of people, some of whom might give him commissions to paint their portraits or to decorate their rooms, and if this happened the Parisian adventure might be indefinitely postponed.

She mentioned the ball one evening after dinner. Mrs. Thorpe did not remonstrate, and Lewis was delighted at the prospect of making known his decorations to Sussex.

"But if my decorations are to be seen," he said, "the room must be properly lighted."

Mrs. Thorpe answered that they had many lamps.

"A lustre will be necessary."

And next day he and Lucy went to London to seek for lustres, bringing back two with them, each holding twenty-five candles.

"With these," he said, "the room will be lighted from end to end."

Lucy was not so sure as Lewis that fifty wax candles would be sufficient lighting for so large a room, and when

trial was made her judgment proved to be right; and for the sake of certain wreaths and Cupids, which to lose would be to impinge on the general effect, Lewis hung sconces here and there, and lamps were placed at his direction on the mantelpieces and on pedestals in the corners.

This was his first exhibition, and the voices of the guests crying, "How charming!" "How beautiful!" "What a lovely room!" filled his soul with an exquisite music only heard by him—an enchanting music whose spell was now and then harshly broken when a couple advanced straight to Mrs. Bentham, showing no sign that they were in a room they had never been in before. "One would think," Lewis muttered, "that they were in a billiard-room with a hard green paper with a wriggly pattern on the walls."

The sense of enchantment, however, began again when Lucy called the attention of her guests to the decorations. He knew they could not appreciate, for they did not understand; but all he desired was praise, and when a couple, after shaking hands with Lucy, began to question her, looking round the room at the pictures, not at the people, his face and hers too lighted up, and she became again a gracious and animated hostess.

As long as they were looking at his pictures Lewis was delighted, but his delight increased when they asked to be introduced to him, and Mrs. Bentham brought them over or called him to come to her; and her pleasure was plain at his success.

"It is quite true," he said, "I'm successful! There can be no doubt about it," he added, for he caught sight of a group of people who were certainly talking about him, "saying," he said to himself, "'He is the painter'"; and when Mr. Ripple, a young man who wrote for the papers, approached him, saying, "I want to introduce you to"—mentioning several people of title—Lewis heard

a voice saying again within him: "You're successful, you're successful." He received the compliments paid him with tact, saying that he was pleased they liked his pictures, and this mixture of modesty and pleasure in their judgments was of advantage to him. He made many conquests that evening, and the most useful of these was Mr. Ripple, who he could see accepted him as a man of genius.

"Mr. Seymour," he said, "will you come with me where I can listen to your views on modern painting?" And Lewis answered: "I shall be delighted if I can tell you anything that will be of use to you in your articles. I believe you write for the newspapers. Come into the study."

"At the end of the library there is a room free from hats and cloaks where we can sit for a few minutes," Mr. Ripple said. . . . "I'm engaged for a waltz not very far ahead. But just tell me your views on mural painting."

Lewis tried to gather up his ideas and Ripple tried to understand, and after a few minutes he said: "I think I must return to the ballroom now, but I hope we shall meet again and have an opportunity of discussing this matter more thoroughly. I think I understand, and you may depend on me to give an artistic expression to your views. I believe you are going to Paris very soon," he added; and Lewis, seeing an opportunity for advertisement, replied:

"Not to study decoration specially—I have my own ideas about that—but portrait-painting, which must not be ignored by an artist. If you should ever come to Paris you will not fail to call on me at my hotel, which hotel Mrs. Bentham will give you the name of."

A few minutes afterwards Lewis saw Ripple gliding and whirling about the ballroom with a young lady in white muslin in his arms, exhibiting, Lewis was fain to

admit, great skill in avoiding collisions, stopping at judicious moments, and taking advantage of every opening, pushing his partner backwards or bringing her forwards to her great delight and to his own; Ripple looking upon himself as pastmaster of the art of Terpsichore.

"Why are you not dancing?" Ripple said, stopping in front of Lewis.

"I'm afraid I'm not an expert in dancing," he answered.

The young girl whispered to Ripple: "Let us away; we mustn't miss any of this dance"; and they went off together, leaving an envious painter behind, one sorely tempted to ask some girl to dance with him, but not daring. He saw a girl steal a gardenia from a young man's coat; the odour overpowered her, and wondered what they said to each other and did in the secluded corner in which they took refuge after the dance. The band began to play another waltz; couples rose out of the dark corners in which they had been hiding, and Lewis saw a tall girl with fair hair and a sheeplike face, who when she looked over her partner's shoulder to admire herself in the mirror, opened her eyes very wide: and the whirling of silk ankles and the gliding of glazed shoes continued hour after hour till the guests went away looking very tired and pale.

Some had ten and twelve miles to go, and these would not arrive home before four or five in the morning, so they said; and when the last batch crushed itself into the brougham, and the last carriage rolled away, Lucy and Lewis were left in the empty ballroom looking at the pictures. "The candles are burning very low in the chandelier," Lewis said, and Mrs. Bentham rang for the footmen, but before they arrived Lewis had secured a step-ladder and he blew out what remained of the candles. The footmen blew out the candles in the sconces,

and Mrs. Bentham told them to turn out the lamps and to draw the curtains, for it was now daylight.

"How strange the dawn is!" Lewis said. "There is always something menacing in the return of the light, whereas there is a sort of consolation in the departing light in the evening." He was surprised at his remark, it seeming to him full of significance and poetry, and he turned his weary eyes once more to his decorations and began to speak of them. Lucy was too tired to think of painting, but not too tired to think of Lewis, and she said:

"You're going to Paris at the end of the week?"

"We shall not be separated long," Lewis answered. "You will come to Paris to see me, and I shall finish the portrait that I began." And his talk was of his portrait as they mounted the first flight of stairs, whereas she expected him to take her in his arms. The moment was a propitious one, and he stopped in the middle of his room to ask himself why he had not done so. Why had he continued to speak about that portrait instead? Damn that portrait! It would have been better if he had taken her in his arms. "She would have let me kiss her; there was nobody on the stairs." He began to untie his necktie, and stopped untying it to curse his folly again and to ask himself why he had missed his opportunity—deliberately missed it. "Because I was too tired," he murmured to himself; "as likely as not that was the reason." He wished his nuptials to be triumphant. "Another opportunity will occur to-morrow," he murmured before he fell asleep. Another opportunity, however, did not occur on the morrow nor on the day after; but he went away to Paris with four hundred pounds, Lucy having insisted on paying more than was agreed on for the decorations: and three hundred and seventy-five pounds to his credit at the bank, five and twenty in his note case, some loose change in his pocket,

and a stiff determination in his heart to be a great success.

But to paint Greeks and Romans (he deemed these alone to be worthy of paint), it was necessary to learn to draw, and as soon as he arrived in Paris he went out in search of a studio, and as soon as he found one, he threw himself into the work that began at eight o'clock every morning, with an hour for luncheon at twelve. Work began again at one, and continued till five. Nor was he content even with eight hours' work a day; he must, for the sake of his visionary Greeks and Romans, attend a night-class of the Beaux-Arts. But to get into this class it was necessary to pass an examination, to draw and model a full-length figure in eight hours, to defeat a hundred candidates—perhaps more. And only a certain number of places were available—twenty-five, thirty, forty, fifty. For these there were many candidates. Lewis's drawing was twenty-fifth on the list—an excellent place among the forty drawings that gained admission to the class. He could hardly hope for a greater success, and he wrote an enthusiastic account of his reception at the Beaux-Arts to Lucy; a couple of months later he wrote an enthusiastic account of the prizes he had won in Julien's studio. A hundred francs and a bronze medal for the drawing he had done in the day-class.

"But is he not working very hard?" Mrs. Thorpe said. "If you look into his letters, Lucy, you will find that he works eight hours a day; his brain may give way. What do you think?"

Lucy did not answer, but soon after these remarks she said she would like to see Paris again.

"It would be well to look after him a little," Mrs. Thorpe replied. "It seems to me he is working much too hard."

"But if we should interrupt him in his studies?" Lucy answered.

"We needn't stay in Paris; a week or a fortnight's vacation cannot do him any harm. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

"Well, we can start any day you like," Lucy remarked. "We'll not write to tell him we are coming, but as soon as we arrive we'll just send him a letter asking him to come to dinner."

Mrs. Thorpe didn't answer, and in the silence of the drawing-room the click of the knitting-needles were audible. Coffee was brought in, and the ladies helped themselves according to their wont.

At last Lucy broke the silence. The servant had just left the room.

"But if Lewis is working so hard that his brain may give way—your very words, Susan—it would be well to remain in Paris some weeks. Eight hours are a long day's work, and you see that he tells us he works for two hours more between dinner and bedtime—ten hours! You see, he admits the work is excessive, adding that he doesn't care to do anything unless he does it to excess. He probably works in the evening after dinner because he has no place to go to. But if we were to take a flat in Paris . . . what do you think, Susan?"

"We must do something," Mrs. Thorpe answered, "or else he'll lose his health."

Lucy did not hear any further. Her resolve was taken, and her thoughts melted into dreams of drives together in the Bois and through Paris after five o'clock when his work was done, and after dinner, starting again out for a theatre, all three, unless Susan did not like sitting up late. It would be pleasanter still to sit alone with Lewis in a box, hearing the French language in all its purity at the Comédie Française. A flat would be much pleasanter than an hotel. One is never free in an hotel. But a furnished flat! Such things were not unknown in Paris,

and a letter to John Arthur, the celebrated house-agent of that time, brought them news that a large and commodious flat, consisting of several reception-rooms, six bedrooms, bathrooms, servants' rooms—in a word, everything a human being could require—was to let in the Avenue Joséphine. The owners were only asking four hundred a year for it, and if Mrs. Bentham wrote by return of post, they could walk into the flat at the end of the week. The owners would leave three of their servants behind if Mrs. Bentham wished to retain them. Perhaps it would save Mrs. Bentham trouble if she kept the Baroness's cook; the house-agent had heard she was excellent. Mrs. Bentham referred the matter to Susan, and Susan thought that, if they were going to live in Paris for some months, no better arrangement could be made.

CHAP. XVII.

"AND now what day shall we ask Lewis to dinner?" Lucy said. "We shall arrive on Saturday; we cannot ask him for that evening, nor on Sunday, but on Monday, perhaps." And it was on Monday morning that Lewis found a letter at his hotel asking him to come to dinner at half-past seven at 45 Avenue Joséphine.

The carriageway appealed to Lewis, who liked the massive, the opulent. And it pleased him to find that the concierge did not live in a little hole in the wall as she did in his hotel, but in a large airy apartment overlooking a courtyard; to find her well dressed and tidy; to hear from her that madame was on the *premier étage;* to bounce through the glass doors; to run up the wide, thickly carpeted staircase—so different from his own staircase; to be received with joy by two delightful women. The adventure was so cheering that he hardly

knew which of the two he liked the better—Lucy or Susan. Lucy, of course; but Mrs. Thorpe was so delighted to see him that his heart went out to her. There was the flat to look over, and Lewis foresaw endless dinners and hours spent in this flat full of deep sofas and voluptuous arm-chairs. No doubt the cooking was excellent; and if the impossible became possible, and he were Lucy's lover! The thought was a flying one; it passed rapidly and was lost amid many other thoughts. "Was the journey calm?" "Had they been sea-sick?" And "How long were they going to stay?" Everything was undecided. No date had been fixed for their return, and amid many misgivings, Lewis felt he could not fail to get her in the end. "But how would it come about?" he asked himself; and the conversation soon after became strained. They were anxious to be alone, and as she could not ask Susan to go to bed, Lucy proposed a walk in the Champs-Élysées. They could excuse themselves for leaving her.

"A walk in the Champs-Élysées," Lewis said, "under the chestnuts, where we shall hear Les Cors de Chasses in green jerkins. They play every evening in the Café des Ambassadeurs."

"You won't mind being left, Susan?" Lucy asked in a confident voice that the old lady's answer justified; and hearing her say she was feeling a little tired, the lovers went forth without a scruple into the Avenue Joséphine, and, turning down the Rue Pierre Charron, they found themselves a few minutes afterwards in the great avenue seeking a crossing. "A little below the Rond Point there is a refuge," Lewis said; and they marvelled at the great procession of carriages coming from and going to the Bois through the dusk of a windless summer evening. All the elegant life of Paris was in movement, and Lewis said that next evening they would go to the Bois themselves, and sit in the Café de la Cas-

cade, and eat ices and drink liqueurs amid the fashionable world.

"But the women we see lying back in those victorias are not ladies, are they?" Lucy asked; and Lewis, pleased to show his knowledge of Paris, answered carelessly that they were *cocottes*. "'Light-of-love' is the only term we have for a courtesan that isn't contemptuous, and every *cocotte* in Paris goes to the Bois in the evening if she is not going to the theatre or to the opera. At the Cascade one meets constantly Blanche d'Antigny, Marie Pellegrin, Léonie Leblanc, Mary Laurent, Alice Howard, and others less celebrated, though not less beautiful. Those who have been to the Café Madrid are returning, and those who are going will alight at the Cascade."

"You seem to have learnt a good deal of Paris," Lucy said to him.

"One hears of these women in the studio," Lewis answered. "I should like to paint their portraits."

The moment had come for them to cross over, and under the overhanging boughs of the pavement leading from the Rond Point to the Place de la Concorde they elected to sit. On their left was the Cirque d'Été, the Café of the D'Alcasar and the Ambassadeurs.

"How pretty the garlands of lamps are," she said; "and how fairy-like the foliage is under the artificial light."

"The artificial lights," he said, "are looked upon by some painters of Montmartre as being more attractive than daylight, but not by anybody in our studio. Shall we sit here among all these women?" he asked. "The studio in the Passage des Panoramas is an adjunct to the Beaux-Arts. The two women by us are *cocottes;* a very low class of *cocotte* comes to sit here in the evening when the evenings are fine, and they go away with lovers if chance favours them."

"Do you like sitting here among these women?" Lucy asked.

"Well, yes, I do," he said. "Their faces bespeak freedom from restraint, domesticity, children, and that shocking word 'papa.' It is difficult to express exactly one's feelings in words. Freedom is the nearest word that I can think of. Freedom unrestrained, unprejudiced. There we have it." And Lucy wondered how it was that Lewis could have become so changed in a few months. She did not like to think the worst, and in some ways he seemed to her more attractive; but there was a lack of restraint in his talk which she feared, and she put it down to the company he had been keeping. "But if he has been working ten hours a day, how can he have kept bad company?" she wondered. "A studio, of course, is full of students, and the society of art students is always unrestrained."

"Tell me——" she said. At that moment Les Cors de Chasses broke forth into a medley so vulgarly harmonized that after a little while they wished it could cease and allow them to continue their conversation, for it was difficult to talk within the sound of so many brass instruments; and, after all, they were more interested in each other's voices than in musical instruments.

Lucy waited for Lewis to speak of his daily life in the studio. He had said that the studio opened at eight.

"So you have to be up at seven to be at the studio by eight?" she asked him.

"Yes, that is about the time," he answered. "But on Mondays it is as well to get there before eight, for there is a new model, and those who arrive first have the choice of places."

"And you work on all day," she said, "till five o'clock, with an hour for luncheon?" And seeing she was interested in the life at the studio, he began to tell her of the professors who walked round the easels,

stopping at every one to give advice to the student, perhaps to take his pencil out of his hand and to correct his drawing. There were two, Jules Lefebvre and Bouguereau, academicians, both of them. Lewis was not especially attracted by Bouguereau's pictures, but he admired Lefebvre's studies of the female form more than anything, if he were to tell the truth, he had seen in the Louvre. He would have liked to talk about Lefebvre, but Lucy was more curious to hear what Jules Lefebvre thought of Lewis's drawings than what Lewis thought of Lefebvre's pictures, and from Lewis's remarks it appeared that Lefebvre thought very well of Lewis.

"He often prefers my drawings," Lewis said, "to the drawings of Ducet, his favourite pupil. And he said so out loud, addressing the whole studio."

"And who else," she asked, "is there in the studio?" And Lewis told her of those who were well considered. There was a short, silent man with a reddish beard, "somewhat like Thompson," he said, "who painted his own way without giving much heed to the professor; and there was a tall dark fellow, very handsome," he added, "with black hair and brilliant eyes." The red-headed fellow, Lewis thought, always painted the model a little too pink, and the dark tall man with the brilliant eyes painted the model a little too violet. The rest of the studio was mere riff-raff, fellows that had been sent up from the art schools in the provinces to learn painting because they had taken a prize in the art school; "and, of course, a great many Americans and Englishmen," he said; "in all, about thirty men and ten women."

"Ten women?" Lucy said; "but I thought the model was naked?"

"Yes, so she is, and he is too."

"And the ladies, do they sit in the room and draw a naked model?"

"Oh, yes!" Lewis answered indifferently. "There is

a school for women on the other side of the street, but they prefer to work with us"; and then, warming to his subject, he explained that no notice was taken of the model except as an object of study. The model might be a block of marble, a vase, a bunch of flowers—it was merely an object for study. One hardly associated the model with human life. All the same, he admitted that it was strange to talk to a young lady from Kensington of her mother and her sisters in front of a great naked man. As long as the model was posing it didn't so much matter; but when the model rested, and didn't wrap himself in a sheet, but just flopped about, it was difficult to feel quite at ease. "And then a model will call," he said, "to ask for a sitting. The master cannot promise him one until he has seen him, if it be a man, her, if it be a woman, and so they have to undress and show themselves, and the worst moment of all is when the woman steps out of her drawers, or the Italian boy steps out of his breeches."

"Does the supply of models never fall short?" Lucy asked. And he answered that he had never heard of a lack of models.

"Once a model fell ill in the middle of the week, and we couldn't get a model to finish the week, so we agreed to draw lots who should sit. The women, of course, were exempted; we couldn't ask the young ladies from Kensington to take off their clothes."

"So one of the students sat?"

"Yes. The lot fell upon me."

"And do you mean to say, Lewis, you stood naked before them all?"

"Why not? The lot fell upon me, and they liked my figure very much, and wanted me to sit through the following week so that Rouneuf might finish his painting. But sitting is very tiring. However, I said I would if Rouneuf gave me the painting; but he wouldn't."

"So it was never finished," Lucy said.

"No, for on second thoughts he decided to leave it as a sketch. Miss Lily Saunders did a very good drawing. She said that what she liked about me was my shoulders. To see me in my clothes nobody would think I had such a good figure. I am only repeating what they said. My shoulders are square, you see; and then the body nips in at the waist, and drops down in good lines to the knees, and I'm long from the knees to the ankles."

"If Miss Saunders admired you so much, I wonder she didn't ask you to take her out to breakfast one day."

"I don't know how it is, but I've never heard anything about the men and women who work in the studios. Some of the fellows go after the models, who are often very pretty refined girls, and we sometimes ask the model to breakfast with us if she is pretty and refined."

"And do you ever think them pretty and refined?"

"If a girl is pretty and refined I think her pretty and refined, wherever I find her," Lewis answered.

"And how was it that you were never tempted?"

"Love," he said, taking Lucy's arm, "is a great shield against temptation."

"I wonder if that is so?" she answered; and they walked up the Avenue together, Lewis asking why they were going home so soon. "The Cafés Chantants will not close for another hour," he said.

"But why should we wait?" she said, as they walked on; and she passed her arm through Lewis's, drawing him closer to her with an involuntary movement of which she was barely conscious, for she was thinking, and intently, of the temptations that beset a young man in an art school, amid art students and models and young women from Kensington.

She was glad that she was spending some months in Paris, for during those months she would be able to save Lewis from himself. "From himself," she repeated

to herself, for it was too much to suppose that a young man would live without a mistress. If he had lived all these months without one it was as much as might be expected. "He said it was memories of me that enabled him to do so." The temptation whispered in her ear, and she wished Lewis would cease speaking of the studio; she already began to hate it, with its models and its young women. Again the temptation whispered that, if she did not give herself to Lewis, he would sooner or later go to live with one of the models; and worse still, perhaps, with one of the American girls, whom he would marry in the end, and once he was married he would be lost to her for ever. Even if he did not marry she would lose him, for the woman that gives herself to a man is always much more to him than any other woman can be. She could not think else. Unless she became his mistress, she would be, and very soon, no more to him than a sort of younger Mrs. Thorpe.

And the thought of losing Lewis, and becoming no more to him than a mere acquaintance or a friend, was odious to her. She must have him all to herself, and her way became clearer as they passed through the Rond Point. The Rue Pierre Charron ascended a little, and they walked slowly, Lewis talking all the while of the studio. "If he goes on talking about that studio any more I shall bid him good-bye at the door," she said to herself; and she was about to bid him farewell, when Lewis said:

"May I not come upstairs?"

At that moment a sudden weakness fell upon her, and she answered:

"If you like; but it's rather late."

"The concierge is in bed," he answered; and all they could hear was the beating of their own hearts. Mrs. Bentham had a key, and as soon as they entered the drawing-room she said that she would feel more comfort-

able when she had got into a tea-gown. . . . She passed into her room, and had not left him more than a minute when it began to seem to Lewis that she was gone an hour. He was standing thinking of nothing in particular, when a thought came into his mind of Lily Saunders's drawing. She admired his figure, and Lucy would admire it if she saw it. But she mustn't come back and catch him in the middle of his undressing. It wouldn't take long. He could undress more quickly than she could, who had stays to unclasp. He was standing in the pose of the dancing faun when the door of her bedroom swung over the carpet and she came into the room.

"Lewis, Lewis! What have you done?" And then she began to laugh. "Is that the pose you chose for the class?"

"No," he answered; "it would be impossible to keep this pose for long. The pose I took for the class is a simpler one"; and he threw himself into the pose. "Which do you like better?"

"I don't know that I care for naked men."

"We are so used to seeing people clothed," he answered, "that nakedness seems comical to us; isn't that so? I will show you another pose"; and when he had taken it, he told her the lines in his figure the class had appreciated. "So, Lucy, a naked man isn't beautiful in your eyes?"

"I don't know that he is," she answered. "But I dare say that Lily Saunders has a different opinion."

"But you don't think that I ever give a thought to Lily. If you saw her you wouldn't think so."

"She's very clever, you say."

"She sometimes does a good drawing. I think she'd sell the drawing she did from me. I'd buy it for you, for though you don't like a naked man in the flesh, you might like him in charcoal."

CHAP. XVIII.

"SO you've been all this time in Paris without going anywhere except at the Louvre; not even to Notre Dame?" Lucy said.

And he answered that he remained outside out of deference to his feeling, the inside of a church bringing to his mind too vividly the ideas out of which a church rises and the uses to which it is put.

"So you've been nowhere except to cafés and brasseries and theatres?"

"I've been to the Luxembourg Museum, and know the gardens very well."

"You've been to Versailles?" He had heard of Versailles, but never of Trianon nor of Le Petit Trianon.

"History doesn't interest you?"

"I don't know that it does. One can't know everything, and a choice is incumbent."

"You don't know who built Versailles?"

"I don't know that I do."

"Louis XIV. You've heard of him?"

"Yes, I've heard of him; but you see, Lucy, I've to get my living. I didn't come to Paris for sight-seeing, but for education."

"My darling, I'm not reproaching you. One man knows one thing—another, another. We all live in different worlds, and perhaps that is the reason why we attract one another. If you were a lord and owned many thousands of acres, it is quite possible that you might never have looked my way." He refused to admit that this was so. "Would you," he asked, "not have looked my way if I were a rich man?" and she conceded this much—that if he were a rich man he might not have captured her imagination.

"And if you were an art student I mightn't have loved you."

"I'm sorry to hear that," she answered; and it seeming to him that his confession had failed to please, he took her in his arms:

"As you are I love you; what you would be if you were an art student I don't know; nor do you know if you would have loved me if I were a lord whose only interests were hunting and shooting."

"When you kiss me like that you can do with me as you like," she answered; and she fell to kissing him: "Wait; lie still and let me look at you"; and, raising herself on her elbow, she toyed with his curls, and bending over, kissed him on the eyes and mouth. "The time will come, darling, when you will care for me no longer."

"But why look forward to that time?"

"You should have answered me that that time will never come; and you'd have answered so if you loved me truly. True love doesn't look ahead. And if——" She checked the words that had risen up in her mind, deeming that it were wiser not to speak them. He did not press her to speak them, for he guessed that the unspoken words were, "If I were younger you would love me better"; and after looking into her eyes, and examining her ears, her teeth, her hands, and declaring himself enraptured with her loveliness, he said to himself she must be about thirty-five—ten years older than I.

"Of what are you thinking, Lewis?"

"About Versailles," he said. "Do go on talking. Tell who built Versailles."

"My darling, you're not interested in the history of France."

He pleaded, and she began: "Versailles was built by Louis XIV., a great King, who had many mistresses, like Solomon, and the most romantic of all his mistresses was

Mademoiselle de la Vallière; and the story runs that the King, while hunting in the forests, heard her say to her companions, who were pressing her to tell whom she would like to marry if she might choose from all the men in France, that the King had always been her hero and her lover, and that if her dream didn't come true—and she knew well enough that it couldn't—she would never marry. This romantic avowal, overheard romantically, so flattered Louis that he ordered her to his Court, and loved her till he met Madame de Montespan, one of Mademoiselle de la Vallière's school-fellows. To be cut out by one of her school-fellows was Louise's fate. One is always robbed by one's best friend; and finding that the King was for ever wearied of her, and would never pick up her thread again, Louise retired to a convent. Madame de Montespan was superseded by Madame de Maintenon. But, Lewis, I cannot relate two centuries of French history in a single night."

"Not in detail, but tell me who succeeded Louis XIV.?"

"Louis XV."

"Was he given to mistresses?" he asked.

She answered: "More than any other man"; and he begged her to relate the rise and fall of the great Madame de Pompadour, her name having captured his imagination.

"How we have declined," he said at the end of the long narrative. "Once I thought Julia Baron, Blanche d'Antigny, Marie Pellegrin and Léonie Leblanc wonderful. They are but *cocottes,* whereas Madame de Pompadour and Madame du Barry were courtesans in the finest sense of the word. But how is it that you know French history so well?" And Lucy answered that English history had no interest for her whatever, but French history was her favourite study, and of all periods the Napoleonic was her specialty. She had been collecting

Napoleonic relics for years past. He asked if Napoleon was before or after the Reign of Terror. She answered " After," and he wanted to know how long it lasted.

" About eighteen months. But to understand the French Revolution you must know something of the preceding reigns. Louis XIV. was succeeded by his great grandson, and, strange to say, Louis XV. was succeeded by his grandson, the Dauphins having died. It doesn't surprise me that you were not tempted to visit Versailles, for without some knowledge of French history Versailles is merely a great formal palace overlooking formal gardens. But I cannot go on talking. Lewis, your arm is beautiful. Hold it so that I can see it. I like to follow the lines. If I were an artist I'd like to draw your arm. Did anybody in the studio draw your arm, Lewis, beautifully? "

" Lily Saunders did a very pretty drawing. She got the movement of the arm very well. I think she'd give me the drawing if I were to ask for it. She'd sell it certainly. Would you care to have the drawing? "

" No, I don't think I would," Lucy answered pettishly. " I don't like to think of those American girls sitting around, their eyes fixed upon you. I don't like to think of any woman seeing you."

" But I am to Lily Saunders no more than a statue—Antinoüs, the dancing faun, or Hermaphroditus——"

" I wouldn't have you speak of yourself in connection with a statue of the decadence," Lucy interjected; and looking over himself, Lewis said:

" Well, there are traces of the woman in me. But why should you be jealous of Lily? "

" I'm jealous because I know she'd like to get you away from me, and, if they knew, how furious they would all be! Who was the other, Rose Post? "

CHAP. XIX.

"SO Louis would not impose any new taxes?" Lewis asked, and Lucy began to tell that when Louis XVI. came to the throne the treasury was empty, and that no new taxes could be imposed on the people, so heavily were they taxed already. It was the peasants and the middle classes that paid taxes before the Revolution; the nobles were exempt from taxation. The wars of Louis XIV. and Louis XV. were paid for by the people, and likewise the palaces of the Kings. Of all, King Louis XV. was the most extravagant; the presents he made to his innumerable mistresses were paid for by the people and the middle classes, and the expenses of the Court of Louis XVI. were very heavy, and there was no money to meet them, no money to pay for the endless sinecures. Everything was dragged out of the people; the people paid for everything. A reform was imminent, and the beginning of the reformation was Louis XVI.'s refusal to impose any further taxes, for he, being a good man, said that if any further taxes were imposed they must be imposed by the nation itself, and the nation was represented by a great council known as Les États Généraux, which consisted of delegates from the people, the clergy, and the aristocracy. It had not been summoned for nearly two hundred years. Louis XVI. summoned it as the only way out of the difficulty—a very great one, because the aristocracy was averse from every project of reformation; reformation meant curtailment of their privileges and taxation. But Lucy could not tell him much about the session of Les États Généraux; she only remembered that Count Mirabeau came in as a representative of Le Tiers États, that is, the people, and through his eloquence it was agreed that the clergy, the nobles, and the representatives of the people should all

sit together, "and so Les États Généraux became more and more democratic, and things, darling, began to go from bad to worse, till at length the people, enraged at the troops that were as usual drawn about Paris, during the second session of Les États Généraux—— Of course you will understand, darling, that I'm speaking from memory. This is merely the roughest sketch. What was I saying? . . . till the people, enraged at the sight of the military, ran off to the *Invalides* and seized all the weapons stored there, and with these overcame the guards at the Bastille and liberated the prisoners."

"What happened then?"

"As well as I remember, the law-abiding citizens formed into a militia guard with a view to the maintenance of law and order; but the people were now thoroughly roused, and a great mob went away to Versailles and invaded the palace. Marie Antoinette, after hastily putting on her stockings and throwing a shawl over her shoulders, escaped to Paris, and the Royal household remained there for some months—I cannot remember how long—till at length it became apparent that their lives were not safe in Paris. Then the Queen's lover, Comte Fersen, arranged that the King and Queen should escape across the frontier, which they might easily have done if they had been more careful to keep their identities hidden at the various stopping-places. As well as I remember, Louis might have got away if he hadn't waited while a chicken was cooked. At Varens he was overtaken and escorted back to Paris, he and Marie Antoinette."

"Was Comte Fersen her lover?"

"Not in the sense that we are lovers, she had no lovers, then, in the sense that we are lovers"; and Lucy told all that was known in favour of the theory that Marie Antoinette's Swedish lover was but a friend.

"Can a passion ever be platonic?" Lewis asked; and the question was discussed for a long while.

"They rarely saw each other; only at long intervals. One interval was ten years, I believe," she said. "The nobles," she continued, "were, so far as I can see, the undoing of the King and Queen, for they would not permit any reformation. Marie Antoinette would have liked some reform of the very expensive Court, the strictness of whose etiquette was almost unbearable to her. Versailles must have been one of the coldest palaces in the world. Hot air was unknown in those days, and the etiquette was that the maids of honour should assist at the Queen's dressing. They were supposed to come in as soon as she came from her bathroom."

"Did they take baths in those days?" Lewis asked.

"Well, that is a question," Lucy answered, "but it is on record that the Queen's chemise had to be passed through the hands of several ladies, the highest in rank handing her the chemise, and if a lady of the Court scratched at the door (the custom then was not to knock, but to scratch), the door was opened to her, and the Queen was kept waiting for her chemise, and sometimes these interruptions happened five or six times. One day it happened seven, and then the Queen said: 'This is unbearable, and must cease. I cannot stand so long waiting for my chemise.'"

"But was the Queen naked all the while?"

Lucy did not think that she sat naked among her maids of honour, and she replied to Lewis that she supposed that the Queen waited in her dressing-gown.

"But if there were no baths at that time?" Lewis interjected, for he liked the idea of the Queen standing naked while the maids of honour went again and again to the door to admit a late-comer.

"It was the tedium of the etiquette of the Court of Versailles that forced Marie Antoinette to take refuge in the Petit Trianon, a present from her husband, and

there all the Court used to go and pretend to be milkmaids. In hoops they milked the cows and churned the milk, in hoops and silk stockings. We must go to the Petit Trianon. You won't care about Versailles, but the trees all around the Petit Trianon are most beautiful. Its rural aspects have been preserved in memory of the Queen"; and Lucy began to speak of Louis XV., who was a great botanist, and used the Petit Trianon for the cultivation of rare trees and shrubs. "He used to spend hours with his gardener considering," she said, "the acclimatisation of the many strange species that were brought to him from abroad."

"Flowers and women seem to have filled his life, and from end to end," Lewis said, and he thought, as he lay amid the pillows, he envied Louis XV. his mistresses, for however successful he might be, there was no prospect of outdoing the King. "He should have died," he said, turning to his mistress and kissing her, "surrounded by all the beautiful women, and been carried to the grave by them. How did he die?"

"In no wise as you would have had him die," Lucy answered. "He died of virulent smallpox, so that when his grave at St. Denis was opened by the Revolutionists, the body had disappeared into a black liquid, whereas some of the Kings that had died hundreds of years before presented as fair an appearance as if they had died yesterday."

"A gruesome story," was Lewis's comment. "It is as if Nature wished to avenge herself for excess." And they were glad to get back to the gardens and woodlands about the Petit Trianon. "So Marie Antoinette and her maids of honour used to milk the cows and all those beautiful neat-herds in hoops and patches, and all the courtiers in their silken breeches, sword on thigh, have passed away; and the world is the same as if they had never been?"

"Not the same," Lucy answered, "for we are thinking of them."

"But our thoughts cannot bring them back, even if we were to think intensely."

"They might if we were to think very intensely," she said; "but thoughts are always wandering, and by the will of Providence that guides the world, so that the past may really be the past."

Lewis did not understand, and begged of her to explain, and she said:

"Darling, I was thinking of a very strange story I once heard"; and Lewis asked her to tell this story, but she said she did not like to tell it, for he did not believe that the world of the spirit and the world of the flesh were but two aspects of the same thing.

"Don't stir, Lucy," he cried; "but just look. Which are your legs and which are mine? Is that leg yours? Is this one mine?"

"Our legs are alike," she said; "but what has your question to do with what I was saying?"

"Well, nothing," he answered; "I was only struck by the similarity. Our legs are indistinguishable in black stockings."

"If you were interested in what I was saying, you wouldn't have noticed our legs."

"I was most interested," he answered, "and am longing to hear your story, and you must know quite well that the thought wanders, but returns quickly. Isn't that what you were saying—that our thoughts were set wandering lest the past might never become the past?"

"I did say that, and was going to tell you a story about a wonderful thing that befell two gentlemen walking in the fields about the Petit Trianon. But I'll not tell you."

"Because I admired your legs. How unjust you

are!" He could read in her face that she would tell him the story, and was only doubtful how he might effectually persuade her to relate it; to do so he allowed their talk to drop, and during the intervals of silence he said: "Very well, Lucy, of course if you don't like to tell the story, don't tell it; but I'm sorry you should think that I deny altogether the spiritual side of life."

"Tell me," she answered—"you are not altogether a cynic, are you?"

He begged her to believe that he was not; and she told how two gentlemen walking in the gardens and woodland of the Petit Trianon became aware suddenly that they were looking upon a garden and woodland similar to those they had seen before, but not altogether the same. "For instance," said one, "there is a brook, and I am certain it was not there last year." "I was thinking the same," his companion answered. "That brook is new to me." A little farther on they came to a staircase, and saw a page running down the steps. "Nor was that flight of steps there last year. Let us follow the page and perhaps he will solve the mystery." And they went in search of the theatricals, deeming that the page must be a performer in them. "It must be so," each said to the other, "but not having an invitation we shall be intruders"; and, on leaving the gardens, they began to relate to each other their experiences in detail, becoming more and more convinced that a vision had been vouchsafed to them. To put the matter to the test they returned to the garden next day, wondering how they should see it—as it was or as it had once been; and not being able to discover any of the things they had seen yesterday—neither the brook nor the flight of steps—they went to the National Library and asked for plans of the gardens as they existed in the days of Marie Antoinette; and to their great surprise they found the brook and the flight of steps; likewise information to

the effect that the Queen's pages were always running down that flight of steps they had seen.

"But, Lucy, to substantiate your theory, the two gentlemen should have gone to the Petit Trianon desiring so ardently to see Marie Antoinette that their desires were able to call her out of the shades."

"They saw her painting," Lucy interjected.

"And your explanation is that the two men were thinking so intently of the time when Marie Antoinette went forth with her ladies to milk the cows that the past returned responsive to their prayer?"

"No; that is not my explanation. As far as I remember, the gentlemen declared that they were not thinking of Marie Antoinette. The page they saw was a phantom, a ghost, an image thrown back from the past. But of what are you thinking, Lewis?"

"Of you, dear—of your figure; you are as slender as a young girl. You could pose in the studio. Your breasts are the same as they always were."

"I'm a little thicker in the hips than I used to be; but I don't think I've changed much. We both have long slim legs, undistinguishable in black stockings. But tell me, why do you wear black stockings?"

"Because I used to wear shoes, and my socks kept slipping, and the suspenders that men wear to hold up their socks hurt."

"Is that the only reason, Lewis? . . . And now, Lewis, we are both very tired; we have talked and talked again, and it is broad daylight, and neither you nor I can keep our eyes open. Good-bye, darling, till the afternoon. When the studio closes, you will find us about five o'clock."

And, kissing her, he said he would not go to the studio. He might go there in the afternoon for an hour or two; but perhaps it would be better to forego the studio. "Every dog deserves a holiday, and I haven't

missed an hour for many and many a month. I will let to-morrow be a holiday—a thanksgiving for last night."

He kissed her again, and in a revival of love they lay in each other's arms for quite a long while, and it was through a happy weariness of spirit and flesh that she heard the door sweep over the carpet, and thought that she would fall asleep at once. But as soon as he was gone thought began to quicken in her, and she remembered that she had gotten at last something to live for, something to love. She would see Lewis every day. Only a few hours and she would see him again. He had said he was not going to the studio, and might come to breakfast. After breakfast they might go for a drive, as he was not working in the studio that day. And after dinner they might go to the opera. How delightful the returning would be: to hear him talking to her and to know that she was talking to him! How wonderful! And to forget all the world! She had almost forgotten it already. Nothing seemed to matter but this fever of anticipation; never to sink back into the lethargy she had come out of, but to have Lewis always present before her in her mind. How wonderful! She had been seeking him always; he had been her quest, and she had found him.

CHAP. XX.

"ARE you sure, Lewis, that French history—this hobby of mine—has any interest for you?"

Lewis answered that he could not go through life without knowing who built Versailles, and who milked the cows at Trianon and made the butter; and he said that he was impatient to hear how the shrieks of Madame du Barry on the scaffold brought the Reign of Terror to an end. In answer to his asseverations Lucy told him that

the King and Queen and all their nobles met their deaths with stoic indifference—Marie Antoinette without a sigh, without a tear. She had suffered so much that the day of her death must have seemed to her happy; if not happy, at least less terrible than many days she had lived through.

"We are now going," she continued, "to the Conciergerie"; and as they drove to it she told him it was originally the palace of the early Kings of France—of the Crusader, St. Louis, the King who went to Palestine several times and killed many Arabs in his attempt to recover the Holy Sepulchre, and place it for evermore in Christian hands. She said that the chapel still existed in ruins or intact—she did not know which; but remembered that during the Revolution the Conciergerie was the principal prison. "We shall be taken," she continued, "through the kitchens of St. Louis's palace, now the Buvette des Avocats; and it was in that room every prisoner was received, and it was from that room every prisoner went to the tumbril that waited to take him to the scaffold. Aren't you moved?"

"Yes, indeed, I am," he said; but in truth the walls were mute to him, and without Lucy's face to read would have had no meaning at all.

After leaving the Conciergerie he hoped she would propose a visit to the Louvre, but they drove to the Convent des Carmes, and Lewis learnt that it was here the prelates were all massacred. After the priest was tried and acquitted of all wrongdoing, the formula was, "Laissez passer monsieur"; and thinking that he had escaped both prison and guillotine, the priest walked out into the open air to be killed by the pikemen. One priest managed to escape into the garden, and Lucy related how the assassins allowed the priest to think he had succeeded in eluding them, uttering words to deceive him, asking each other if he had escaped over the wall, knowing well

that no escape was possible. "He must," they said, "have climbed up some tree, and from thence dropped from a branch on to the wall." These words were spoken to inspire hope, it being judged that his punishment could be increased by the false hopes. "So there he is!" was the cry as soon as the man emerged from his hiding-place; and the hunting began again. "These huntings were known as the cassock-hunting," Lucy said.

As soon as they returned to the victoria the coachman asked them whither they would like to go, and to please Lucy Lewis said that he would like to see other rememberable places; but Lucy told him that they had seen the two principal places—many others there had been, but these were swept away, everybody being anxious to rid himself of the painful associated memories. But there were old palaces that she would like to show him, and they drove about, visiting different sights. La Place des Vosges, she told him, was the most fashionable quarter in Paris at one time; it was now given up to small tradesmen and their families. The last great man that had lived there was Victor Hugo. Lewis cried out, "Paris is wonderful!" and they drove day after day through Paris, visiting old streets and churches and inns, Lucy relating stories, till at length she began to speak of the French country of which Lewis knew nothing, and she told him of the palaces that the Kings of France had built in the country of the Loire: if he wished to learn French history in an agreeable manner they might journey from castle to castle, and from the guide that would conduct them through the rooms he would learn a good deal more of the history of France than she could tell him.

"Blois is but an hour or two from Paris," she said; and the next day the train took them to a pleasant sunny town by a deep river, at the sight of which Lewis said,

"Is that really the Loire?" and he thought that if he ever made sufficient money by painting he would like to buy a house in Blois with a large garden about it. The house and garden of his imagination occupied his thoughts more than the castle did; Lucy thought that he hardly saw it, but he assured her that he admired the spiral staircase designed—so it was said—by Leonardo da Vinci. The state-rooms seemed to him too formal, and he said that life must have been dreary in the castle; but he was interested in the pictures, especially in one of a holy family painted by Ingres, in the manner of Raphael. He thought it better than Raphael; and they went away to Souches and went through many rooms and heard stories of the Kings of France: how they lived and died—very often murdered. From thence they proceeded to Amboise, and heard more stories of Kings and Princes and great nobles, and the impression left upon their minds was that all these rich people lived in cold palaces insufficiently warmed by great wood fires, scenting themselves instead of washing, for bathrooms were almost unknown in the eighteenth century, only bidets; "and that shallow vessel," Lewis said, "has become the symbol of the eighteenth century . . . of its ideas and sensations," he added after a pause. "Isn't that so?" he asked, and as she did not answer, he concluded that she was dreaming of the discomfort of living without a bath, she saw the great nobles going forth on palfreys with hawks on their wrists. One day, as they emerged from a close of ancient walls, Lewis said: "Lucy, the country is beautiful, but it is smug. Even our South of England is not as smug as the country of the Loire, in which the men seem to fish admirably from morning to evening, watching their floats carried down by the slow current—emblems of hope and patience."

"But do they catch anything?" she asked, and he said that was a secondary consideration.

"It is plain that they fish admirably"; and the joke became one of their little intimacies, a little secret to which they could return with pleasure, and which united them—a sort of communion.

"You will like Fontainebleau better," she said, and he answered:

"Fontainebleau is in a forest country, and I've never seen a forest. We have no forests in England of any great extent, and who wouldn't like to visit a palace in a forest?"

And a few days after this remark they were in Fontainebleau walking towards the palace, and having listened to the guide's patter till their brains were weary of it, they walked into the gardens and stood leaning over the balustrade, conscious of the great history that lay behind. They had seen the room in which Napoleon had signed the treaty of abdication. But he was, after all, only an intruder, not having added one high roof to the castle, nor brought a statue hither; nor was he even responsible for the furniture in the castle, nor for the designs of the gardens. This was Lewis's view, but Lucy would have been only faintly interested in Fontainebleau if Napoleon had not been there, and if the treaty of abdication had not been signed in the castle. The French Kings had looked upon Fontainebleau as a hunting-lodge; so there must have always been a place of some sort at Fontainebleau.

One of the Henrys built a house for his mistress in the environs of the town, and Lewis, always interested in mistresses, cried aloud that they must go to see her house. "La belle Gabrielle," he repeated again and again. "Who knows but we may see her vanish at the end of a gallery, or come upon her leaning over a balcony, watching the sun setting? Do you know any other story, Lucy, of the past returning suddenly?" and, after thinking a moment, she remembered another revival

of the past, coming suddenly upon a party of Florentines that had gone into some woods and were sitting at breakfast under the trees. A naked woman came through the brambles torn and bleeding, and the dogs that hunted her were followed by a huntsman in green hat and jerkin. And when he was asked why he urged the hounds to attack the woman, he related that it was his privilege to wreak vengeance through eternity upon the woman who had deceived him. "An Italian folk-tale, no doubt, but containing, perhaps, a little truth," she said to herself, and at that moment became conscious that the evening closing slowly over the gardens had befallen not once, but ten thousand times before—the same blue fading into roseate grey, without a cloud, without a wind, had been admired by ladies in hoops and powders and high wigs. Nor was she the first woman that had followed her lover round these fish-ponds admiring the evening. The same evening and the same dreams had been entertained by how many women? At every moment she felt the vision to be imminent. As none appeared, she inclined to the belief that her thoughts were not intent. If she could only detach her mind from the present, the past might reappear—if not to Lewis, to her. She asked herself if it be not true that every eye sees things that no other eye sees. . . . If Lewis was away she might have been able to detach herself from the present, but he was by her side, and she in the joy of living. A year and a half, nearly two years, had passed since the day she saw Lewis for the first time in Mr. Carver's shop. She was then thirty-four, now she was thirty-six. A year of the short time of life allowed a woman for love had been wasted, and in ten years she would be no longer fit for love. She might keep him for ten years, but after ten years she would have to hand him over to another woman, whom he would marry, and who would bear him children; and she wondered who this woman would be, and if

the wife would suffer when she learnt that she was not his first love, Lewis having had a mistress for many years. Would she, the mistress, hate the wife? And would she suffer at this surrender of her happiness, and retire gracefully into middle age?

She turned to admire the young man by her side, and his grace as he leaned over the balustrade brought a swimming behind the eyes. She might retain him for some ten or a dozen years, till she was forty-five; at fifty a woman's life is really over, and she began to wonder how the sensual coil would break; if weariness or some accident would break it; or the arrival of another woman, a misfortune that might befall her at any moment, for she could see that all attracted him, he being a very young man.

One of the first pieces of worldly wisdom she learned from her husband was that a man did not care for a woman for more than a year or eighteen months unless she produced a child. If she did, love began again, and on a new lease. He had a good knowledge of human nature, and what he said had a ring of truth about it; he had had experience among women, and said they were the same as men. Women had tired of him sometimes before he had begun to tire of them: he had been flung out. The words "flung out" frightened her, and she asked herself if it could be her fate to be flung out. Would it not be better to break with Lewis? But that she could not do, any more than she could throw herself over the balustrade into the fish-ponds; and she took refuge in the thought that we continue to live though we know we shall die some day for certain; and, despite the possibility of dying of some painful disease, we continue to live because it is such a natural thing to live, and in like manner it is a natural thing for a woman to yield to a man and to love him despite his faults. . . . She knows them, but knowledge does not help us to shape our lives

wisely; they are shapen for us; and she fell to thinking of the progress Lewis had made during the year and the success he had been in Paris. He was thought highly of by the professors, for they had adjudged to him prizes, saying that his natural genius was of the decorative order, and the essential now was for him to try to improve the quality of his painting. The quality of his painting had improved—her own eyes told her that: "The Road in the Woods" was beautiful, the best thing he had done; he thought so himself, and she liked to think that her influence had counted for something in the development of his talent. It was she who had discovered the lake, high up on the top of the rocky hill; and seeing in it a subject for a picture, she had brought him to it. It was her point of view he had painted. A man usually owed a good deal of his inspiration to his mistress. The Fornarina revealed to Raphael the beauty of women, and Rubens's artistic debt to his wives is admitted by everybody. It was a pity she was not ten years older; if she were forty-five she would adopt Lewis. But the part of a mother would be a cold portion; and overcome by a sudden remembrance, she cried out within herself, "Only one relation is possible."

"Of what are you thinking, Lewis?"

"Thinking?" he replied. "I was just wondering what you were thinking of? How many minutes is it since we have spoken?"

"A minute, two minutes," she answered. "It isn't necessary to be always speaking, is it? Sometimes I think one is nearer in silence than in speech. And you, Lewis? Of what were you thinking?"

"I was thinking that we might walk across the park through the great trees to Changis. The nightingales sing there, and afterwards we might go to Barbizon and dine at the inn, and come back through the forest at midnight. Do you remember the birds the other night?

There seemed to be as many nightingales in the forest as there were stars in the sky. I shall never forget that midnight. How the birds called to each other and sang against each other, each striving for mastery, pure flames of song! Do you remember, we called to the coachman to stop so that we might listen to the birds?"

"Of course I remember," she answered. "It was as you said—nightingales everywhere in the dark branches and a sky full of stars."

"We scarcely spoke during the rest of the drive. Why is it, can you tell me, Lucy—why are sensual moments the most illusive? The two hours we spent in each other's arms are not as clearly remembered as the moment we listened to the birds singing."

"We remember intellectual emotions better than bodily."

"I suppose that is it. The flesh forgets its pleasures and its pains, one as easily as the other; and yet——"

The conversation fell, and Lucy did not dare to ask if he had thought of her before he dropped asleep; nor did she dare to tell him that when he left her room she had slipped out of bed and stood in her nightgown looking at his sketches, and that she remained looking at them till she feared she was getting cold, and ran back to bed.

CHAP. XXI.

ONE evening they heard that Fontainebleau had a poet, or, to speak more exactly, Valvins, a riverside village some three and a half miles distant; and as the need of some occupation was upon them it occurred to Lucy to inquire for the poet's works as they walked through the town. But the bookseller to whom she addressed herself could not furnish her with any verses by Mallarmé, the

poet being averse from collecting his poems, preferring to leave this task to posterity rather than to undertake it himself. He contributed poems to reviews, but, as far as the bookseller knew, he had only once published a considerable poem—some three or four hundred lines—a leaflet which, of course, he would be glad to procure for them.

A few days afterwards a parcel came to their hotel, which on opening was found to contain Mallarmé's poem—a miracle of typography on the finest Japanese paper, and adorned with three illustrations by Manet.

"The illustrations are rubbish," Lewis said. "The man has never learned to draw."

Lucy liked the golden strings and tassels, and their imagination was stirred by the title, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*. They applied themselves to the poem, perceiving with joy that it was written in words every one of which they had seen before and understood. All the same, they were never sure of the poet's meaning—at one moment they held it, and a moment after it was gone; and they pursued it through a mist of conjecture, till at last, tantalised by the ever-escaping meaning, they returned to the bookseller to ask him if he could construe some three or four verses that puzzled them especially.

After some application of mind and eyes to the text the bookseller handed the leaflet back, saying that they had better take their difficulties to the poet himself: he was a professor of the English language in one of the State colleges in Paris, and was very notable for his courtesy to visitors, and of all to English visitors.

"The tramway would take you to Changis," he said; "and from there, by gentle descent through the outskirts of the forest, you will reach the Seine, and after crossing the bridge turn to the left. You cannot fail to find his house. There are only about a dozen houses in Valvins; the first passer-by will direct you."

With these directions in their minds they went forth, but they missed the way many times from Changis to the river, and had to turn back and follow a different path; but all the paths were overhung with pleasant branches, so it did not matter, and after debouching from one of these they came upon the Seine suddenly, and stood looking up and down the deep, tranquil river, enchanted by the aspects, and amused by their adventure—their search for a poet who would make plain three puzzling lines to them.

"His cottage must be one of that group," Lewis said.

"But these cottages are but peasant cottages," Lucy answered. "Do you know, Lewis, I am beginning to feel nervous; he may look upon our visit as an impertinence. What do you think?"

"All the same we cannot leave Fontainebleau with the meaning of those three lines still upon our minds."

"Do you know, Lewis, I think I have got the meaning. It came to me in one of those forest lanes. Won't you listen?"

"My dear Lucy, I listened to you all last evening, but having come so far, I'd like to see the poet and receive his own interpretation of the obscure passage. We'll cross the bridge and ask one of the fishermen on the other side to point out the poet's house to us."

"The fourth house," the fisherman answered; and as soon as they were admitted into the kitchen their eyes fell on certain rare pieces of furniture. "Pieces that owe some of their attractiveness to their association with the poet in a humble dwelling," Lewis was saying when the door opened, and Lewis had not time to close the lid of the escritoire he was examining. An awkward moment, surely, but the poet passed over it easily by opening the escritoire for inspection and telling how he had become the owner of some quite genuine pieces.

"After the war," he said, "the authorities, deeming

it unlikely that the castle would ever be inhabited again, had the furniture taken out of the servants' rooms and sold by auction. . . . May I offer you a cigarette?" he asked. "Madame does not object to smoking? The nineteenth-century poet is glad to live amongst the off-scourings of the eighteenth."

He had already won them over, and they sat listening to him, charmed by his courtesy, his affability, and, of all, by the pure Voltairean French that came off his tongue like silk. It seemed as if they were listening to French for the first time, and their pleasure was heightened by the contrast his spoken word presented to his written; one was so difficult, the other so easy, and his naturalness so insidious that already they had begun to think he did not seek the contrasts that surprised and almost repelled them at first. He accepted them without question, as a man accepts the colour of his eyes and the shape of his nose. No doubt this was so, and the thought brought them to the study of his appearance, which till now had escaped their scrutiny.

They found it typical, but enhanced by many special accents: A French peasant he seemed to them; a handsome rustic of middle age and medium height, but on looking closer they had to acknowledge that his features were finer than a peasant's. The nose showed some beautiful modelling, and the pale, kindly eyes lighted up an oval face, framed in a close-cut brown beard. He wore a flowing, almost military, moustache, and Lucy watched him take tobacco out of a rare Oriental pot. While he rolled his cigarette she noticed how carefully clipped his nails were, and it was his nails that decided her that the real man was a dandy. Lewis came to the same conclusion almost at the same time, saying to himself, "He wears rough clothes," and overlooking the trousers and the hang of the jacket, he added: "He's just one of those

men who would go to a first-class tailor and say: 'I want you to make me a suit of peasant's clothes.'"

As soon as his cigarette was lighted the poet returned to his scheme for an entirely new departure in dramatic writing; and, seeing that he had captured Lucy's enthusiasm, he opened a drawer and showed her a bundle of tiny notebooks, saying that it was on Japanese paper that he put down the thoughts that came to him in walks in the forest and in his boat on the river.

"Thoughts connected with your drama?" Lucy said, and she begged him to disclose the people of the play to her.

"There are but two," he answered. "A young man, the last of a noble family, a poet living alone in a ruined castle, uncertain whether he is called upon to go out to the wars and add to the glory of the family by some signal act, or whether it would be better for him to engage in commerce and make great sums of money and build up the family fortunes again. He is not sure of himself, and every time he puts the question to himself the wind answers him with the word, 'Oui,' long drawn out, resembling the sound of the wind in a ruined tower. It is part of the genius of the French language that the wind in a ruined tower should always be trying to pronounce the word, 'Oui.'"

Lucy asked the poet if the play would be performed in Paris, and the poet passed over the question. It did not seem to her that he answered it directly. He seemed to foresee himself travelling from fair to fair, interpreting his play himself from a tilt-cart, and she began to wonder if he preferred an audience of rustics rather than one of the sophisticated Parisians. And then, her mood changing, she entertained the thought that Mallarmé's desire to interpret his own drama from under a tilt was in keeping with his aversion from a collected

edition of his poems during his lifetime. He wished to return to the versifying vagabond—to Villon.

There is something of Villon in us all, in every poet's heart, and the eternal Villon had led this professor of English in a State college to buy a peasant's cottage in the neighbourhood of a forest, and to dream of himself as a mummer travelling with a show: a young man, the last of an ancient line, listening to the wind in a ruined tower. We would all escape from the coil of civilisation, and the very title and the obscure diction of *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* testifies to a soul in revolt. But the precise versification presents some difficulties. Ah, we are subject to more souls than one. . . .

It was in this way that Mallarmé became comprehensible to Lucy. He was trying, as we all are, to escape from ourselves, and she fell to thinking of Marie Antoinette milking the cows at the Petit Trianon.

"The same thing," she said to herself, and at that moment she remembered that the afternoon was slipping by, and that they must be thinking of departure—but they must not go before asking for a translation of the enigmatic verses into Voltairean French. The rest of the poem they hoped to puzzle out for themselves, and, summoning all her courage, Lucy confessed that her French never seemed to her so inadequate as it did while reading *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*.

"The language you write," she said, "is not the language of the streets."

"No, it is not," the poet answered. "The painter, the sculptor, and the musician have special languages, and therefore only the general significance of their work is understood by the public. You were kind enough to say that you found beauty in my poem: is not that enough? My poem brought you to me. It has achieved already a great deal. The revelation has begun, and

any explanation from me would only divide us. To be with you always, I must not lift the veil."

"But we fear," Lucy interjected, "we shall never understand the passage beginning with the word 'Alors,' when the faun awakens—I mean when his sexual appetite awakens. We would know if his desire is concerned with the nymphs that are bathing or with the water-lilies. Would this be a true interpretation of the sense?" she asked. "'Then I shall awaken to my primal ardour, erect and solitary, under an antique flood of light, Lily, and one of you all (the reward) for my ingenuousness.'"

"I can only repeat," the poet said, with a look of gratification on his face, "that the interpretation of my poem is henceforth with you, and you will forgive me if I am averse from robbing the poem of all chance of future life in your hearts."

On these words he turned the conversation from his poem to the morning illumination of the river, mentioning that his boat was awaiting him in the reeds.

"You will come," he said, "for a sail with me, for I am indebted to you for my boat—at least for part of it. It was bought with the five hundred francs that the bookseller paid me for it, and you paid ten francs for your copy of *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*. My wife," he said, introducing them to a long, thin female, who reminded them of a dried herring in a bonnet, and to an amiable daughter, who had inherited a good deal of her father's beauty.

His family accepted the introduction, apologising for their intrusion. They did not know that M. Mallarmé was receiving visitors. "And my husband always has tea in the afternoon."

"To-day we will have tea an hour later. My friends here are kind enough to say that they will go for a sail with me."

The family bowed as they retired through the door, and the poet led his visitors out of the house.

"This is my first day sailing," he said, and they were not very far from the bank when this fact became plain. A puffing wind caused the boat to heel over, and they would have all found themselves in the water if Lewis had not thrown all his weight over on the other side.

"A narrow escape," Lewis said.

"I hope you're not frightened," the poet said, turning to Lucy, who by this time had obtained sufficient control of her voice to answer that she always felt safe with Lewis—a plain avowal of her love. But Mallarmé's tact was equal to the occasion, and neither that day nor the next, nor any of the succeeding days, did he ever allow the lovers to think for a moment that he had divined their secret.

"Mr. Seymour is, I can see, a skilful yachtsman. We are both safe while he is in charge of the sheet," thereby pleasing Lucy, the end he had in view. Lucy smiled acquiescence, her smile seemed to the poet a permission for him to steer up and down the current, and along the broad, bright banks sloping steeply upwards to the forest.

"You will always remember," the poet said, as he handed the lady ashore, "that after crossing the bridge you turn to the left: my cottage is the third. You see, I do not fear explanation when I want my guests to arrive in time for breakfast. I may add that my wife would never forgive me if, through my fault, you were late for her breakfast. She sets much store upon her cooking."

"The day after, Monsieur Mallarmé," Lewis said, "you will turn to the right, for you have promised to dine with us at the inn. Now, with kind regards to your wife and daughter, we thank you very much. We have received more than we expected. Then, to-morrow."

"Isn't he charming?" Lucy said, when they had bidden

the poet good-bye. "We have spent a most enjoyable day, as agreeable as unexpected. He's not a bit like what I imagined him to be. Every incident seems to contribute to our happiness: this poet and the river-side inn over yonder. I was so anxious to leave Fontainebleau; it was beginning to be tiresome, and now the poet and the inn will give us a fresh start, and we shall probably stay here for some days longer."

And for a week the poet came and dined with them at the inn, or they breakfasted with him in his hamlet, and the three spent long days together in the open air, returning home tired and looking forward to next day's adventure.

There were no empty days, and ten had passed away before they began to see that it would be without meaning to remain any longer in Valvins. All the same there was sadness in the thought that this river-side adventure was but a moment in their lives.

"If we stay any longer we shall lose a pleasant memory," Lucy said on their way back to Paris. "Things are always falling behind us; and don't you think, Lewis, we would enjoy life less if it ceased to flow like a river?"

"But shall we never see Valvins again?" Lewis asked.

"We may see it again," she answered, "but it will never be the same Valvins: Valvins is now a memory."

And, taking up her thread of thought, he said:

"It will be memory that will never grow less, but will increase and multiply in imagination as the years go by."

His words seemed strange to him. He regretted having spoken them, and to put them out of Lucy's mind he said that he was glad to return to his art.

"My painting is an excuse for breaking up our honeymoon," he said.

To which she replied: "It is not broken up, Lewis; we shall continue to live it in Paris."

"Yes," he said, and it was then that he had broached the subject, "not only in the flat, but in my studio."

"In your studio, Lewis?"

He had drawn enough models, and must return to himself—to his dreams. She asked him if he thought he was doing well to leave the Beaux-Arts, but lent a willing ear to his assertion that long hours of work in a public studio wore away the natural spontaneous artist that alone was of any value. He had drawn, he said, from the model long enough, and the argument he put forward to prove that the Beaux-Arts was a bane could not be well gainsaid. "Every year," he said, "an artist wins the Prix de Rome, but no great artist—except Ingres—ever won it, from which it seems to me that we must conclude that education is detrimental"; and convinced that he had learnt as much as he could carry away, he returned to designing, which, he said, was himself, and to his portrait of Lucy, which, though a portrait in essentials, was a decorated surface.

In his studio was a piano, an organ, and a violin. He had what is known as a good ear, and could ramble over the keys and strings at great length, and Lucy listened to his performance on all three instruments with equal pleasure; and for some reason which she could not explain, her love for him seemed to reach its height when he laid aside his fiddle after playing some fashionable melody. He used to sing words by Ronsard to a voluptuous undulating rhythm, till she could bear it no longer, and, bending over the arm-chair, waited for him to come and kiss her from behind on the neck. And the combat over, they went forth shopping together.

"You won't lose patience, darling? I have some hats waiting at Esther Myers's."

"Who is Esther Myers?"

"The great milliner."

"But who can tell you better than I which hat to choose?"

He liked seeing money spent lavishly, and it amused him to hear her order hat after hat, toque after toque, and to say you must wear that one when you come to see me, and she replied with a verse:

"*Elle mettait son beau chapeau, son chapeau bleu.*"

She did not know any more of the sonnet, but thought that the lover lived on the *cinquième*. If so, the last words would be "*je t'aime.*" . . . She tried to remember, but at that moment the brougham turned into the Rue de la Paix and stopped before Worth's great doorway, when a liveried footman came forward to open the door of the brougham, and liveried footmen showed them into the great man's consulting-room. At both ends were large mirrors, two that could be moved about at discretion; the others were fixed in the wall. On the right was a high desk, where a clerk waited to take down an inspiration as it came from the master's lips.

After a few preliminary questions the great man said, sinking back on the green velvet divan:

"Will you kindly walk this way so that I may catch the character of your shoulders?"

Lucy passed across the room and stopped. Worth did not speak, but motioned her with his hand to walk back again, and after some moments of deep meditation he murmured: "Florentine bronze, tinted, falling over a *bouillonné* pleating of pale moonlight blue"; then after a pause he added: "The front also blue, closely gathered more than half-way down."

The inspiration then seemed to have left him and he moved uneasily on the divan of dark green velvet. The assistant waited at his desk, pen in hand, and the silence was full of much uneasy solemnity. After some moments the master murmured "Flounces," and his brows con-

tracted like those of a poet. Lucy and Lewis approved of the flounces, but Worth shook his head, and with the candour of genius admitted that something lacked; for the moment he could not say what, and was on the point of asking Mrs. Bentham to call another day, when Lewis hinted that the top might be partially concealed by some handsome bronze and gold bead trimming. "An admirable suggestion," the master said, and added with an expression of triumph: "forming a garland of fringed leaves."

Three-quarters of an hour were spent in discussing the shape of the body, also in brown satin; and after giving ear to all their suggestions, Worth decided it was to be cut in the shape of a heart.

"Now, Lewis, I'm going to the Bois and will leave you at your studio."

He pleaded to be allowed to go with her, but she said that to drive through the Bois with her in the afternoon would advertise them as lovers to all Paris. She did not wish to be talked about, for she was beginning to be known in Paris. And it was on her lips to tell him that he was neglecting his painting, but she refrained from reproaching him, afraid lest she might exhibit herself in the light of a schoolmistress. "I may lead," she said to herself, for she was not without tact, "but I must not attempt to drive." No, indeed, she was not without tact, and knew how to introduce him to her friends without compromising herself, and she persuaded him that they must present a reasonable appearance to the world. It was all right for him to appear in her box at the Opera; the Opera would not interfere with his painting. Parties, balls, he should avoid as much as possible, for a man who has been dancing till four o'clock in the morning cannot be out of bed and at his easel at ten. Lewis answered that four or five hours' sleep were enough for him, and he followed her from ballroom to ballroom. He

had become interested in dancing and desired to distinguish himself in the Boston, and Lucy watched him whirling round the drawing-rooms of Le Quartier de l'Étoile; every kind of American face leaned over his shoulder, for dancing was the fashion in those days. Lucy did not care for dancing for its own sake, but to see him coming towards her with a ribbon to pin upon her dress, and to leave her chair and advance towards him and to whirl with him round the room, and be taken back to her chair by him, was a great pleasure to her. "There has been very little pleasure in his life till now," she said to herself and refrained from reproaching him, saying, "he will return to his painting more eagerly than ever after his holiday. The schoolmistress he must never see in me," she said to herself, and whispered in his ear the corner at which he would find the brougham waiting for him.

They did not leave these balls together. To do so, Lucy said, would make her a marked woman, and he must be sure to shake off any friend that would accompany him. No one must see him get into her brougham. He was clever at avoiding detection, and believed himself capable of outwitting most detectives. There was a good deal of the cat in Lewis. One moment he was in the street and a moment after he was in her brougham, her skirts about him; a delightful moment, though both were tired and sleep pressed their eyelids. A delightful moment in a well-appointed brougham, driving along the Champs-Elysées in the dawn across the Place de la Concorde, over the bridge along the quays into the Rue du Bac. He had a studio in the house in which he lodged, and she told him she would call for him about twelve and take him out to breakfast. "Good-bye, dearest." The door opened, and as soon as he passed into the house, the brougham returned along the Quai Voltaire, and immediately afterwards she remembered Carpeau's sculp-

ture and raised her tired eyes to look at it, and regretted that it was not placed where it could be better seen. The brougham passed along the Orangerie into the Place de la Concorde, and she remembered that a hundred years ago it was called the Place de Louis XV. The Champs-Elysées were built afterwards, she thought, during the Second Empire. But why was she so interested in every bridge and every point of view? The London streets did not interest her, but she never drove up the Champs-Elysées in the early morning without wondering. There was something great, something triumphant in the wide avenue ascending to the arch on the hilltop nearly a mile away, and all the way beautifully planted with chestnut-trees and interspersed with swards, with cafés and restaurants throughout, swings and merry-go-rounds —an enormous wonder in May when all the trees were in flower under a morning sky. In a few minutes they would be at the Rond Point, and a few minutes later they would turn into the Rue Galilée. A few yards of sharp ascent would take them into the Avenue Joséphine. She had heard the name, Avenue Joséphine, was going to be changed. A pity, she thought, to change a name, and a name so evocative as Josephine.

As the brougham turned into the Rue Galilée a tall thin man rose from his seat in the victoria that had followed the brougham to the Rue du Bac and back again to the Champs-Elysées. The little horse that drew it could no longer keep pace with the brougham, and putting some francs into the driver's hand, he sprang from the step, and, catching up his long coat, he ran full tilt up the pavement into the Avenue Joséphine, and rushed across it, reaching the house in which Lucy lodged a few seconds after she had passed in. The concierge, already awakened by Mrs. Bentham's ring, did not keep him waiting; and as it was not uncommon for two lodgers to enter the house at the same time, Mrs. Bentham as-

cended the stairs wrapt in her own thoughts, and was half-way up the second flight when she was startled by hearing somebody call: "Lucy!"

A great surprise this was to her, for there was nobody in Paris, except Lewis, who used her first name in addressing her.

"You've no right, Herbert, to follow me into my house."

"Nor has my wife the right to leave a young man at his lodging in the Rue du Bac after a ball."

"So you've been following me?"

"Of course; and the result of my spying is that a new arrangement has become necessary. But we can discuss the details more comfortably in the drawing-room than on the staircase."

Herbert begged of her not to raise her voice on the staircase lest she should bring the concierge to her assistance. "If you do, I shall have to say who I am. Let me come into your drawing-room."

"How long do you propose to remain?"

"I hope and think we may be able to come to an agreement in ten minutes or a quarter of an hour upon a certain point."

"A matter of money?"

"Why put matters so plainly, so crudely?" he answered. "Do you mind my lighting a cigarette? A cigarette gives one countenance—a sort of veil between oneself and reality."

"A matter of money," she said to herself. "Well, I'd better hear how much he wants."

"You've taken these apartments for a year?" he asked.

"Let us not waste time. How much?"

"My dear, that is not the way we should approach the subject. I hoped that the money question would never rise between us again."

" How much? " she answered.

" Aren't you going to sit down? "

" You can sit down if you like."

" Well, Lucy, the question arises, as the newspapers say, between us, whether I shall ask for a divorce or whether you will divorce me. We can settle that matter much better between ourselves than by the aid of your solicitor or mine. You're tired, I can see that; but a more propitious moment could hardly have been chosen."

" You know," she said, " that I was at the Marquise de Maure's ball? "

He answered that it would take too long to explain how he had learnt that she had at last taken to what he called " side-stepping." " A delightful expression which, like many others," he said, " comes to us from America. Well, now, which is it to be, Lucy—that you divorce me or that I divorce you? "

" I don't want a divorce."

" But I may want one."

" I suppose you have acquainted yourself with the law of divorce, Herbert; and know quite well that if I can prove any 'side-stepping' against you, your petition will fail? "

" Yes," he answered, " I know that; but you may not be able to prove to the satisfaction of the court that I have ever committed adultery, whereas your little excursions to the Loire and back leave no doubt of misconduct. If money affairs——"

" Ah! "

" Yes, if money affairs can be settled satisfactorily between us, I can give you cause to bring an action against me, and then you will be free to marry the young gentleman."

" But if I do not wish to marry? A woman who has

been so unhappily married as I was feels little inclination to put her head into the noose again."

"Well, then," he said, "I shall have to bring an action against you, and Mr. Seymour may not like to figure as co-respondent, and you may not like to do him harm—prejudice his career. Come, Lucy, it is much better to avoid these public scandals."

"How much do you want?" she answered.

"Well, I was thinking that if you were to allow me fifteen hundred a year—" And seeing that she would consent, he yielded to the temptation to question her: "Now, why don't you want to marry this young man? It doesn't follow that because you were unhappy with me you should be unhappy with him. And there is another reason, Lucy." The question brought a little colour to her cheek, tired though she was, and she waited for him to speak again, afraid lest he read in her heart that she did not wish to marry Lewis because marriage would quench the sense of motherhood in her. She could not look upon her husband as her son, but she could look upon her lover as a sort of stepson, or, to put it differently, she could look on herself as Lewis's stepmother; and as she sat gazing at her husband, she remembered how much she liked to take Lewis in her arms and kiss him as a mother kisses her son, chastely. At other times feelings that she could not overcome overpowered her, and she kissed him as he asked to be kissed—as a mistress kisses and a wife doesn't, as she had never willingly kissed Herbert. His first name was odious to her. She did not think of him as Herbert, or as Mr. Bentham, but as "him."

"Of what are you thinking, dear?"

Lewis had asked her of what she was thinking as they leaned over the balustrade above the fish-ponds of Fontainebleau, and now "he" used the same words: "Of

what are you thinking?" The question that had pleased her when Lewis asked it now irritated her.

"Are not my thoughts my own?" she said. "Come, how much? I'm tired. Don't let us prolong an interview that cannot be any less disagreeable to you than it is to me, unless you wish to torture me. How much did you say?"

"I'm sure I don't mind your leading the life that pleases you. I don't see that there is any harm, if appearances are kept up."

"Spare me your theories on the goodness and badness of things. How much?"

"Well," he said, "since you put it so plainly, an allowance of fifteen hundred a year might console me for a marriage that I shall be obliged to forego. A very nice widow . . ."

"You have mentioned the sum before! I agree. Fifteen hundred a year. But what proof shall I have that you will not blackmail me and follow me into my house?"

"Well, if I do, you will be in no worse a position than you are to-day. You will be able to say: 'You have broken your promise, Herbert. I shall not pay you another penny; consult your solicitor.'"

"What you say seems to be reasonable. I will tell my solicitor that I intend to allow you fifteen hundred a year."

"May I ask when the first quarter's allowance will be paid?"

"If you will give me the name of your bank, I will write to my solicitor to-morrow on the subject."

"That will be very kind of you. Well, Lucy, good-morning. I hope that we shall not be forced to meet again."

"Then, indeed, it will be 'good-morning.'"

CHAP. XXII.

THE interview with her husband overnight appeared in Mrs. Bentham's face and speech and manner at breakfast, and Mrs. Thorpe and Lewis were afraid that she had not slept well. She answered that she had slept hardly at all.

"You seemed quite well when you left me at my door," Lewis said.

"We have been keeping late hours lately, and it may be that I'm beginning to feel the effects."

"You have, indeed"; and Mrs. Thorpe advised her cousin to go to her room after breakfast and lie down, but Lucy answered that she would not be able to sleep. She would be better after she had been out for a walk. But she would not go to Madame de Coetlogon's dinner, nor to the Marquise d'Osmond's ball after dinner. "Lewis, are you dining with us?"

He was sorry; he was dining with Madame de Coetlogon.

"And she'll take you to the Marquise's ball?"

"She offered to take me. But I shan't stay. I shall be in bed before one and at work in the studio at ten. To-morrow will be a long working day, and you won't see me before tea time."

"You don't seem to care for anything, Lewis," Mrs. Thorpe said, looking intently at the young man, "unless you're doing it to excess"; and Lewis answered that he was not sure that Mrs. Thorpe was not right, that excess was what pleased him: and he instanced the days of twelve hours that he used to spend on the scaffolding at Claremont House.

"It wasn't easy to persuade you to come down from that scaffolding for your meals," Mrs. Thorpe interjected; "and when you had worn yourself out, you

would suddenly abandon painting and spend whole days down by the river; it was as difficult for you to lay aside the fishing rod as it was the palette."

"Yes, yes," he answered cheerfully, and Mrs. Bentham, who had, meanwhile, been chewing the bitter end of jealousy, said:

"You seem pleased at being accredited, Lewis, with such febrile enthusiasms for work and idleness, but I'm not sure that the painter you admire most, Fragonard, didn't try to maintain a continuous inspiration, and if you would emulate him——"

"Emulate him!" Lewis cried. There was sufficient good sense in him to deprecate comparison between himself and Fragonard, and when reproved for his modesty he reminded the two ladies that he was only six and twenty, and Fragonard died an old man. But though he could not accept the compliment that his mistress paid to his talent, it pleased him inasmuch as it set him thinking that if he were to make Paris his home he might capture some of that painter's sunny sensuality. "Those sunny bedrooms and landscapes," he said to himself, and continuing his æstheticism he affirmed that to depict beautiful things with a view to making them seem more beautiful than they really are was always the mission of the artist.

His reverie came to a stop suddenly. "I believe she's beginning to tire of Paris," he said to himself, and he remembered that she no longer laughed at the caricatures of Offenbach and Hervé. The great Hortense in "La Belle Poule" seemed to her shallow, superficial, perhaps even a little vulgar, and Lewis began to think his mistress irreparably English in her tastes. Every day she seemed to him to become more and more English, till at last he had begun to feel that she would never appreciate the Champs-Élysées. He had heard her say that the name was in itself ridiculous, and that Les Cors

de Chasse playing fanfares in a formal garden was quite a Frenchman's idea of *le sport*. Auteuil—its balconies, porches, vases, gardens, and tiny railway was to her, like everything else in Paris, theatrical. "There is a lack of homeliness," she said, "in Paris. It is charming for a week or a fortnight, but we English people sigh for home after a fortnight. The French people seem to live in cafés and to talk too much about adultery." She perceived the imprudence of her words, but kept her gravity, and Lewis did not dare to snigger. "Are you not tired of France," she asked.

Lewis began to talk of Boucher and Fragonard, and the flatness of the English vision in painting, and how anxious he was to acquire the French.

"But," she said, "you go to the studio no longer."

"No," he answered; "but I'm absorbing French influence. The present is a period of absorption—of thinking things out." And he asked her to come to the Louvre with him. "But, Lewis, when is this period of absorption to come to an end? I quite understand that everybody must have a holiday; but when do you propose to end your holiday and return to England? You know I'm anxious to see you in a studio painting. Wouldn't it be better to work while you are in Paris, and to take your holiday when you are in London?" She regretted her words soon after having spoken, for they implied that she was not satisfied with the life that Lewis was leading, which, in truth, she was not. For some time past she had been saying that a man who doesn't get to bed before four in the morning cannot paint the next day—certainly not before twelve o'clock, and Lewis usually arrived about one o'clock at the Avenue Joséphine. In the afternoon he paid visits, and in the evening he had a dinner engagement, and there was always a ball after dinner. This life of pleasure she had begun to feel was incompatible with art. She had always under-

stood that an artist sacrificed everything to his art. She didn't wish Lewis to sacrifice her, for without her he would decline. She was his mainstay; without her he would not have learnt how to paint. All Lewis knew of art he got from her; and she must not separate herself from him, but have patience with him, despite the fact that she saw him led away by women almost every night. But they were taking him away from her. Her influence was fading—she knew it—yet she lacked resolution to say: "Lewis, we are returning to London; we'd like you to return with us, but if you think it would be better to remain some while longer in Paris, we shall look forward to seeing you when you return." A communication of this sort she felt to be necessary, and she kept turning the words over in her mind for a long while, till at last they could be delayed no longer, and she mentioned that she had written to Claremont House, giving notice of her return.

"When," he asked, "do you return? Not yet, surely; not before the 'Grand Prix'?"

"But why should I remain for the 'Grand Prix'?"

"We might go to the fashionable Dieppe and to Trouville afterwards. We might spend a season in Aix-les-Bains in September, and we might from there go on to Spain."

"But my home is in England; and really, Lewis, if you wish to hear the truth, I will tell you. Your career is in England, and not here. You cannot become a Frenchman because you were born an Englishman, and nobody is a success out of his own country, or happy."

Lewis felt that she had spoken the truth, and it came to be often discussed between them that we can only really live where we are born. Our minds never wander far from our nativity, though our bodies may be elsewhere, and it is well not to separate the mind from the body. What is true of plants and flowers and trees is

also true of animals and of men. True, quite true; he must return to England because he was English; the two years and some months he had spent in Paris would remain a little island in his life. He would return to England with Lucy because he loved her; he could not be separated from her. Lucy was his line of luck. "You will help me to find a studio," he said.

She welcomed the word "studio," and spoke to him of the presidency of the Royal Academy as they leaned over the bulwarks of the vessel, without, however, being able to cheer him.

As the shores receded he felt he was bidding good-bye to La Belle France for ever. Something that had come into his life was going out of it for ever, and there were tears in his eyes as he wrapped a woollen shawl round his mistress's shoulders.

CHAP. XXIII.

HOWEVER we may have enjoyed our sojourn in a foreign country, it is always agreeable to return home, and the English cliffs presented a pleasant appearance even to Lewis, full as he was at that moment of French sentiment, and in spite of himself the English accent sounded pleasant on his ears as it came from the lips of the railway porters.

He did not like to fall asleep in Lucy's presence, but sleep overcame him, and it overcame her soon afterwards, and they both slept till the ticket collector came to ask for their tickets. Even at that moment of low vitality it was pleasant to see the solemn Thames so different from the gay little Seine, and to mark the buildings and the sky that was just beginning to brighten.

"It may be a fine day after all," Lewis ventured.

Mrs. Thorpe, whom they had forgotten, woke up and

suggested they should all go to the same hotel together and sleep away their fatigue; and this plan might have been followed if it had not been discovered that they could catch a fast train and save themselves the trouble of unpacking and repacking their trunks, and undressing and dressing again. The old phrase about making two bites at a cherry came into their minds, and an hour later they were rolling out of Victoria, thinking how pleasant it would be to get to bed and sleep away the fatigue of the journey.

"Don't call after him," Lucy said, as she and her cousin ascended the stairs; "he has gone to look at his decorations"; and while she dressed for luncheon she began to feel anxious about him. "If his decorations failed to please," she said to herself, "he hasn't closed his eyes all the morning, but lain awake thinking how he might improve them. It may be that he will ask permission to begin them all over again. His face will tell me"; and when they met in the drawing-room, his face, which she could now read, told her that he approved of his work, and on questioning him she learnt that he was more sure of his drawing; that he knew more; and his eagerness to return to London and to work convinced Lucy that she had done well to take him away from Paris and its associations.

Her presence at Claremont House was needed; her gardens! But Lewis left her no peace, and at the end of the week they were going to London together to look for a studio. After all his painting was more important to her than bulbs. She would be a great deal in his studio during the winter; the studio, therefore, was almost as important to her as to him. She would like it to be within convenient distance of Carlton House Terrace. She fell to thinking of Bloomsbury; the very name exhaled a fragrance of dead romance, and Lewis said that he thought he could see himself living in one of the

old houses in Bloomsbury Square. So to Bloomsbury they went, and spent a long day searching without being able to find anything that they could approve of cordially; but if the house agent's books had proved singularly poor in artistic residences, they had, nevertheless, spent a pleasant day, and sitting on either side of the fireplace in Carlton House Terrace they talked of studios and gardens, thinking that as they had found driving to and fro, calling at different houses, running upstairs, discussing the height of ceilings, north lights and wall papers, a pastime, they must not yield to the temptation of saying "This will not do." They had seen nothing in Bloomsbury, but in Chelsea they might find what they were seeking; and Chelsea was, after all, not further from Carlton House Terrace than Bloomsbury.

"We shall have to go to Chelsea," Lucy said, "but there is one thing I must ask you: to have patience. It is impossible for you to paint the pictures we would all like to see you painting, in ugly surroundings. We have gotten a number of addresses and must go to every one. They won't all suit us, but we may happen upon something that will, but we must be patient."

And the next day the carriage stopped in front of a handsome house with portico overlooking the river, an inspiring house it seemed to them both, and the inside seemed in keeping with the outside.

"We seem to have hit upon the very house we want," Lewis said. Lucy was not so sure: it seemed a little pompous, but it might do.

At that moment a voice from the next room cried out that he was not to be disturbed, and the caretaker told them that the gentleman had come in last night who had taken the house.

"But why did you let us come in?"

"I thought that you were friends of the gentleman's,"

the caretaker replied; and Lucy and Lewis returned dejected to the brougham.

The next address was in a slum.

"We shall have you laid up with fever," Lucy said.

"And the noise!" Lewis answered. "Dogs and children howling together. I wonder why the agent sent us here? I told him I was a painter."

"When we go back to the office you'd better tell him the kind of pictures you intend to paint," Lucy replied, laughing; "and to make matters plain to him, it might be as well to bring some photographs of Boucher and Fragonard. A photograph of the 'Rape of the Chemise' could not fail to put him in mind of some picturesque spot."

Lewis laughed, and after he had complimented Lucy on what he called her pretty wit, they proceeded from failure to failure up staircases and round backyards till Chelsea was fairly ransacked.

"We haven't been down this turning," Lewis said at the end of a week's searching.

Lucy said she didn't remember it, and they passed out of a rather squalid thoroughfare into a lane that led them towards what seemed to be the outskirts of a little English town, and after passing some untidy studios they stopped to admire a beautiful eighteenth-century house, with a garden in front, at the side, and behind it.

"Who couldn't paint in that beautiful house?" And Lewis pointed to another Georgian house—pillared porch and balcony in all the best style; but what caused their hearts to stand still was a board, "RESIDENCE TO LET."

"But how much will it cost to live there?"

"Whatever it costs you must live there," Lucy answered; and they walked through a little gate to the house.

On the first floor was a dining-room and a back room in which Lewis said he would keep frames and pictures,

and after much whispered admiration they ascended a staircase with thin balusters.

" How perfect was the taste of our ancestors ! " Lewis remarked; and from the landing they walked into a long room the full length of the house, with four windows. " If it be in me to paint beautiful pictures, it will be here that I shall paint them," Lewis murmured. " Among apple-green walls and lemon-yellow window-frames."

" Oh, how clever of you, Lewis, to think of it so quickly ! "

It would be necessary to make some inquiries about bathrooms and bedrooms, but before making any it seemed to both that it would be better to hurry to the agent's and put in their claim for the house, " Unless," Lucy interposed, " all the arrangements be unsanitary."

The house was to let. The agent did not think the sanitation defective, and they returned to the Vale to make further investigations, and then returned to the agent to pay something in advance, so afraid were they that another purchaser might rob them of their discovery by offering a bigger rent.

Without this house the conviction tugged at their heart-strings that their dreams would come to nought. The house was essential. . . . They knew it. " The house—the house," they repeated all that evening, and next day an order was given for the preparation of a lease. It came up in due time for Lewis's signature, and as soon as it was signed, breath came more freely. For twenty-one years the Georgian house in the Vale was Lewis's. " Your house as much as mine, Lucy."

Lucy protested, and they fell to talking about the furniture. " What curtains do you think will harmonise best with a pale apple green ? " Lucy asked; and the colour that came first into their minds was, of course, red. " But what red ? Silk damask, moire, or rep ? "

" The century is just emerging from rep," Lewis

answered. "Rep is too early Victorian." And they walked out on to the balcony, their thoughts passing from curtains into admiration of the vision of country imprisoned by some miracle in London's midst. Lucy spoke of flowers, but Lewis thought the tall tangled grasses would be in keeping with the fig-trees.

"The lag end of an English village it seems to me to be," he said, as he stepped aside to let her pass into the long low-ceilinged room.

"The curtains must be rose damask," she murmured. "And now let me see what furniture is wanted."

"In a house like this there can be but eighteenth-century furniture."

And next day they went forth in the blue silk-lined brougham, filled with looking-glasses, scent-bottles, note-paper, pens, and many other delightful and unnecessary knick-knacks, to buy furniture. A Sheraton sofa was indispensable, and a set of Sheraton chairs to match. Lewis did not wish his house to look like a museum, and was very glad when a friend of Lucy's, a rich man who had just bought a Jacobean house, thinking that some beautiful glass chandeliers would be out of keeping with his house, gave them to Lewis. "One day you may paint me a picture," he said to Lewis.

"I will, indeed," Lewis answered; and as soon as the man had gone, he said: "He is one of those men who, having no notion of what is beautiful, think they can attain the beautiful by having everything in keeping. Poor fools!" he muttered; and they drove to another dealer, and spent a long time considering French clocks, a favourite whim of Lewis's. "No house possesses anything like a sufficient number of Louis XV. clocks. Every clock was beautiful," he said, "till clocks began to strike the nineteenth century"; and a light came into Lucy's face, for now everything her lover said struck her as wonderful. The brougham stopped.

"We must now give our attention to carpets."

"There are no carpets but Aubusson."

Aubussons were scorned in the seventies, and Lewis was able to acquire a great circle of flowers for a few pounds.

"A marvellous design," he said, and their thoughts and their eyes were caught at that moment by some Chelsea figures. Lucy picked up a pair of Battersea candlesticks, and asked him if they were not pretty, but he said he didn't care for Battersea unless they were green at the base. Satinwood tables played a large part in their peregrinations, and they spent a long while admiring writing-tables with little bookcases at the back to hold volumes no larger than one's hand. Too much money was asked for these pieces, and Lucy resolved to say nothing to Lewis, but to buy them for him when his back was turned. His pleasure would be the greater.

The bedrooms were a source of great anxiety to both of them. Lewis was in favour of a four-poster, a Victorian, for he did not mind mixing the styles, so long as the posts were beautifully carved; and they saw some beautiful beds, French and English. The Italian bed and the Dutch interested neither: and they thought of themselves in a French bed.

"After all, love such as ours is worthy of a canopy and Cupids."

"Lewis, I would not have you speak like that of our love, though I know you are only jesting. Our love does not depend upon the style of bed we live in. I hoped that your love would not be different, though we had no bed but a straw pallet."

"My dear Lucy, bed life is——" He stopped.

Her earnestness obscured the sky of their happiness, and they walked pensively through the show-rooms, the showman's patter sounding far away till the sight of a French bureau in dark mahogany, with rich ormolu,

awoke them from their reveries; and in consideration of this beautiful object we will leave them and take up the thread of the story a few weeks later, when the Georgian house in the Vale was furnished from basement to garret, and the time had come for Lewis to paint a picture.

He had had no heart to think of painting since his return, and for many months before, painting had occupied his thoughts but seldom, and he was now without an idea in his head and unable to decide if he should paint Judith and Holofernes or a bunch of flowers. He could paint neither, for he was without an idea, and an artist without ideas is an unhappy man: ideas are his portion, inasmuch that he can accept all other forms of poverty without grumbling. If there be no wine he can drink beer; if there be no chicken he can eat mutton; if there be no mutton he can eat bread and cheese; and bread and cheese with an idea is preferable to the daintiest French dishes without one if the man be an artist. And Lewis was an artist in a sense. He did not remember that he had ever been before without an idea: good ideas or bad ideas, he did not know which, but he had had ideas even in the Waterloo Road; but in the Vale he was without an idea sufficient to carry him through a still life. "Was he an artist?" He put the question as he stood on the balcony overlooking the tangled grasses, and then returning to the low-ceilinged room, he covered sheets of paper with all kinds of scrawls, every moment thinking that an idea would emerge. He was lured for a moment, and then another design was begun, and at the end of a short October day, after passing through a shadowy garden, Lucy found Lewis seated before the fire more depressed and sad than she had ever known him. She took up one of the sheets of paper and asked him to explain the different compositions, and he said that very likely some were not worse than many of the

compositions that one saw every year on the walls of the Academy, but there was no idea in him, "And one cannot paint without an idea," he said. "The months that I spent in those Parisian studios may have scraped all my ideas out of me."

Lucy could see he was full of despair, and she kept her eyes withdrawn from his, lest she might catch sight of tears. "He will feel ashamed of himself," she said to herself, and determined to save him from self-humiliation, she remarked that the subject, whether of a picture or of a book, perhaps even of music, came from without. A word heard in conversation, something read in the newspapers, something seen, accident dictated it. "You mustn't be impatient; you must wait for the inspired moment. The waiting is tedious, but it may be shortened by reading. Now, have you thought, Lewis, of the books you have read? There must be something in one of them that prompts a picture."

He did not reply, and to win him out of his mood of despondency she began to talk to him of the books they had read together in Paris. They had read the *Decameron,* but the tales did not seem to them nearly as well told as they had been led to believe they were. The most that could be said in Boccaccio's favour was that a clumsy fellow, without literary intuition or skill, took down everything that came to his ears, which was his luck and ours, for if he had tried to give shape to the folk-tales he had collected he would have spoilt them.

"A good secretary," Lewis said, stretching himself out in his arm-chair; and in his new and more comfortable position be began to contend that literature had not yet begun to emerge from the darkness of the Middle Ages.

Lucy objected.

"Dante—we did not read him."

"He belongs to the Middle Ages; and speaking out of a very shadowy knowledge of the subject, I would

like to say that the Renaissance seems to me to have produced every art in perfection but literature."

Lucy reflected a moment, and a little surprised at Lewis's perception of a subject which he only knew from her, reminded him that Latin literature was, with the possible exception of Dante, superior to Italian. "The late Latin and Greek writers that we read in the Tudor translations struck us as being more independent than any modern literature"; and she spoke of the fragment of Petronius that has come down to us as illustrating the freedom of the ancient writer from social prejudices, and they were agreed that *Gil Blas* was but a pale copy of it. It may be that Le Sage never read the Latin work, but the tradition of it survived in the subconsciousness of the modern world; and they rejoiced in their recollections of the great feast, a thing in itself, an essential—like a great mountain, an elephant, it cannot be forgotten. And each was moved to speak of the boy whom the thieves quarrelled over, and of the boy, too, whose complacency was won by a present of gamecocks—neither remembered the second present; the third they were sure was a promise of a pony. But it was not because of the unfulfilment of the promise that the boy threatened to tell his father, but for quite a different reason—proving the Roman writer was possessed of a very superior sense of humour. Lewis reminded Lucy of the *Golden Ass,* a literary work that compares with the sculpture done in that period, and favourably. The story in itself is so alive that they took pleasure in speaking of the parlour-maid whose tongue the young man sipped as if it were nectar, between whiles entertained with stories of wizardry, "for their amorous encounters," Lewis said, "took place in her mistress's bedroom, among many phials containing mysterious medicines." One of the phials contained a medicine that could change a young man into an ass, and keep him in that animal's shape

till he fortuned upon roses and ate them. It was with this medicine that the parlour-maid transformed her lover at his request; but before she could give the animal, that instantly appeared, rose-leaves to eat, robbers broke in, and the transformed was an ass henceforth, and put to the use that asses are put to. An excellent relation the story is of the assman's adventures, and his desire to return to his own shape. An excellent relation, happily interrupted by a flash of immortal genius—the beautifullest story ever written — the celebrated story of Orpheus and Eurydice, superior to anything that Boccaccio discovered—as the Parthenon marbles are superior to Tanagra figures — much more beautiful, for the Tanagra figures are slight, but nearly always beautiful, whereas Boccaccio is very often shapeless. And the twain were agreed that, even if the divine story was left out of consideration, the *Golden Ass* was much superior as conscious art to anything written in Italian.

"In saying that, we are saying nothing," Lewis interjected, "that we have not said before. We are agreed that the *Decameron* is mere folk, whereas the art of antiquity was always conscious, and never more so than in the very beautiful story of *Daphnis and Chloe*—the last effort, so the critics tell, of Greek genius. Some attribute the story to the second, some to the ninth, century. It may be that I shall find my subject in that story." And they went over the story together, reminding each other of component parts. Like the *Golden Ass,* it rose out of an incident, almost as conventional as the transformation of a man into an ass. A goatherd notices that a certain she-goat escapes from the flock again and again into a copse. He follows the goat, and finds her giving suck to a male child. In another part of the island a shepherd notices that a ewe escapes from the flock into a dingle. He follows the ewe, and finds her giving suck to a female child. These children are brought

home by their respective finders, and as they grow into girl- and boyhood they lead their flocks through the hills. There is a fountain in the island, and the nymphs carven upon the rocks stir their childish imaginations, setting them wondering; and Daphnis's back, when he bathes in the fountain, seems to Chloe the most beautiful thing in all the world, and Chloe's beauty does not seem less to Daphnis.

"It is extraordinary how little one remembers of what one reads," Lewis said; "and yet one remembers intensely. I have an intense memory of an old shepherd whom Daphnis and Chloe consulted concerning love. He said many profound and witty things, I am certain, though I cannot recall one; and I am also sure that his counsels were not sufficient, Daphnis and Chloe being too young at that time to rightly understand him, though they longed to understand; and for a more explicit telling of love's procedure, you remember, Lucy, the interest with which they watched the mating of the ram with the ewe, of the he-goat with the she-goat. But so innocent are they in their teens, that we have only in this period an account of their kisses under the rocks. And perhaps the incident that releases them from their innocence is one that everybody knows: painters, men of letters, women of the world, all, for some reason or another—all have read or have been told how in some further embarrassment of Daphnis and Chloe, a married woman—the wife probably of one of the shepherds—came to ask for Daphnis's help. An eagle had carried off one of her lambs, and would he follow her? which he did, she talking the whole time to him of the lamb which they would rescue; but as soon as they reach a secluded dell she tells him that she had overheard all his talk with Chloe and witnessed their embraces. The words are so well chosen that one regrets that the ancient writers did not introduce more dialogue into their narra-

tives. Do you remember?" And Lucy said she thought that the married woman told Daphnis that she was once as innocent as he and Chloe, but had learnt what love was from a married man, and would teach him in her turn.

"And then," Lewis cried, "comes one of the most beautiful touches in the story. Daphnis is about to run away at once to Chloe, fearing he might forget his lesson, but he is stopped by the married woman with these words: 'Remember, Daphnis, always, that it was not Chloe that taught you love, but I.' After which words she permits him to return to Chloe. And now again comes one of the most beautiful touches, one which shows we have learnt nothing during the last eighteen hundred years. I am assuming, you see, that the story was written in the second century. Daphnis returns to Chloe, but he doesn't practise upon her the art that he has learnt from the married woman, for they are engaged to be married, and he thinks it will be as well to wait till then for the consummation of their loves. The next incident is the rape of Chloe by pirates, and nothing in the story is more delightful than the relation of Daphnis's grief; his raving along the coasts and through the woods, his prayers that Pan and the other gods may intervene to rescue Chloe. It is all so untrue and yet so true. And truth in untruth is the essence of art, an essence which we shall never reach again, but which Greece attained in this last effort of her genius. By the intervention of the gods the pirates are shipwrecked."

"Isn't there a meeting of Daphnis and Chloe on the shore?" Lucy asked. "Didn't Daphnis lead Chloe up the hills into the woods from the sea?"

"Of course he did," Lewis answered—"he couldn't have done else, yet one barely remembers." And then they spoke of the incident that sets the seal of genius upon the story—the love of the steward who comes with

his master, who owns the island, to see if his flocks have prospered.

"It was a disappointment to me to hear that Daphnis and Chloe are slaves," Lucy said; "and the turn the story takes is certainly unexpected; it is not Chloe that the steward seeks, but Daphnis. A modern writer would have sought to interest the reader by a story of ordinary revelry. With this incident the author includes all human love within the circuit of history." Lewis agreed that there is something in ancient art that escapes the modern sense, and he asked Lucy if anything in literature was more remarkable than Daphnis's appeal to the master of the island to save him from the steward. "Do you remember, Lucy, the last line of the story, exquisite in its humanity, is the remark that on their wedding night the lovers understood that all they had done in the woods was but child's play. For centuries this story has been the admiration of scholars."

"You know, Lewis, that the most beautiful translation of this story was done by a Frenchman—Bishop Amyot." And they began to talk of the extraordinary incident that befell the story. Three pages were missing from all the copies that came down to us, till one day in the beginning of this century a Frenchman discovered a complete copy in Florence. He made a transcript of the pages and then upset his ink-bottle over them, destroying them completely. Lewis, who heard the story for the first time, held that Paul Louis Courier destroyed the pages in order that his name might be preserved; but Lucy inclined to the belief that he wrote the missing pages himself, translated them, and died without yielding up his secret, knowing that it would breathe in the minds of posterity an irresistible curiosity that time would never blot out.

"It cannot be that he knew Greek well enough to deceive scholars. Could any Englishman write three

pages into *Mademoiselle de Maupin* that the least critical would accept as Gautier's?"

Lucy answered that it did not seem possible. She suggested Swinburne when he was very young. Lewis shook his head, and a long silence fell between them.

"I'm beginning to see them: Daphnis bathing in the fountain, and Chloe admiring his back. Beginning to see them as a picture."

And as he sat thinking of the picture, Lucy told him of Goethe's admiration for the Greek story. He listened, hearing her as one hears when one lies between sleeping and waking; and then rising from his chair, he walked out on to the balcony.

"The Vale is an ideal spot in which to illustrate Daphnis and Chloe. But before beginning a series of drawings I must concentrate on Daphnis and Chloe in the cave. It will be difficult to get a model. Chloe was about thirteen or fourteen when she admired Daphnis's back. No, she wasn't so old as that; they were children of seven or eight—too young for drawing. In my picture they must be nine or ten, eleven or twelve."

He did not ask Lucy's opinion, but passed by her into the low-ceilinged room, wainscoted with apple-green panels, and upon a satinwood table fell to sketching. "The first draft of my composition," he said, showing her a rough outline.

"It is charming," she replied, leaning over him. "The only thing I fear is a lack of perseverance."

"No one is more patient than I am, but till we spoke of Daphnis and Chloe I hadn't an idea in my head. To-morrow I must make some drawings, for you know, dearest, whether a composition be good or bad depends upon the drawing one gets into it. I will work at the composition this evening after dinner"; and he was glad to hear her say that she must return home. Her visit had been a pleasant one, and it was pleasant, too, to lead her

out of the Vale into the King's Road, and to put her into a carriage, and to say: "Well, I hope to be able to show you the composition in a day or two."

A moment after she was gone, and he returned to the house absorbed in his picture.

CHAP. XXIV.

THE sketch seemed to represent the text—a cave in which there was a fountain and some statues of nymphs. But he had already begun to ask himself if the nymphs engraved upon the rock were bas-reliefs or statues. "Bas-reliefs," he said. Statues mean pedestals, and dismissing pedestals from his mind, he considered the size of the fountain. It must be large enough to bathe in, which presented a difficulty; and to reconcile himself to a small fountain, he remembered that the boats in Raphael's Miraculous Draught of Fishes were not large enough to contain a single figure, and Raphael had placed several in the same boat. The boats were symbolical, and his fountain, too, would be symbolical of a pool in which two figures might swim about. He need not introduce the whole of the pool; a corner would suffice—a flash of water amid the rocks. A more serious difficulty presented itself when he began his studies from the life. The model could not take the pose he had imagined, and when he got her brother to pose with her, he failed to place them in attitudes that even recalled his composition. She was a well-proportioned girl, and fell into very pretty poses naturally, from which it would be easy to pick and choose, but it required a very special talent to show the girl how to fit herself into a pose already designed—the pose in the composition.

A man he had known in Paris was very clever in choosing a model who could fit herself into a pose that the

artist had created out of his imagination. With a cushion here and a book there, he succeeded in getting the pose. And Lewis wondered how it was he could not manage it. He tried another model, but could not get her to take the pose that the first model had given him. A very little difference in the proportion of the limbs of the body was enough to change everything. How was it to be managed? Michael Angelo knew how Nature was made, and could out of his knowledge create Nature, and Boucher, on a much lower scale, had learned Nature so well that he could dispense with a model, so it was said. He, too, could dispense with a model. An occasional look at an engraving here and there was sufficient to enable him to decorate a ballroom with nymphs and Cupids; but the present task was a different one, and if he could not get the models into the poses that he designed, he would have to draw Kitty and her brother in the attitude that they fell into naturally. They were both well-proportioned, and the group would appear of itself just as a beautiful cloud shape appears, if you wait for it long enough.

"I must read them the passage." And opening the book, he applied all his mind to the comprehension of the passage that he wished to illustrate: "Hee then fared to the founte in thoughte to washe his long blacke hair and his bodie all sun embrouned, yet might men deem his hue caused of the shadowing Trefoures of his haire. Fair he seemed to Chloe in his bathe, wherein she seeing him for the first demed him therefrom to haue come by his fairness. And whenas she laued his backe and shoulders eke his fleshe yeeled tender to hir touche: therewith him all unwittynge shee felt hire owne skinne ofte, in mynde to proue whether of the two was softer. Phebus now declining, they draue theyr flockes togithers to foldwarde, Chloes onlie wishing beeing to viewe Daphnis bath again."

"All that I have to illustrate is in that passage," he said to himself, and, the book closed, he sat with his eyes fixed, thinking how he might paint two figures, if by chance his models gave him a group; if not the group that he saw in his imagination, a group that corresponded to it—an equivalent group. "How was it lighted?" he asked himself, and how in a room with four windows would he get the atmosphere, the pale twilight of the cave? The cave might be open overhead, and the light might fall through implicated leaves; a Shelley-like cave it might be, one of the caves in the Prometheus. But these caves recalled pictures of Mantegna and Botticelli, fresco-coloured drawings rather than pictures. Chiaroscuro was unknown to them. Beautiful pictures had been painted in that manner, but the manner was archaic. "All modern art is an appreciation of values, different degrees of illumination, and were I," he said, "to conceive the cave lighted from above, a ray of light falling through a cleft in the rocks, the problem would be for Rembrandt. Now, which is my picture to be? A fresco according to Mantegna, a Botticelli, or a mystery of light and shade according to Rembrandt?" His heart misgave him, and he asked himself if it were possible that, after all, he was not a painter. "If not a painter, what then?"

A knock came at the door—it was Kitty; and all day he drew her pretty figure in different poses, and the drawings seemed to him not without merit, but he was puzzled as to what use he was going to put them to. The next day she brought her brother with her, and he sketched some pretty groups, but they bore no resemblance to his composition, nor did they seem to him to be in keeping with the text that he had proposed to illustrate.

His models left him, but they were to come again, and next day he made further drawings, and the day after, drawings of legs, drawings of hands, drawings of heads,

of backs, of shoulders. There was nothing he did not draw, but his drawings were not of any use to him. Now it was the sister that inspired the hope, now it was the brother. For half an hour his soul was on fire, and then the fire died down, and at the end of the day his heart was cold ashes again.

CHAP. XXV.

A MONTH went by, and no progress was made. He had tried three or four more models, but the drawings he did were of no more use to him than those he did from Kitty and her brother. He dreamed of another studio and relinquished his dreams; but one day Kitty, seeing him overcome with despair, deep in silence, put out her naked foot and pushed him gently. A painter in his discouragement is an easy victim to the model, and he took her on his knee and kissed her, and thanked her for her sympathy, for he was very unhappy. But his eyes, happening to go round the room at that moment, he remembered that everything in it, and the house itself, had been given to him by Lucy; and his debt was so great that he felt that he must not deceive her. If she were to come into the room and find him kissing his model, it would cut her to the heart. So he put Kitty away, allowing as he did so his hand to linger, toying with a plait of hair for a moment, and then telling her that he was not free, but should he ever find himself free he would be glad if they could return to this moment. Her eyes were very winning, and when she had gone he remembered them, and fell to thinking that all this debt he had incurred to Lucy must be repaid. But how was it to be repaid? His picture had gone wrong, and could not be put right, he was striving for something he would never reach. "Poor little Kitty! It was a feeling

of kindness for one whom she could see was suffering that had induced her to put out her foot," he said as he prepared the tea for Lucy, whom he expected, while hoping to get a telegram from her, saying that she was prevented from coming to see him.

He was expecting Lucy. Even loneliness was better than her company this afternoon. She would be certain to ask him to show her the picture, to bring out all his drawings, every one of which was a failure from his point of view; and feeling that the interview would be unbearable, he began to think it might be better to send her a telegram, saying that he had to go out. But whither should he go? It seemed to him that he was the unhappiest man in the world, and while trying to measure his unhappiness, he remembered that if he did not send a telegram she would be knocking at his door in another hour, asking him how he was getting on with his picture, and if he confessed failure he'd have to listen to vain consolations: and if he showed her the picture he felt that all hope would be gone. He'd never touch it again. . . . He fell into a reverie and awoke unhappier than before. Another hour had joined the past, and he strove to rise out of his chair. But if he sent the telegram he would have to sit thinking alone in his studio, and if he didn't, Lucy would take him out for a drive, and he'd forget his failure . . . for the time. "Another half-hour will have to pass away," he said, and he went to the window to wait. "Ah, here she comes," and he planned an answer to her question. But the question was never put.

As if she guessed that he had not been lucky with painting, she spoke to him of friends, theatres, operas, and so hearty was her interest in the passing show, that he began to wonder if she really cared for painting at all, or took any real interest in art, or was she tired of him? Her abrupt departure, too, caused him further

uneasiness, but he conducted her to her carriage and bade her good-bye, letting her go without making an appointment for the next day. When he was going to see her again he did not know, and it did not much matter; he was done for. It was in this mood that he returned to the studio, and pulled out his canvas to look at it in the fading light, but not in any hope that he might be mistaken regarding its value. He wished to know the worst—that was all: and while he sat thinking of his rocks, Lucy was on her way to Mr. Carver, a plan having begun in her mind that some means must be discovered to distract Lewis's thoughts from his picture. He must think of other pictures, and the only way to win his thoughts from Daphnis and Chloe was a commission from Mr. Carver, his first patron, to paint a set of decorative panels, sea nymphs and Tritons blowing conch shells, a thing to hang above the fireplace of a long Venetian dining-room. He would be able to paint these pictures without any difficulty, and as soon as he had finished this, Mr. Carver would ask him to paint a family group, or separate portraits of himself, his wife, and his sons and daughters. Lewis's own original talent could be won back in time, she had no doubt, and she lay back in the brougham looking forward to the interview with Mr. Carver.

The time was late and the Bond Street shop would be closed; but he lived in a street close by, in Saville Row; she would go there and interview him, and a few minutes afterwards the brougham stopped, and she was shown up to the drawing-room, which seemed to her to differ very little from the shop in Bond Street, so filled was it with rare china, ormolu clocks, and eighteenth-century French pictures. She remembered having seen one of the clocks in the Bond Street shop, Mr. Carver having drawn her attention to it. He had urged her to buy it; she had liked the clock, and did not know why she

hadn't bought it. She might buy it still, it seemed, for the first words he spoke on entering the room were: "I'm glad to see you looking at that clock, Mrs. Bentham; I like it so much myself that I had it brought up from the shop, and got a good talking to for doing so, for my wife says that once a thing comes up from the shop it never goes back again. 'But as soon as my fancy wears off——' I said. 'That will never be,' Mrs. Carver replied tartly."

"You have many beautiful things here," Lucy remarked at the first pause.

"Yes; this room is my taste, Mrs. Bentham—the shop is public taste. I'd like you to have another look at the clock."

"Yes, but that must be for another day, Mr. Carver. I have come to talk to you about something different, and I must apologise for coming here and not waiting till to-morrow morning; but you see, to-morrow morning I shall be very busy. I am going down to Claremont House."

"Ah, yes; I remember Claremont House. I hope you're satisfied with Mr. Seymour's decorations?"

"Quite satisfied."

"Won't you sit down, Mrs. Bentham? The chairs are worth sitting on—Louis XVI."

"But are you sure, Mr. Carver, that you can spare me ten minutes? I feel that I'm intruding upon——"

"Not in the least, Mrs. Bentham. At your service, at your complete service."

"Well, Mr. Carver, you have just said that you remember introducing me to Mr. Seymour and my giving him an order to decorate the ballroom at Claremont House; I shall always be grateful to you for your choice: Mr. Seymour's decorations are a great success; everybody who has seen them admires them. And what is more important, they were the means whereby he acquired an

artistic education. He said he didn't think he could invest the money he had earned more profitably than by going to Paris to study drawing in the French schools. His intentions were excellent, but I'm afraid things have not turned out as he expected."

"Paris is a very dangerous place for a young man, and I hope that Mr. Seymour has not—— So far as I know, his conduct has always been above reproach." Mr. Carver's face assumed a puzzled expression and Lucy continued:

"No, his misfortune cannot be attributed to a dancing-girl or to a grisette—at least, not so far as I know." Mr. Carver held up his hand: how could she know anything of such matters! "You would never guess," she continued, "he has very nearly lost all his talent; but it can be regained, I think and hope."

"Lost all his talent?"

"Yes. You see, Mr. Carver, the education that is measured out at the Beaux-Arts is not suitable to every talent; it seems to me to be a sort of grinding-stone very apt to take the edge off a talent. Not of all talents, of course."

"Ah, now I'm beginning to understand you, Mrs. Bentham: after a long course of study Mr. Seymour has come back—how shall we put it?—a little tired."

"He has taken a studio in the Vale—you know the Vale, King's Road, Chelsea."

Mr. Carver bowed, and Lucy continued: "He was at first embarrassed to find a subject for a picture. He'd like to exhibit in the Royal Academy, and his talent being of the classical turn, he sought for a classical subject, and found one in a story called *Daphnis and Chloe.*"

"A most charming story, Mrs. Bentham; I know it well."

"He has been redrawing the two figures for the last

two months, recomposing the group, painting and scraping out what he painted, and beginning again."

"And you think, Mrs. Bentham, that it would be well that he should put aside that canvas, and start upon something else—something lighter, easier?"

"You have interpreted my meaning exactly, Mr. Carver, and I've come to ask you to commission him to paint two overdoors; you know the style of things—sea nymphs and Tritons blowing conch shells, Mr. Carver; nymphs tressing their hair."

"To complete his decorations at Claremont House?"

"The decorations at Claremont House are completed; no, that isn't my intention. My intention was to ask you to commission him to paint these two overdoors."

An almost imperceptible change came into Mr. Carver's face, and noticing it she added: "And my intention in giving this commission is to encourage Mr. Seymour, who is suffering from a fit of depression. It would, therefore, be well if you did not mention my name, but allowed Mr. Seymour to think that the commission came from you. My obligation to you will still further increase if you will take charge of the pictures for me."

"Or sell them," Mr. Carver interjected, "if a purchaser should come along. Every time a painter sells a picture he enlarges his custom."

"I think it would be well for you to sell the pictures, if you can find a purchaser; you will naturally exercise your own discretion and judgment in this matter."

"You can count upon me, Mrs. Bentham, to nurture his talent; a talent must be nurtured, and so fine a talent as Mr. Seymour's requires a good deal of nurturing. It shall be our mutual pleasure to bring it to maturity. His foster-parents," he added, without a suspicion that his tone was a little too familiar. "One possessed," he said, "of the Venetian secret for decoration, born again in a northern climate, come down through the ages from

Pompeii, transmitted through Botticelli onward to Venice, and away again through France, to reappear in the Vale;" and Mrs. Bentham listened to his eulogies with so evident a pleasure that he continued them till, remembering suddenly that his dinner hour was approaching, he said: "You can count upon me, Mrs. Bentham, to carry this thing through; and when the two overdoors have been executed I would advise, if I may be permitted to offer a word of advice——"

"Pray do, Mr. Carver."

"Well, since you are so kind, Mrs. Bentham, I would suggest that I continue from time to time to give Mr. Seymour little commissions, and these pictures can be put away until the time when Mr. Seymour becomes recognised at the Academy, and then the little exhibition of his early work might do well, and might repay both of us."

"You think, then, that Mr. Seymour has a real talent, one that will come to fruition?"

"Should I have recommended him to decorate your ballroom if I had not faith in his talent?" And still talking of his belief in Lewis Seymour's genius, Mr. Carver conducted Mrs. Bentham to the front door, and she drove away in her brougham with a feeling of warm pleasure about her heart.

CHAP. XXVI.

AS he sat pondering on the wreck of his picture, a knock at the front door reverberated through the house, and he began to ask himself who the visitor might be, for the knock sounded like one, and any were welcome, for he was weary of himself and art. His picture he must turn to the wall: it must not be seen, for no explanation would conceal the fact that he had failed. . . . "Who can have

come to see me at this hour, and before the breakfast things have been taken away?" A man's voice reached him—Carver's! and the voice called to mind the rotund figure, the portentous nose, the rich brown beard with golden hair in it; and Lewis waited nervously, but glad on the whole to meet the architect of his fortunes again, "Such as they are," he said to himself as he handed the great Jew a chair, who steering himself into it, began in a deep voice, in which there was, however, a note of falsetto, to tell Lewis that he had alighted on as pretty a perch as he had seen for a long day.

"On a lease of twenty-one years, I hope," he said, "for the owner of this property will sooner or later begin to think that the ten acres might be developed, and, from the little I've been able to gather in a first look round, these might, with judicious handling, be made to produce twice as much as the present rental."

"You're looking ahead. Where shall I be in twenty years hence?" Lewis answered.

And Carver repeated: "Twenty-one years pass more quickly than anybody would believe to be possible." Lewis listened vaguely to Mr. Carver's apprehensions; and his indifference becoming apparent to Mr. Carver, he broke off the conversation with: "You are painting some beautiful pictures here! Nymphs, of course. Lucky fellows you artists are, with your paint-pots, your easels, and your models. Quite Georgian," he said, looking round the room. "I like the colour—apple green." And rising to his feet he walked to and fro. Lewis heard him muttering to himself: "Patting their bottoms"; and feeling the words to impugn his sincerity as an artist, he answered somewhat hotly. Carver laughed, and, producing a cigar case, fell to telling some racy stories, to which Lewis listened with grace, for he had begun to suspect that Carver had come to see him on a matter of business. "Much pleasanter here than the Bond Street

shop. And to think that it all came out of my shop! A very pretty piece of carving, too, you are," he added, staring at Lewis, his large red lips showing through his brown moustache. "And it was a lucky day for me, too, that old Jacobs took the panel to you: Mrs. Bentham tells me she is delighted with your decorations. I'm going down to see them next week. She has invited me—does that astonish you?"

"Why should it astonish me that Mrs. Bentham should like to show you my decorations?" Carver had never seemed to him so rude or so vulgar before; but he had come to see him on a matter of business, so there was nothing for it but patience, and not wishing to appear too solicitous, he began to talk to Mr. Carver about the decorations, telling him the difficulties he had to overcome and how he had overcome them. "I wish you'd put me on to another ballroom——"

"I dare say, I dare say, but Mrs. Benthams are not going every day."

"The money she paid me," Lewis continued, "was all invested in education: two years in the studio in the Passage des Panoramas, the evening classes at Les Beaux-Arts; Evon's class"; and he related that the right of entry to Evon's was decided by competitive examination. He had passed in twenty-fifth; "over the heads of much older men," he said. "If you could get me some more decorations to do, I'd be able to show you what I can do."

It did not seem to Lewis that Carver showed sufficient astonishment; and, afraid that he might ask to see some of his new work, Lewis complained of a certain staleness. Eight hours, sometimes ten hours a day, he said, had improved his handicraft in a certain direction, but the great profit he had derived from his sojourn in France was the knowledge that he had obtained of the decorative art of the eighteenth century. The schools of Boucher

and Fragonard, he affirmed, could not be studied outside of the Louvre. "The money I received—two hundred and fifty pounds—for the decorations" (he had received four hundred, but thought it would be as well to dock a hundred pounds; it was not likely that Lucy had mentioned the sum of money she had paid him) "carried me over the two years I spent in Paris."

"And for it to carry you over two years in Paris, you must have lived very frugally indeed!" Mr. Carver interjected solemnly.

A little embarrassed by Mr. Carver's solemnity, which seemed to him somewhat portentous, Lewis threw himself on Carver's generosity.

"You've helped me so far; perhaps you will help me to the end," he said. "For my position in London is not secure. If, for instance, you could get me some portraits to do."

"That will come later," Mr. Carver answered. "What I have to do first is to ask you to do me a favour."

"A favour?" Lewis answered. "How can I do you a favour?"

"Well, in this way. Of course, the prices you ask now are very different from those which you were willing to take two years ago; and a customer of mine has been talking to me about some overdoors; and the moment she began to tell me the kind of overdoors she wanted, I began to think of you. But, I said to myself, he'll be wanting very big prices indeed; and then it occurred to me that perhaps, after all, you might not have forgotten that one good turn deserves another. It was I that gave you a start, and you might be willing, I said to myself, to oblige me. Now, what do you say to two hundred pounds apiece for the overdoors? You'll be doing me a favour, Mr. Seymour."

Lewis strove to keep calm. The overdoors would not take more than three weeks, a month at the most, and

two overdoors would help him to forget the unfortunate "Daphnis and Chloe."

"Of course, Mr. Carver, I shall be only too pleased to undertake any work you choose to bring me. You mentioned two hundred pounds apiece for the overdoors. A very fair price this seems to me; too much, in fact, considering how much I owe you already. If you like——"

"Oh, I couldn't think of underpaying you. It isn't to be thought of, Mr. Seymour; not to be thought of. If you will do me the overdoors at two hundred pounds apiece, I shall be very grateful to you. Now let us talk of other things. I'd like to see your house. Apple green, with yellow window-frames. Beautiful! You've some very nice things about in the way of furniture, and will remember when you want some French clocks that there is a shop in Bond Street where these articles are to be found. Not another word more! All this house wants is a little more furniture. What do you say to a nice Aubusson carpet for your studio? They are very cheap at present. I could get you one for twenty pounds, and a beauty."

Lewis agreed that an Aubusson carpet under apple-green walls, particularly if there was a little green in the carpet, would be a charming addition to the already charming appearance of his house.

He took Mr. Carver over each room, and then they walked into the garden.

"Under your own vine and fig trees," Mr. Carver said. "A wonderful place this Vale is, and I'm not sure that you aren't right to leave it in its tangled aspects. A woman would like flowers"; and talking of Mrs. Carver and his daughters, they bent their steps in the direction of the King's Road.

"You'll start the overdoors as soon as you can; my customers——"

"Immediately I return to the house I shall make a sketch, Mr. Carver."

Mr. Carver waved his hand, and Lewis returned wondering at his good fortune. Carver had given him the dimensions, and with a sheet of paper in front of him, the afternoon passed away agreeably amid dreams of nymphs and Cupids, arrows, masks, and Kitty's delightful little body. It supplied a hint enough for one nymph; her baby brother gave him all that he required for a Cupid; and ideas coming abundantly and freely, he lay down in his bed regretting that Carver had not ordered many more overdoors.

He arose from his bed eager, and the day passed in pleasant contentment; and at the end of the week he sat down to write to Lucy all about his good fortune and his pleasure in painting overdoors. Mr. Carver was summoned at the end of three weeks to admire. He placed his hands on Lewis's shoulders: "Admirable!" he said. "The genius of Boucher and Fragonard has descended upon you; or perhaps I should have said, the genius of Fragonard and Boucher has risen up within you."

"What you say is very kind, Mr. Carver, and I'm sure I'm very pleased that you like these decorations, but I'd not have you think that my talent is limited to overdoors and such-like. It is true that I had a misfortune with a picture, when you came to me with the order for these overdoors, and was feeling very miserable about it. But while doing the overdoors, new ideas have come to me, and I think I shall be able to bring a fresh eye to the picture."

"But it is only three weeks or a month since you have put it aside. Wouldn't it be better to leave it by for a much longer period?"

"It would, indeed, Mr. Carver," Lewis answered, "but I must do something. If you had any more overdoors——"

"If I were to give you an order for another overdoor——"

"I'd much sooner you gave me an order for a portrait. You spoke about your wife?"

"I'll think it over," Mr. Carver answered. "Come up to supper next Sunday—number seven, Saville Row—and I'll introduce you to my daughters. Mother is always asking me to have their portraits painted; and I'd like to have a portrait of my wife. Supper at eight; we'll talk it over."

A few years ago Lewis would have looked forward to supper with the Carvers as a great advancement, but his successes had given rise to a hope that he might eventually cut some sort of figure in society, and he now regarded shopkeepers with suspicion; and began to think that if he were to drop in to supper, they might drop into calling him Lewis. How was it to be managed? He couldn't write a note pleading a prior invitation. "Once and once only," he said to himself as he crossed St. James's Park, and he looked askance at a somewhat nondescript servant who opened the door to him, "A sort of overgrown pantry boy," he said to himself. And he began to examine the large picture by Tintoretto that hung in the passage. He noticed the rich furniture and China vases on the landing, and muttered as he went upstairs—"things he could sell in the shop." And the people in the drawing-room struck him as being in keeping with the house. He recognised Mrs. Carver as a woman who had left much beauty behind her. A long white nose, beautifully shaped, divided a heart-shapen face, shaded with faded gold hair; Lewis could not tell if it were natural or dyed. She was expensively dressed, and it seemed to Lewis that she not only held his hand unduly, but had entirely forgotten the presence of her daughters, who waited in the background for mother to

finish with the visitor. Some moments after she introduced him—somewhat surreptitiously, he thought—to Evelyn, a large white girl taking after her father rather than her mother in features and colouring; already she had begun to thicken in the waist, and the widening flanks filled Lewis with apprehensions for her future. But the second girl was on a much smaller scale, and would have been undoubtedly very beautiful in his eyes were it not for the large family nose. But was a nose ever more beautifully moulded? Lewis asked himself, and he admired the clear cynical eyes and the long thin lips, seldom parted except when she laughed; and when she laughed her lips disclosed a row of perfectly white and shapely teeth. Her hair was brown with a golden tinge in it, and the tiny curls that fell about her face put the thought into Lewis's mind that he would like to persuade her to unpin it. Her hand rested in his as long as her mother's; she began to speak to him in a low wavering voice, and before he was aware of it he was sitting by her at some distance from the rest of the family.

"How good of you to come here!" and Lewis was about to ask if she had ever sat for her portrait; but at that moment Carver began to speak of Mrs. Bentham, and then his tone changed suddenly; he read his wife's face truthfully: it was on her tongue to ask: "Is she the lady who called here a week ago, just after we had sat down to dinner?" Carver was able to stop her in time, and the girls chimed in opportunely with, "I'm sure you like music, Mr. Seymour?"

"But if you prefer talking——" Ada said.

"I like both," Lewis answered, "singing and talking, but not together."

"I'm glad of that," Ada whispered; "you shall hear us after supper"; and they all went down talking very loudly on the staircase. Mrs. Carver begged Lewis to

take the chair next to hers, and she accentuated the request with an affectionate gesture. He was only just seated, however, when a diversion was caused by somebody ringing the front door bell. The whole family cried out the visitor's name; Mrs. Carver whispered it to Lewis, bending over till he almost felt her lips upon his ear: "The largest importer of blotting books in Europe," she said.

A small thin man entered and was placed between the two girls, who in turn besought him, half ironically and half because they wished to exhibit a wealthy acquaintance to Lewis, to tell them the result of the last year's trading. The visitor seemed embarrassed at the girls' loud entreaties, but having some instinct of a gentleman, he answered them quietly, and then resumed a silence which Lewis judged to be habitual.

"Now which of the girls is he after?" Lewis asked himself, and it seemed to him impossible that either could take much interest in the merchant, so uninviting was his appearance. "It would be difficult to get an interesting portrait out of him"; and Lewis fell to wondering what he should do with that round skull covered with short, scrubby hair, and a skin like aged parchment, without colour in it. "There is drawing in the hands; it would be well to place them on his knees. But which of the girls will he marry? He doesn't seem interested in either particularly, nor is he interested in himself. A tedious creature, but kind withal. But he is after one for certain." He wondered why he should feel certain that the merchant was bent on matrimony, and hoped that the big girl was his choice, for already Lewis had begun to think of Ada, or certain parts of her, while talking to her mother. "It can hardly be the big girl he is after," and as soon as an opportunity offered he disengaged his eyes from Mrs. Carver, taking a closer scrutiny of the merchant, with a view to discovering

what the great importer's chances were. "A tendency to consumption," he said to himself, and he applied himself to the task of answering Ada, who had become suddenly interested in his painting.

"When may we come to your studio?" she inquired, and Lewis answered that any afternoon he would be pleased to see them. He never had a sitter after four, and five is the hour for talk and tea.

"We have heard," she continued, "that you're going to paint mother and father."

"If it is to be a group," Evelyn chimed in, "it had better be a family group. Father, mother, and ourselves."

"What about Nellie?" Mrs. Carver asked.

"Oh, she's married," the girls exclaimed, "and no canvas would hold us all. He must take us as we are."

Lewis began to feel frightened at the prospect of the group of four which had projected itself so suddenly on to a great canvas, and his mind was relieved as from a great weight when Mr. Carver said he was much too busy at present to give sittings. "You know, Mr. Seymour, that Ingres had as many as fifty-five sittings for his portrait of Monsieur B——. It was not till the fifty-first that he saw his sitter in the pose that he had first in mind all the while he was painting. He said, 'My picture is finished. At last I see you in the pose in which you are yourself'; and fetching a new canvas he began again. Monsieur B—— was, I suppose, a man of leisure, but a busy man like myself has sales to attend to and customers. Impossible, Mr. Seymour, just at present, but one of these days, perhaps"; and he burst into a cheery laugh.

"Mr. Seymour must begin with mother," Ada said. Mrs. Carver said she should have had her portrait painted twenty years ago; Lewis protested and assured

Mrs. Carver that he had in mind a very striking portrait if she would only be good enough to sit for it.

"And when mother's portrait is finished," Ada began, "it'll be our turn. Will you paint us together or singly?"

Lewis said that he would like to do a group, and after supper, when the ladies had gone up to the drawing-room, Mr. Carver said: "Well now, Mr. Seymour, what about terms?" Lewis replied that the terms might well be left to Mr. Carver. He was sure he would have no cause to complain.

"Still, business is business," Mr. Carver answered. "Have another cigar"; and he considered while smoking how much of these commissions should be paid by Mrs. Bentham. The whole amount could not be charged to her, since he was going to keep the pictures, but he was having his family painted by Lewis Seymour to meet Mrs. Bentham's expressed desire to assist Lewis, and, therefore, must charge something to her account.

"What say you, Mr. Seymour, to three hundred pounds for each portrait?"

Lewis was overwhelmed inwardly at Mr. Carver's generosity, but he managed to keep his countenance.

"Two hundred to Mrs. Bentham, and one hundred to me," Mr. Carver said to himself; "it sounds fair. In this way we shall all be painted for a hundred pounds apiece. A very fair proportion"; and he watched a ring of smoke flow upwards and disappear into the lustre.

"Shall we join the ladies? You said you'd like to hear my daughters sing. My wife is a first-rate pianist and could give points to a good many of the pros."

As they ascended the staircase the girls broke out into "The Maid of Athens," and being in the humour to hear them, Lewis thought that he was spending a highly delectable evening. And so he was, attended on by two girls, one of whom, Ada, besought him to sing something.

"You must hear mother, else she'll not let us come to the studio," Ada whispered. "Mother, dear, Mr. Seymour is dying to hear you play one of Chopin's preludes," said she, and Lewis was so pleased with her playing that she decided that the sittings for her portrait were to begin next day: "And you'll tell me your interpretation of that wonderful prelude."

"A woman, a balcony above a garden, scent, silence and darkness, inspired the melody," he said. "But a sudden remembrance awakens a storm in her heart; she would have the past return. But the past may never return to us, and the sad exalted melody begins again. That is how I hear the prelude, Mrs. Carver," Lewis said, and she answered that he had put her feelings for the prelude into words. "We shall have some pleasant talks during the sittings," she said; and next day Lewis was listening to Mrs. Carver's recital of Carver's wooing of her and her married life, the birth of her children, and the temptations she had endured. Carver did not always remain Hannah's ideal (Lewis discovered her Christian name before the end of the first sitting); all the same, notwithstanding some heartbreakings, she had remained faithful to Mr. Carver, a statement and assurance from her that frightened Lewis a little, for at the end of the sitting it seemed to him that she again held his hand a little longer than was necessary.

"We'll pick up the thread where we dropped it to-day," she said, looking back at him out of her carriage window, and the next day her daughters came to view the portrait, which they much admired. "I never should have thought that mother would have made such a good portrait," Evelyn whispered to Lewis, but the more subtle Ada had always thought that mother would inspire a good portrait, a remark which so pleased Mrs. Carver that she proposed they should all go into the garden, and they were not long there before Ada con-

trived to lead Lewis away from her mother and sister.

"Tell mother that her hands are as plaintive as the prelude, and she will agree to anything. . . . I want her permission to take lessons, if you will give me lessons."

"Of course I'll give you lessons." Ada's bushy hair and appealing eyes came into his consciousness, and he finished her mother's likeness while dreaming how he should possess the daughter.

A portrait painted in these circumstances would, if Nature were not altogether illogical, prove a great failure, but, as all painters know, their best work is often done in trying circumstances; and, despite Ada's requests for assistance, the portrait progressed towards completion. It rose into being almost unconsciously without a check from the beginning, and while Lewis was placing the last touches upon it, the two girls were saying that mother would have a great success in the Academy, and their admiration brought Mr. Carver down to the Vale to admire the portrait, and he was so struck by it, that he somewhat incautiously announced that it exceeded his expectations, and that, perhaps, the time had come for him to consider how he might try to squeeze time to give Mr. Seymour sittings for his picture. His daughters hung on to the lapels of his coat; Mr. Carver clasped his wife's hand, and a dream rose up in his mind of one whole wall in Saville Row covered with his family. "And after my death," he said, striking his hand into his waistcoat and looking into space, "we shall all go to the National Gallery."

The portraits of Ada and Evelyn were begun soon after, and guided by his remembrance of their singing he began to imagine them as sirens among rocks by a summer sea, lighted by stars only. One sister, Evelyn, would have liked the moon showing, but Lewis said that the moonlight would throw shadows, and his dream was a pale, suffused light. He garmented them in diaphanous

robes, putting a lyre into Ada's hand, saying to Evelyn, "throw back your head; sing the high G. Now I've gotten a singing mouth, and on that note your voice will stream across the Bay bringing many sailors to their doom."

The girls came to sit for their portraits together and separately, accompanied by their maids, of course, and while Lewis was painting Evelyn, Ada worked at a water-colour till she was called to the daïs.

The group flowed on as easily as the mother's portrait had done, till one day the thought passed into Ada's mind that she might go into the garden while Lewis was finishing Evelyn's dress. "Lewis," she said to herself, "will come to fetch me, and we needn't return to the studio at once."

Things happen very often as women have planned them, and on the day in question Lewis found Ada sitting under the mulberry-tree, overjoyed at the success of her trick. "At last!" she said and the words were full of significance, and carried them at once into another zone of intimacy. "We mustn't keep Evelyn waiting more than five minutes, or she'll be down after us. To-morrow I'll try to get rid of my maid. Evelyn is going to a singing lesson. You won't hurry, dear, over my portrait. . . . How happy you are with your painting! But aren't you often lonely?"

"Yes, in the evenings."

"I don't think I can come to you in the evenings, but I'll get rid of the maid's embargo."

Ada was full of invention for walks in the garden, and beyond the garden, and Lucy's friends told her that Lewis was often to be met walking with a Jewess in the King's Road, and Lewis answered that after a sitting he put Miss Carver into a cab, and like one entirely detached, he related that Ada often spoke to him of the importer of blotting-books, which was true to a certain

extent. Mr. and Mrs. Carver, he said, looked favourably on the match, but for the present, at least, Ada couldn't abide the importer of blotting-books, an aversion that Lewis was careful not to emphasize in his narrative. Lucy sought in his eyes for confirmation of these stories, but they told her nothing, his interest in the young girl being but a sensual curiosity, already declining. The same words would tell what her interest in him had been, and what it was, and without the other being aware of it, each was seeking independently a way out of an intrigue which began to seem to them to have run its course.

"Lewis, dear," she said one day, "don't make it harder for me. My father and mother are pressing me to marry him."

"Darling, what is to be done?" he answered, though his heart was uplifted at the news. "Tell me," he asked in a stern tone, "what your answer is," and she answered: "We will always remain friends, but once I'm married you won't care to kiss me again."

"I shall always care to kiss lips as soft as yours and as red."

"But not mine," she answered. They bade each other good-bye; and feeling somewhat ashamed of his lack of soul, he walked in the garden, and standing in front of his picture he wondered how it was that things happened so oddly in this world. He added a few touches to her portrait, and fell to thinking that she would go to Germany to live, and when she returned it would be with a baby. How very sad! with this, however, of good in it, that the news of her marriage would quiet Lucy; and feeling he could do no more painting that day, he laid aside his palette and went to Carlton House Terrace to ask his mistress to come to the Park with him if she were disengaged that afternoon. She was always ready to do what he asked her, and while sitting under the

trees watching the fashionable strollers he related the news to Lucy.

"Ada Carver is, as I told you, going to marry the importer of blotting-books."

"Really? Well, I hope she'll be happy," Lucy answered. "Well, that is over," she said to herself. But one flirtation begins another, and soon Lewis was entangled in many others. Love affairs seemed to rise out of his pictures as out of a love philtre, and again the news reached Lucy's ears that he was in love: he had been seen driving with a woman, a girl in a plaid dress and with golden hair slipping over her ears, doubtless a model, and she began to try to take counsel with herself, reminding herself that she was now forty-five. She had said to herself in the days long ago at Fontainebleau: "If I get seven years I shall be satisfied and will retire gracefully. Sooner or later the break will come," she said, "but how will it come?" And turning from the glass, she asked how it was the future is always hidden from us, and, therefore, we poor mortals can do nothing but wait till time or accident set us and our lives apart.

"A woman dies twice," she said, "and in a very few years it is borne in upon us that our mouths are no longer fit for kisses. His mouth, too, will one day cease to be attractive. Would that it were hateful to all women to-day. He is twelve years younger than I." And she fell to thinking. Something might be done to persuade her husband to consent to a divorce. But it was too late. He had loved her once, and would always like her better than any other woman, so he had said. Could she blame him? Not with justice, for he had given her many happy years—given her herself, for without his love she would not have known herself. Why, then, was she dissatisfied? If she had purchased her freedom and they had married, would her case be any better? Even in marriage one cannot keep on kissing indefinitely. Time

brings an end to all things. Our pleasures go one after the other till nothing but our children remain. Ah, if she had had a child by Lewis, losing him would not be so hard to bear.

CHAP. XXVII.

WHILE Lucy sorrowed, Lewis rejoiced in his liberty regained. He had been faithful to Lucy for several years, not knowing whether his fidelity sprang from love or from gratitude, but he had been faithful. Ada had broken the bonds he had put upon himself, and once the bond was broken, there was no reason why he should deny himself the pleasure of every intrigue that presented itself. As soon as the day's painting was over, he was paying visits in Mayfair, talking painting, architecture, sculpture, and sometimes landscape gardening to ladies. And sometimes they leaned over a table examining water-colours, views, and aspects that the lady had accomplished during the summer months in her country residence, while the men were shooting grouse and partridges; waterfalls, windmills, and other picturesque spots were examined with attention and appreciation, and sometimes Lewis asked for the water-colours and criticised, brush in hand. "You see what I mean?" he would say. "All the lines should run into the picture. Lines running out of the picture make bad composition, and though we hear a great deal about skies being light, skies are often better dark than light."

Remarks such as these are very impressive; and every word the lady said seemed to go straight to his heart, to be treasured therein. His round magnetic eyes were always fixed upon her, and in this way he unravelled intrigue after intrigue. Every post brought him letters from women, and as the years went on his failures became

fewer and fewer. He recognised mistakes in the past, and whenever he fell to meditating them a tall girl, who had walked with him by a river, under trees, rose up in his memory, so strangely distinct that he felt that all his conquests were worthless, having lost this one. He had attracted her once, but that was years ago, and if they were to meet, he asked himself, would she pass him by? He had not been passed by unnoticed when he was a poor lad seeking a livelihood—why should she pass him by now? His success would astonish and win her, but he was older, and she was a girl, perhaps, who liked men in the twenties. He was only in the beginning of the thirties, but they might not meet till he was forty, and then it would be too late. "All the others were but shadows of this one," he said one morning, and put out his hand to gather up some letters. The first came from a woman whom he had met at a party a couple of nights before. "An uninteresting female," he said, and a moment after, his heart began to beat, for the letter brought the welcome news that Lord and Lady Granderville and Lady Helen Trevor had returned from St. Petersburg, and were in London for the season.

The next letter he opened was from Lucy, and it came to remind him that he was engaged to dine with her on the 12th of June, the night of her ball. "And it will be at that ball I shall meet Lady Helen," he said. "She will be there for certain. Good heavens! I shall see her in how many days? In thirteen days! I wonder if she will know me again. And how strange that I should have been thinking of her, and that Lucy should be giving a ball to which she has invited all her friends. She cannot have omitted the Grandervilles." And in his imagination he could see Lady Helen rising out of white silk; her blonde hair like a crown of gold. She was a girl when he saw her. She had liked him that day,

but she had seen many a man since. Was she still a virgin? He turned over in bed and lay thinking.

He made many calls that afternoon with a view to picking up news of the Grandervilles, but the days went by without his meeting them, and on the night of Lucy's ball he experienced a strange exaltation of the senses as he walked through Eaton Square, saying: "A great artist, perhaps—a successful artist, certainly—is going to meet the beautifullest woman of a great period," and the thought gladdened him that never in the old monarchical days had so many crowned heads passed along the banks of the Thames. "Never," he said to himself, as he came into view of the trees showing above the high walls that enclose the gardens of Buckingham Palace, "have the daughters of cotton-spinners been so anxious to exchange their wealth for the owner of the escutcheon. A wonderful moment," he continued, "a sort of intoxication, a desire of love and of art; and how much pleasanter it is now that women have ceased to take the trouble to conceal their intrigues." He laughed to himself, for his thoughts had gone back to the night when Lucy told him that in 1750 a certain French Marquis wrote to Louis XV., saying: "It is true that my daughter is sixteen years of age, but she is as innocent of what a man is as a babe unborn." "The reign of Louis XV. is again upon London"; and he remembered the professional beauties, the wives of unknown gentlemen, who had become celebrated in the space of a single night, and the people standing upon the chairs in the Park, so that they might see them better as they went by. "On every table," he said, "are photographs of Frank Miles's drawings of our courtesans, and the presents they receive are discussed in every drawing-room; and yet there are those who do not believe in progress."

He had read somewhere that every age is remembered by a word; to organise represents the fugitive Empire

founded by Napoleon, "And the professional beauty," he reflected, "represents Lord Beaconsfield's Government. But we're doing better in a way than the Court of Louis XV., for in the eighteenth century young girls —except those especially reserved for the King—were exempt from the general profligacy; but, great Scott! to-day the young girls compete with the married women, and very often are successful." A moment after he was asking himself if Lady Helen had remained a virtuous young girl in the Court of St. Petersburg, or taken her first lessons in love from some splendid Russian nobleman on the staircase. He would have liked to have been that young man, and—— But here he was at Carlton House Terrace, and he went up the great stairway with a faint hope in his heart that he might be asked to take Lady Helen down to dinner. But there wasn't much chance of that. Lucy would remember the incipient flirtation years ago, and would arrange her table accordingly. For this he admitted he could not blame her, and the long dinner went by drearily by the side of a dowager, whose mottled shoulders set him thinking of the snowy shoulders he would see ascending the stairs. "Under snowy shoulders we may seek a volcano, and find one," he said to himself, and continued to find conversation to amuse the dowager, who had been confided to his charge, till the people began to arrive for the ball.

"The Grandervilles will not be here before midnight," he said. "And perhaps some indisposition may keep Helen at home."

At last he heard their names called in the hall, and looking over the banisters saw Helen as he had seen her in many an imaginary portrait—an extraordinary whiteness rising out of white silk. "She wears her golden hair like a crown, just as I have seen her in dreams. Her bosom, too, is exquisite," he said; "almost as a boy's —just a turn, no more."

"Lord and Lady Granderville!" the prime butler shouted. "Lady Helen Trevor!" he added, in a slightly lower tone, and the men above leaning over the banisters looked down into Helen's bosom seeing her shoulders rising out of the scanty bodice, stiffly boned, held in its place by two narrow ribbons: the one her father had forbidden her to wear. "But she is wearing it!" No one spoke the words, but they were in the air; and all eyes rejoiced to see that the only concession she had made to her dressmaker's fears and her father's sense of propriety was a cluster of Aimée Vibert roses on her left breast. With a string of pearls about her neck, she ascended the stairs slowly, the gold of her hair coiled into a high knot, into which her maid had pinned a single flower. Her father followed her, muttering: "She might as well have come without a bodice at all"; and he kept his eyes for shame's sake averted from his daughter's back, affecting great care not to tread on the heavy train of white silk that flowed over the pompous bustle.

Lucy, at the head of the stairs, received the Grandervilles, and Lewis compared the mistress that had been and was still his with the girl he hoped would soon become his mistress . . . or his wife!

Lucy was in pink tulle and was still a young woman though she would never see forty-five again. . . .

"Did you ever see such a skin?" Day said, speaking of Lady Helen. "She is like milk."

"I would rather compare Lady Helen's whiteness to a lily's," Ripple replied in a reproving tone. "She looks as if she had stepped out of Gautier's poem, *Symphonie en Blanc Majeur*.

'De quel mica de neige vierge,
De quelle moëlle de roseau,
De quelle hostie et de quel cierge
A-t-on fait le blanc de sa peau.'"

"You may quote French as much as you like," Day answered, "but you won't change me, and though my French may be limited, I understand some words. A grain of virgin snow, isn't that it? Well, it won't do, Ripple. You must try something else. She is *crème de la crème* to look at and I should think *crème de menthe* in the mouth."

"A vulgar little cur," Ripple said to himself as he turned away suddenly and went towards the Misses Davidson: the oldest was in blue, the youngest in white, and the litter was chaperoned by Lady Archer. Next to them were Mrs. Ormrod and her three daughters, for Lucy never forgot to send invitations to her Sussex neighbours—they came or stayed away as they liked, but they got invitations; there they were sitting in symmetrical rows, the same people who were at the tennis party ten years ago at Claremont House, making quite a little party led by Mrs. Swannell, the wife of the member for the county.

Most of the guests had arrived; occasionally the servant shouted out a name, and if Lucy caught sight of the newcomers she advanced to meet them, but her duties as hostess were now practically over, and she regarded herself as free to enter the dance with her beaux.

"Mrs. Campbell Ward," shouted the servant, and Lucy held out her hand to a tall, large woman with brown hair, dyed sufficiently to give it a golden tinge. A young man was waiting for her and she took his arm, and Lucy said to the man whose arm she had accepted, "A game that will never go out of fashion." At the same moment the blare of the cornet came through the soft sound of the fiddles; the clarinet repeated the principal theme, soon to be lost in the clash of cymbals; then string, wood and brass brought the waltz to a close. And as soon as the music ceased a crowd of black coats and white shoulders moved forwards and words "ices" and "heat"

were heard constantly. Every time Mrs. Campbell Ward came into view a hush fell, and instinctively the men withdrew to let beauty pass, the men with envious eyes, the women with cold indifference verging on contempt. Once she was followed and closely by Lady Helen, and this was the great moment of the ball, the moment in which everybody asked himself and herself which was the most beautiful woman. A strange look passed between the women, and then, forgetful of Lady Helen, Mrs. Campbell Ward took Lord Senton's arm and went towards the ballroom. Lady Helen tapped Lewis's arm with a smile that seemed to say "Presently," and taking the arm of the gentleman who had come to claim the dance she disappeared.

Lewis was now free, and he joined the group of artists, anxious to hear their opinion of his full-length portrait of Lucy, hanging at the other end of the room conspicuously draped—"A little too conspicuously," Lewis said, "but of course we artists have no choice in such matters as this."

"Now, Hilton, should I be presuming too much on your kindness to ask you for a candid opinion?"

"By no means, my dear Seymour. If I understand your picture correctly, you wished to decorate a surface, and you have done it, and admirably."

"But a portrait," Holt interjected, "is something more than a mere decorated surface. A portrait without character is not a portrait. You must not understand by this, my dear Seymour, that I am of opinion that you have omitted any essential characteristic: I like your portrait and would not have it different, except, perhaps, the shoulders. Now, if you look at the shoulders of those young girls you will see what I mean. Life has accents that many of us fear to include in our pictures. We're afraid of life; we deem life a vulgarity and think that we must attenuate and omit, whereas vulgarity, to my

thinking, though I don't expect you or Hilton to think with me in this matter, is lack of personality. I don't see how any man's art, if it be personal, can be said to be vulgar: to be vulgar is to be like other people, whereas if you are not like anybody but yourself, it cannot be said you are vulgar."

Hilton broke in here: "Gustave Doré is like nobody but himself, but he's vulgar. No, I cannot agree that originality and personality are convertible terms." The Academicians continued their argument till the waltz was over and Lady Helen reappeared, fanning a white face into which had risen some delicate shades of rose.

"Those tints could only be got by a glaze, Holt."

Lewis was much interested in Holt's criticism, but he was now thinking of Lady Helen, and so intensely that he forgot his interest in painting and rushed off to ask her for another dance, leaving Holt to explain to a young man who was engaged for a dance with one of the Misses Davidson, that a glaze did not mean a return to archaic painting. The young man deemed it to be politeness to listen, and his partner, seeing her dance diminishing, said: "I wish Mr. Holt would leave off talking to Freddy; I shall lose half my dance. Hostesses would do well not to ask men to their balls who want to talk painting."

"And I think it is unfair to ask girls to balls and not introduce them," the sister answered; "bringing us up from Sussex to watch others dancing—I was never so bored in my life."

Mr. Campbell Ward came from the card-tables, and his relations with his wife set the girls talking. "I wonder," said Miss Davidson, "if he walks out of the drawing-room when Lord Worthing calls."

"I'm not sure I don't admire a husband who walks out of the drawing-room, leaving his wife alone with her lover," Miss Ormrod said, causing her friends to look at

her askance; and she regretted her words as soon as they had passed her lips, feeling that she had, in the expression of the popular idiom, given herself away.

"I don't know that it would matter, for one never feels safe in a drawing-room. Servants are always coming in and out," Miss Davidson remarked, and she too regretted her observation, feeling that perhaps she had given rise to suspicion regarding the propriety of her conduct on all occasions.

The group watched Mr. Campbell Ward pass his arm through Lord Worthing's and walk away.

"I hear that Mr. Campbell Ward plays heavily; perhaps he is asking Lord Worthing for a cheque. But here comes Mr. Seymour, with his old love on his arm"; and the girls began to speak of the days long ago when they were introduced to Mr. Seymour.

"He didn't look half so well as he does to-day; a dapper little man came down to do the drawing-room decorations, when Miss Fanshawe won the tennis match, do you remember?"

And the appearance of Mrs. Bentham on her lover's arm set the painters again talking of Lewis's portrait.

"Talent! Good heavens!" broke in Mr. Holt. "Is his picture in cardboard or linoleum—which surface?"

"But surface isn't everything in a picture," Ripple remarked.

"Yes," Holt replied, "it is. Touch is art"; and he began to develop the theory that touch was essential in all the arts.

"In literature?" Ripple interjected.

"Yes, in literature," Holt continued, "and that is why women neither paint, nor write, nor play the piano as well as men—they lack touch. In love only is their touch exquisite."

"Our friend," Hilton remarked, "invites us to follow him down a dangerous incline—primrose paths leading to

a bonfire." And the Academician's remark put everybody in good humour, but the humour of the moment was broken suddenly by the arrival of Lord Senton with his little mongrel secretary, Day, who had been down in the supper-room, and had come up rather tipsy.

"Now, what are you learned gentlemen talking about? Which woman would make the best model for Venus is the subject of your talk. Which—Lady Helen or Mrs. Campbell Ward? Lord Senton thinks Mrs. Campbell Ward the nobler."

"I didn't say nobler, Day. When you quote, quote correctly."

"Well, well, what did your lordship say? That the girls this year"—Day steadied himself on his legs—"are randier than last year's lot? Was that it?"

"Day, you're tipsy!" Senton replied angrily. "I'll——" He clenched his decayed teeth, and, afraid of an uproar, some friends led Day away and came between them. Lord Senton went forth to meet Lady Helen, muttering: "I'll give the fellow the sack to-morrow."

CHAP. XXVIII.

"LET us sit here," Lucy said, and noticing Lewis's hesitation, "if you're not engaged for this waltz. Are you?"

"Yes," Lewis replied, some colour mounting his cheeks.

"To whom?"

Afraid that she would object to his dancing with Lady Helen, he answered that he was engaged to Miss Davidson.

"Very well, then, we will dance together later on," Lucy said.

"I'll put Miss Davidson off, if you like."

"On no account. Those girls haven't had too many partners. I want them to enjoy themselves."

"You don't mind?"

"Not in the least. What right have I to mind? You are your own master."

"Lucy, dear, don't answer so crossly. If you don't like me to, I won't dance with her."

At this moment the band began to play again, and Mrs. Campbell Ward and Lord Worthing came forward to speak to Lucy. "You're not thinking of going?" she said; and seeing that Lucy would be engaged in talk for some time with her departing guests, he hurried away to find Lady Helen waiting for him, and went off to dance, completely under the charm of her beauty.

It seemed to him that he had never desired anything but faintly, and that this was the first time he had ever been able to particularise a passion. He remembered Lady Helen as something extraordinarily white with corn-coloured hair, and the slight change that the years had wrought in her inflamed his passion to possess her. The young girl whom he remembered had passed away into a young woman, hardly less beautiful, he thought, and more urgently desired by him, for now he felt himself capable of a deeper passion than in the days when he had just come out of poverty. Claremont House had not been able altogether to efface the privations of the Waterloo Road. He admired Lady Helen as much as his strength allowed him to admire her in those starveling days, but now life appeared more brilliant, more distinct, and as he glided over the floor with her he compared her, and to her advantage, with every other woman. The touch of her limbs as they waltzed together quickened the blood in his veins till Lucy was forgotten, and nothing seemed to matter but the moment. But Lucy, who did not believe Lewis when he said he was going to dance with Miss Davidson, determined to go in search of them as soon as she could shake herself free from Mrs. Campbell Ward and Lord Worthing. The twain,

however, delayed her; other couples came up at the same time. The supper-rooms were open; guests were flocking on the staircase. Lucy found herself obliged to ascend the stairs with them. She was detained again and again; and when at last, wearied out, she got back to the ballroom, the waltz was over. She was stopped by young men who thought it their duty to ask her for a dance, and by women, who talked commonplaces to her. The necessity of answering them politely provoked her beyond endurance. She got rid of one with a "Yes" and another with a "No," and a third with an occasional smile. She pressed through a group of black coats into the card-room. Lewis was not there. A whist party that had just risen detained her again. She again got caught in a crowd of dancers.

"If you see Mr. Seymour," she asked a young man, an admirer who aspired to Lewis's succession, "will you tell him I'd like to speak to him?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Bentham"; and he told her that he had seen Lewis in the supper-room.

Lucy answered that she had just come up from the supper-room, and Lewis was not there; but the young man assured her that he was, and thinking that perhaps he had gone down to supper while she had been speaking to Lord William in the card-room, she said: "Thank you; if you see him, tell him I want to speak to him."

"But may I not go down to the supper-room and fetch him for you?" and once more she descended the staircase, now full of light dresses and black coats passing up and down, looking at themselves in the great mirror as they passed.

At the bottom of the staircase was a tessellated pavement with high pillars that supported the gallery overhead, and as she passed across this hall the sounds of music died away amid the clatter of supper in a long room wainscoted as high as the doors in oak, with

pilasters dividing the walls, and dark-green velvet curtains hanging from massive gold cornices.

"The feast of the chaperons," Lucy heard somebody say, and the phrase would have amused her at any other time, for everywhere she caught sight of lumpy shoulders, and the young men in attendance on these called to the servants for *pâté de foie gras, salmis de pleuvier doré,* ham, cutlets, cream and jelly. A young man asked Lucy if he could get her anything, and she asked if he had seen Mr. Seymour. "A friend of mine, Lady Ascot, is most anxious to meet him. Do try to find him for me."

The young man returned without news of Lewis, and Lucy returned to the ballroom with a great number of dancers, who began to form themselves into quadrilles. And Lucy watched them dancing, the fumes of champagne in their heads, the different couples coming and going in a confusion of bright stuffs. And the rhythm, having mixed the colours, brought back on certain notes the same rose satin skirt, the same blue velvet bodice, next to the same black coats. Then, like a shower of fireworks, they all disappeared up the room, and so on hour after hour.

A melancholy gaiety, it all seemed to her—dancers and card-players; and leaving the card-players she walked round the gallery encircling the head of the stairs, thinking of the bedrooms which were reached by two small staircases united by a long passage.

"Surely they cannot be sitting up there alone! She wouldn't be mad enough to hide behind this curtain." And she drew aside the curtain. Nobody was on the staircase. She ascended the stairs and stopped for a moment, puzzled, passed along the passage by her room, from whence came a faint odour of verveine, and prepared to descend to the ballroom by the other. But on the sound of voices she stopped again, and descending

a few steps, looked over the banisters and saw Lewis sitting with Helen.

The temptation to eavesdropping was overpowering, and she gave an anxious ear to the broken murmur of talk that reached her—without, however, being able to divine the words.

"Will he kiss her?" she asked herself; and a moment after she saw Lewis kiss Helen on the point of her shoulder, and the sight smote her with such violence that, stifling a cry, she stole away to her room. As she stood there dazed, the thought struck her that the kiss that she had witnessed might be but a prelude to an act that would divide her from Lewis irreparably. "He will marry her," she said, and hastened to the staircase, hoping that she might not arrive too late; but the lovers were gone, and she lingered at the head of the stairs, asking herself if they had gone away to dance and would return. As it seemed to her not unlikely that they would return to kiss again, she sat on the top stair waiting for them, her brain becoming gradually benumbed with music. Waltz upon waltz, polka upon polka, a false gaiety that burdened her brain till she could bear it no longer, and she returned to her room, her mind filled with broken thoughts. "I'm done for, I'm done for!" she repeated again and again, till she was weary of the words, and looked around her room in search of some means whereby she might end her life. But there was no poison on her dressing-table, nor even an opiate; and she lay awake hour after hour crazed with grief—or was it jealousy? She did not know, and she cared not—nothing mattered to her now; and the words that came up again and again in her mind were: "My life is ended, my life is ended; I'm done for!" And then she remembered that other men had made love to her. That very evening a man had told her that she was a delectable morsel. She turned from the remembrance with mingled anger and disgust,

and with the knowledge that she would not find forgetfulness of Lewis in another man's arms. The thought of revenge passed quickly. She did not wish to revenge herself upon him. "Moreover," she said to herself, "even if he knew that I'd gone over to another, he might not care." "He must never know!" she wailed out, and prayed for strength not to speak of Helen when he called. "He will be sure to call about tea time"; and she feared the interview so much that the reality, when it appeared, seemed trivial compared with the anticipation. He mentioned that she looked tired, and she answered that every woman is tired after her ball. She noticed that he did not dare to congratulate her on the success of her ball, and seemed glad to hear that she was going away to Claremont House for rest.

"Good-bye, Lewis."

"Good-bye, Lucy; but I shall see you in a few days," he answered.

And she left him, wondering at his perfidy; leaving him to return to the Vale, to wonder at his good fortune. He was now free!

CHAP. XXIX.

SHE did not speak to Lewis about the kiss she had seen him exchange with Helen on the staircase, when he called at Carlton House Terrace, and she did not ask him to come to Claremont House, but just mentioned that she was going to the country for some days.

He received this welcome piece of news with an unmoved countenance, and hoping to see her when she returned, left her congratulating himself on his good-fortune, for he was free to spend whole days with Helen—only his painting interfered with his love-making; and one day, unable to endure his sitters, he put them off on the

ground of ill health, and went away with Helen on a coaching excursion to Dorking. They were never alone, it is true, but they had enjoyed together a long day of twelve hours of sunshine, from ten till ten; and feeling that she deserved reproaches for her contumacy, she fled upstairs to her room. Very soon, however, the expected inquiry came. Did her ladyship require any dinner? The answer she gave the servant was that she did not need dinner; a cup of chocolate was all she required; might she have one brought up to her room? The maid retired, and returned with the message that his lordship and her ladyship would be glad if Lady Helen would come to the drawing-room.

"I shall be asked with whom I have been spending the day," she said to herself as she arranged her hair, "but there must be no more wrangles on this subject or any other concerning me," she added as she turned the handle of the dining-room door.

"Will you be kind enough to tell us where you have spent the day?" the inquiry began; and she answered her father that she had expected that question, and that it had been put to her many times before, and that she had come to think that she had already made it sufficiently plain that she intended to live her life in her own fashion. And at this declaration her father asked if she would be kind enough to give them some idea as to the measure of the nonconformity they might expect to have to endure—was not even the dinner hour to be respected? And he turned to his wife, and Lady Granderville interposed with some plaintive admonitions that Helen would be sorry sooner or later for her conduct, which not only would do much harm to herself, but would also prejudice her father in the eyes of Her Majesty, the lady to whom all transgressions of the kind were abhorrent, and whose life was blameless.

Lord Granderville asked his daughter if she proposed

to marry Mr. Seymour, and she answered wearily that she did not know, and begged her parents to forego the discussion, at least till to-morrow morning, for she was very tired.

"My chocolate is getting cold," she said, passing out of the room quickly to avoid further discussion. "But it isn't quite cold," she said, when she got upstairs. "I shall enjoy it more when I get out of my stays and into a tea-gown. How beautiful London is in the twilight," she said, and in the summer dusk she sat sipping her chocolate, thinking of the delightful day she had spent with Lewis on the coach and strolling with him along the hillside in front of the great expanse of country, talking of things that she had always wished to talk about: about Rossetti in principal; his poetry and his pictures both interested her, both had been an influence in her life for many years, but nobody she had met knew anything about Rossetti or wished to see his pictures or to read him. Lewis was the first man she had met who knew Rossetti's pictures and could talk about them, and trying to reknit herself to her recollections of him and the many vital things he had said, she lamented that her father and mother had ordered her to come down to the drawing-room for reproval. If there must needs be another wrangle it would have been better to have chosen another moment. She could have listened to her father more respectfully after breakfast; on the top of her happiness she could not. Her father had spoilt everything; after that scene she couldn't pick up the thread of her memories. "Happiness is but a cobweb," she said, "an angry hand destroys it in a moment," and pouring out what remained in the jug, she drank it and began to undress, hoping that as she lay between sleeping and waking she would be able to disassociate herself from the house she was in. She regretted the Vale. If she had spent the night out, her father could not have said

more than he did, and she began to think that the question whether her life belonged to herself or to her father and mother would have to be settled. The sooner this question was settled, the better for all of them. For ten years she had lived in different countries, speaking to people with whom she had not a thought in common, striving to entertain them for her father's benefit. All he thought of was his chances of going to Paris as an Ambassador. She would like to live in Paris, but not in an embassy. Of embassies she had had enough and more than enough. "Disgraced," she cried out, "because I have been out coaching with Lewis Seymour! To go out with a man alone is disgrace, in my father's eyes, and in mother's—I don't know that mother troubles much. Whereas to my mind it is disgraceful to accept any opinions but one's own." She slept lightly, and awoke thinking that she was married to different men. In one dream it was a Russian, in another it was a German, and in every case she was glad to find she had only been dreaming: she was still free; that last calamity, marriage, had not befallen her—to be married to somebody whose life she would have to adopt was what she dreaded. She dozed once more, and from this doze the thought awoke her that she had been a virgin long enough. "How silly it all is!" she cried, sitting up in bed. . . . And how incomplete! Now, why? For the first time she felt like a fool, and when the summer dawn divided the window-curtains, she cried out in bitter rage: "Ten years of my life have been wasted, but every hour of it henceforth shall be employed upon myself, upon myself alone; enough of my life has been given to others." She dozed again, awaking before the servant's footsteps were heard on the stairs. "My life in this house has ended"; and slipping out of her bed she went to her writing-table and wrote a note to her father, saying that she was leaving London for a few days and would

write to him again about her intentions. She wasn't quite sure but her next letter might contain an announcement of her marriage. This done, she began to pack a small trunk, something that she thought she could carry downstairs, throwing into it the barest necessaries: some diaphanous chemises and nightgowns, drawers and fine laces; the soft things she needed—silk stockings and delicate shoes. "For we shall not do much tramping about the country," she said to herself, gathering some phials, enamel boxes, and brushes from her dressing-table. "I can only take with me one complete change in this trunk! A second hat seems inevitable"; and a scarf of singularly delicate material embroidered with a rare pattern struck her as something that Lewis might like to paint. "But how shall I manage? This small trunk I can carry down myself, but the bandbox and dressing-case? It will be better to wait until the servants are about. The first is the kitchenmaid; she will help me. Now I must finish dressing. But my bath?" She passed her arms into a wrapper and returned to her room five minutes after, for it was now close on seven o'clock, and the servants would be about very soon.

"The best thing will be to go away about eight o'clock, leaving messages with the butler and footman just as if my departure had been arranged for. There will be less talk than if I were to sneak out of the house without saying a word. . . ."

The footsteps she heard were the kitchenmaid's. "Do you carry this trunk for me," she said. The girl ran to the cabstand and returned in a hansom. The trunk was hoisted on top, Helen and the bandbox went inside.

"How long will it take you to drive to the Vale, Chelsea?"

"About half an hour, miss," the cabby cried through the trap in the roof of the cab, "but I can hurry my horse up a bit, if you're pressed for time."

"There is no hurry," she answered, and her thoughts melted into reveries. Lewis would be turning out of bed when she arrived. But on hearing she was waiting in the studio, he would hasten his sponging. He might be so anxious to see her that he might come in apologising for his dressing-gown, and she thought she would like to see him in a dressing-gown and slippers, but the news she received was unexpected. "Mr. Seymour is still in bed," the parlour-maid said, "but I'll wake him. He'll not be long, your ladyship."

"Ask Mr. Seymour if I may come up to his bedroom, for I have to speak to him of matters of some importance," she replied, and a few minutes afterwards the parlour-maid took her upstairs; and as soon as the door had closed she burst out laughing, so comical did the situation appear to her: Lewis lying in bed, and she standing at the foot of the bed looking at him. After a while she asked him if he were not glad to see her, and he answered that of course he was glad, but would be able to appreciate her visit more as soon as he knew that no catastrophe had fallen or was imminent.

"Catastrophe, Lewis?"

"Well, dear," he answered, "the message that Teresa brought up to me was that you wished to speak to me on a matter of importance, one that admitted of no delay."

"A catastrophe it certainly is," she said, "but whether pleasant or unpleasant depends upon your humour. I fancy you will find it pleasant—at least, there is a good deal to be said for it. I have come to tell you, Lewis, that we must go away together."

"That is pleasant news, indeed," he cried, but was taken aback when he was told there was to be no delay. To his question "Whither should they fly?" he was told that Helen had in mind a villa at Twickenham. Why Twickenham she did not know, nor could she tell him to which villa they were going, and Lewis gathered that she

had in mind large drawing-rooms overflowing with pale furniture, and gardens and swards shelving to the water's edge.

"But we shall marry," he cried.

"Yes, we will marry," she answered . . . "ultimately"; and she related her life, till at last, feeling that the story was being prolonged unduly, she said: "Lewis, you must dress yourself. I'll give you ten minutes for a bath, and half an hour to put on your clothes, and when they are on, you will please to ring, and I will come upstairs and talk to you while you are shaving. Will you allow me to order breakfast?"

"Of course"; and having kissed her, he applied himself to his bath, thinking the while of the adventurous girl he had fallen in with. Yet not altogether a feather-headed girl, such a one as would wreck a man's life. . . . He must insist on marriage; but marriage without notice was impossible, even in a registry office. He dried and powdered himself with care, and sought for becoming clothes, for whatever happened he was going to spend the day with his betrothed. "Whatever happens now," he said to himself, "I shall have to accept; there is no controlling this woman, who would talk to me while I shaved," he added. "What a genius for intimacy!" He rang the bell. "My dear Helen, you spoke of Twickenham, but are you sure there is a hotel there?"

"It doesn't matter," she answered, somewhat testily; "we shall hire a villa."

"And sleep," Lewis said, "under the same roof?"

"In the same bed, I hope," Helen answered.

"But if we cannot get the villa?"

"Then we shall go to the hotel. There is always the Star and Garter waiting for us, darling. You are the star and I am the garter, dear: could anything be more providential?"

"You are more than a garter, Helen."

"Yes, perhaps I am, but for the moment I think I would like to be the garter."

Her wit gave him courage, and he looked upon himself as her husband already, with a delicious adventure in front of him.

"An hotel," he said, "will be a sad descent from the riverside villa."

"Lewis, for the next fortnight you must promise me not to grumble, but to bear all that may befall you joyfully. Now, if you're ready, we'll go down to breakfast. Aren't you glad, Lewis, to see me pouring out the coffee and attending on you just as if I were your wife?"

"But you will be my wife to-morrow."

"We may have something else to do to-morrow. But why think, Lewis? Why not enjoy things as they go by? Only women seem to have that faculty. Men are always thinking. Shall we go into the garden or shall I sit for you?"

He began a sketch, but his mind was not on what he was doing. "I cannot draw to-day," he said, and tore up the drawing. "Let us go and inquire for villas"; and jumping into a hansom they drove from house-agent to house-agent. But none had a villa on his books that could be transferred to them during the course of the afternoon. "An inventory is necessary," the house-agent said, "and the references you give, though I'm sure they are entirely satisfactory, will have to be inquired into." While the house-agent was saying these words a tall, energetic old lady, in black silk, who had just come into the office, said: "I have come here to arrange for the letting of my villa at Twickenham. It might suit you." Whereupon the house-agent that was attending on the tall upright figure in black silk came forward, and the inventory was again alluded to, but Lewis declared that he would accept the inventory, and as he was an artist and liked beautiful things, it was extremely unlikely that

misfortunes would occur to a piece of china or to a picture.

"I don't think, madam," he said, "that you will find that coffee has been spilt over your sofas or on your arm-chairs, and if coffee be spilt, I shall have to pay for the recovering of that piece of furniture."

She answered that these conditions seemed to her to be fair, and that Mr. Lewis Seymour's position in the art world was a sufficient reference so far as she was concerned. The house-agent bowed acquiescence, saying that all things being agreeable to all parties, they might look upon the matter as settled. Lewis and Helen began to think that Fortune was still fighting their battles, but at the last moment the old lady cried out: "But it is impossible for you to enter into possession this evening"; and Helen and Lewis returned crestfallen from the doorway. "My parrot is still there."

"But we shall be very glad to have a parrot," Lewis said, smiling.

"If you knew more about my bird, I'm afraid that you wouldn't say so. He is an extremely jealous bird, and will fly at anybody who comes near me."

"But you will not be there, so the parrot's jealousy will not be excited."

"He'll not take food from anybody but me, only when I am away will he allow my maid to feed him, and when I return he'll fly at her. Only the other day he tore the cap off her head. An ungrateful bird, I admit, but a wonderful bird."

"We'll keep your maid to look after the bird and the furniture." The lady looked from Lewis to Helen and thought she had never seen a handsomer pair.

"You will not tease my bird?" she said in a sudden burst of intimacy, and Lewis answered that she would have no fault to find with her tenantry. "Five-and-

twenty pounds a week for a month, payable in advance"; and the old lady, astonished at this generous offer, for she would have let her villa for fifteen pounds, signed the agreement.

"And now," Lewis said, "will you be kind enough to telegraph to your maid that she may expect us for dinner?" and from the house in the Vale Lady Helen wrote another letter to her father.

They had tea together, and after tea Lewis packed some summer suits and jerseys.

"A hansom," he said, "can take us and our luggage, and it'll be a pleasant drive there."

Lady Helen was of the same mind, and with two small trunks on the top and a bandbox between their legs, they drove away, seeing London declining into long streets of two-storied houses about Hammersmith, but as soon as the river was crossed, they came upon villas standing in the midst of tall trees. After tennis-grounds and flower-vases the country opened up into fields in which haymaking was in progress. Clouds unfolded in a blue sky, birds flew from wood to wood, while the lovers dreamed of the happiness that awaited them. "One long month of happiness for certain," Lewis said, "unless, indeed, your father and mother come down and snatch you away from me."

"But how could they do that?" Helen answered. "Am I not my own mistress? If a woman can't choose her life at seven-and-twenty, then she is a slave to the end of her days, without the right of self-judgment."

"But if your father should come and find us still unmarried? Don't you think, Helen, it would be better to . . ."

"No, Lewis, I do not. We shall be married one of these days. One morning I shall say to you, 'Now, Lewis, don't you think that this is a suitable morning for

us to go to church?' More than that I cannot say; not at present."

"The banns will have to be published," Lewis muttered.

"I'm going to have this adventure according to my fancy. God only knows I've waited long enough for the adventure of my fancy"; and Lewis, feeling unable to control her whim, abandoned himself altogether to it, and a pleasant silence fell, bringing them into intense consciousness of each other; and feeling for each other's hands, they followed the landscape, expecting the river to appear at every moment.

"There's a sensation of water in the air," Lewis said, and it was about half a mile on the other side of the village that the hansom turned into a yellow gate on which was written "The Willows," the drive proceeding into what seemed to be a little wooded domain. It stopped in front of a gabled house, out of which came a maid-servant of comely aspect, accompanied by a page boy, into whose charge the maid confided the luggage.

"That twelve-and-sixpence," Helen said, "carries us into a new life"; and wondering at her audacious mind, Lewis followed her into a villa, larger, more commodious, and pleasanter than they had hoped for; and the maid-servant, pleased at their commendations of the large airy saloons, draped with grey curtained windows, invited them to admire the greensward. The maid-servant said that Mrs. Cartwright set great store on her china and pictures, and the lovers accepted the maid's words as admonitions, and passed into their bedroom, which, of course, for them was a matter of special interest.

"This is Mrs. Cartwright's bedroom—the one, I suppose, you will occupy; and this is the bathroom Mrs. Cartwright put in only a year ago. The dining-room is at the other end of the house." And through airy and pleasingly

coloured saloons they followed the comely maid, thinking how the days would pass with books and music, coming in from walks and going out for walks together.

"And there is the parrot!" Helen exclaimed.

The maid stopped, surprised.

"Mrs. Cartwright has told you about Polly?"

"Yes, indeed," Lady Helen answered—"that he hates everybody but his mistress."

"Which is quite true, ma'am. He is very fond of tea and coffee and cocoa, but before Mrs. Cartwright went away, whenever I offered him a spoonful he would take the spoon and tip the tea or coffee out, just to show how much he disliked me. But all the time Mrs. Cartwright was away he took everything I gave him, and came to me when I called him, and on Mrs. Cartwright's return I said: 'I think that Polly has quite taken to me since you've been away, ma'am,' and went to the cage to show her how she would come to me, but the moment I put in my finger ungrateful Polly tried to snatch it. Now, you see how she rolls her eyes when Mr. Seymour comes near the cage? What a rage she is in! And if she could get out, she'd fly at him just as she flew at me. She tore the cap off my head, and a great piece of hair came with it."

As soon as Lewis retired from the cage the bird's anger ceased, and climbing up her cage she put out her neck for Helen to stroke her.

"Well, I never! She's taken to you at once, ma'am. A thing I've never seen her do before."

They talked a little while longer of the whims and caprices that parrots were subject to, especially the green sort. "She speaks very well for a green bird," the maid said.

"The green are much more savage than the grey," Lewis said, "and the grey are better speakers and

much more beautiful in colour—grey and red, a much prettier bird to paint."

"You'd like to see the dining-room, sir?" They murmured their satisfaction.

"We shan't have many visitors," Helen said to the maid, returning to the parrot, who seemed overjoyed to have her back again.

"I declare, ma'am. She loves you better than the mistress."

Lewis thought this a good opportunity to tell Kate that his wife was Lady Helen Seymour, to which Kate answered: "I beg pardon, sir, but I didn't know the lady's name; and if her ladyship would like to tell me about the dinner, I'll send up to the village for a chicken."

"That will do excellently, but we are easily fed, Kate," Lewis answered. "And when will the chicken be ready?"

"In an hour, sir; you will have just time to dress for dinner."

Whereupon the lovers returned to their rooms, Lady Helen saying that she would like to get into a tea-gown. "And after dinner we shall see if the parrot will take food from me."

"Well, isn't it wonderful that we should be here alone? How things have worked out! How well you have managed it!" he said. "Here we're dressing for dinner in front of each other." And they went out to dinner together, Lewis whispering: "Don't you think I did well to mention your name? We are going to be married."

"Yes, Lewis, we are," she said, "on the first opportunity"; and laughing gaily they sat down to dinner, Lady Helen speaking of the parrot, to whom she took over fruit from time to time.

"I never should have believed it possible," Kate said,

"if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, but I wouldn't advise your ladyship to make too free with Polly yet, for those birds are very artful and inconstant."

"But somehow I feel quite safe with her"; and when dinner was over she repeated the phrase, saying, "I feel quite safe with her," and went towards the cage.

"My dear Helen, if on such a night as this the bird should take a piece out of your cheek! I beg of you, I beseech you, I implore you."

But Lady Helen would not be gainsaid; and as soon as she opened the door of the cage the parrot came out, perched on to her finger, and climbed up her arm on to her shoulder, and proud of her conquest Helen walked about.

But the Polly could not bear any attempt to come between her and the object of her affections, and when Lewis approached Lady Helen, Polly at once began to roll her eyes, to scream, and put up her feathers.

"Don't come near me, Lewis; you are agitating the bird," she said. But Lewis, forgetful that parrots have wings and can fly, began to feel a little jealous of Polly, and would have liked to put her back into the cage; but the moment he attempted to approach Lady Helen the bird prepared to attack him, and so savage was her demeanour, that Lewis thought it wiser to retreat. But this wasn't enough for the parrot: she flew after Lewis, who was walking in a different direction, and Lady Helen's cry and the parrot's claws and beak were a simultaneous intimation of the assault. Polly's beak was in Lewis's ear, causing him considerable pain, and he might have lost a piece of the ear if Lady Helen had not ran forward at once. At her approach Polly seemed to forget Lewis altogether, and from the harsh notes her voice fell into a soft cooing, and she allowed herself to be put back into her cage.

CHAP. XXX.

NEXT morning Lewis and Helen were awakened out of deep sleep by the sound of women's voices, and sitting up in bed they listened.

"What can all this screaming be about?" Lewis asked, and slipping out of bed, he opened the door. "I believe," he said, "that they have let the parrot out of the cage and are trying to get her back into it." Kate cried to him to shut the door, but she cried out too late, and a moment afterwards the bird came flopping through it and settled herself at once on the pillow beside Helen.

"We are so sorry, sir; and it isn't my fault. The kitchenmaid, while I was dusting the chimney-piece, opened the door to take out the tray and forgot to close it."

"Well, the bird is in our bedroom now," he answered.

"Would you like me to come and try to get her back into her cage, sir?"

"I'm afraid she wouldn't let you," Lewis answered, and his eyes went to the bird, who had perched herself on Helen's shoulder, and was now rubbing her head caressingly against her cheek. "She seems to be as fond of you as I am, and has ousted me from your bed."

Helen offered to carry her back to her cage, but Lewis said he had slept enough; and arming himself with a towel, said, "I will go to the bathroom, dear, and perhaps when I come back dressed"—he stopped to watch the bird put her great horny beak into Helen's mouth —"I'd like to do a drawing, and will bring in the sketch-book."

While he was bathing, Helen, to make Polly more comfortable, drew forward a high-backed arm-chair, inviting Polly to perch upon it, which the bird did, obedient to

her every wish. Polly cooed and extended her head for caresses, and she went through her entire repertoire of phrases for Helen's entertainment. A curious scene it was when Lewis returned: Polly was giving all her attention to Helen. "Trying," Lewis said, "to learn new words and phrases," as if she only cared for those she could learn from Helen. "If I were only sure the bird wouldn't attack me."

"The bird will not interfere with you, Lewis, so long as you don't come near me. But she is clearly very jealous, and can only have one love at a time, and will not suffer any rivalry, so keep away."

The last remark did not altogether please Lewis, but his mind was bent upon his drawing, for he had seen a pose that captured him: Helen raising herself up to the bird—a pretty movement, almost a nude, for the morning being very hot, the last sheet had been kicked aside.

"How is your drawing going?" Helen asked, and Lewis replied, "Very well indeed. But can you keep the pose a little longer?"

"Well, a little longer," she said; "all my weight is on my right arm."

Lewis hurried to get down the main lines of his drawing, and when Helen said, "I really cannot bear the pose any longer," he answered that after breakfast he would be glad if she would give him another sitting.

"And now, Polly, I must really dress myself," she said, twisting her legs over the bedside; and taking Polly in her hands, she took her to her cage and went into the bathroom, appearing some twenty minutes afterwards in a tea-gown.

"You said you'd like me to take the pose afterwards, so I haven't made any considerable change in my toilet. But, darling, I haven't asked you to show me your drawing."

Lewis opened his sketch-book, and they hung over it together, admiring, criticising it till beguiled from it by the savoury smell of kidneys and bacon. They seated themselves at the breakfast table. Kate had baked some cakes for them which they liked exceedingly, and the coffee was strong, the marmalade excellent, and in a happy digestion they rose from the table and stood by the open window, their feet tempted by the greensward and by the shady alley leading no doubt to the water's edge. Both were anxious to explore, to investigate and admire their little domain—a month's domain, for by the end of the month it seemed to them that they must return to town. Lewis had pictures to paint, but for a month they would be all alone with the books, the views, and the sketch-books.

"And a vicious parrot," Lewis said. "A bird that threatens to monopolise you, darling. My first rival; will there be any others?"

Helen did not answer as he expected she would—"There can never be anybody but you"—she merely turned the conversation, saying that she was tempted to walk out. "But you see, dear, I've only slippers on, silk stockings, a chemise and a dressing-gown. You see, I'm nearly undressed. You want me to go back to bed for you to finish your drawing."

Lewis admitted that he would like to have another half-hour's sitting, but he, too, was captured by the scents that came up from the flowers, and the hum of the bees seeking honey from larkspur to hollyhock.

"How strong and sweetly the stocks smell!" she said. "I think we might go a little way."

"Yes, let us go a little way and talk to the gardener yonder. There may be a boat-house, and the air is so pleasant in the shady alley, and you are so pleasant to walk with," he said, conscious of the presence of her body under the long blue tea-gown.

The alley they were in was shaded by willows on one side and by an occasional elm on the other, a pleasant path extending one whole reach of the Thames. It seemed commonplace to her to say that it was exquisite to walk in this fresh morning air by the river after a love night. Yet the words were on their lips—on his, perhaps, more often than hers, for she was more content than he was to enjoy without speech. He would have liked her to speak, for not to speak seemed to him a little cynical. That was the one fault he had to find with Helen. She yielded her body, but not her soul—at least, not as completely as he had expected she would, as other women had. And presently she seemed to him unduly loquacious with the gardener, asking for tiresome information about the strawberries that were over, and the peaches that were ripening. Was it not enough to know that he would send in some peaches? Of what concern of theirs was it to learn the precise relationship of the peach to the nectarine? The gardener was anxious to conduct them through his garden to show them some carnations—a new flower of his own invention—and Helen would have followed him, but Lewis said: "Somebody is always stealing you from me. It began early in the morning with the parrot, now it is the gardener."

A change came into her face, and they turned back into the shade of the alley, the sun being uncomfortably hot in the open. Half its length was traversed without speaking, till, breaking the silence suddenly, Lewis said that a new idea for a picture had just come to him, and his idea was that Polly might conceive the idea of robbing Helen of her nightgown: "Stepping from her perch, the bird might be dragging at your nightgown as if he liked you better without it. Another version of Fragonard: 'La Chemise Volée.'"

"But Polly," Helen said, "unlike you, loves me for

myself. I'm as much to Polly dressed, as I am undressed."

"And is it not the same with me?" Lewis asked. Helen was not sure.

"If I weren't of an appearance that pleased you——"

"But it is your appearance that attracted the bird. Polly can know nothing of your intellectual or moral qualities."

"It is just because Polly knows nothing of my intellectual and moral qualities that her love is deeper than any human love can be. All that Polly knows of me is the elemental substance—that which a musician expresses, if he have genius."

"Polly," he objected, "looks to you for food."

"You heard Kate say that Polly will take food only from those she loves; even the tempting spoonful of cocoa she'll upset if the hand that presents it be not agreeable to her."

"But how quickly Polly changes her affection; her mistress is already forgotten."

"It would seem to me," Helen answered, "that is another reason for my belief in the fundamental nature of an animal's love. Polly lives in the present, free from recollection, and undisturbed with hope of a future. The actual moment is the only moment. Her love is undivided, but yours——"

"And yours? Is it altogether divorced from memory and imaginations that outstrip reality?" he interjected.

"Perhaps I should have said man's," she replied. "We are considering love in the abstract. Let us detach ourselves from our circumstances, and see ourselves a little as God sees us."

"How does God see us?" he asked.

"He would begin by recognising the fact that Polly does not see in me the making of a picture."

"Therefore Polly does not appreciate you as I do," he replied. "She doesn't discriminate. She merely loves. So in your view, then, the artist is the most imperfect of all lovers?"

"Necessarily," she said, "for he sees beyond the woman. Perhaps the perfect lover will never be found in reasonable man. Now I come to think of it, there would be a better chance of finding him in the unreasonable"; and laughing at her own thoughts, she began to tell of a friend of hers, a disillusioned woman who had fled from London to a lonely country-house, stored with books, music, pictures, with all things that appertain to art, and how while gazing on some marble, or twanging an old-time melody on the cithern, she was startled from her sad reverie by a man crashing through the sky-light of her studio. As she was about to ring for help, the sudden intruder rose to his feet, and begged of her not to summon her servants. He was not hurt. "But the shock?" she said. "A mere nothing," he replied. "I'm used to worse shocks than the last"; and, sitting by her side, he told her how he had determined to discover the one woman who could give him perfect love, and had sought her all over the world, through the East and in deepest Africa. He had even ventured as far as the North and South Poles in search of the one human soul and body decreed to him from all eternity. "Without finding her?" she said. "Without finding her," he answered, and when they looked into each other's eyes it seemed to them that the great lovers of all time had met at last. And so that he might appreciate her as she appreciated him, she poured into his ears a moving account of her flight from London, and how she had hoped to obtain forgetfulness in art of one who had not proved as perfect in love as he had once seemed to be. No more words were spoken. Words were lost in the conviction that each had discovered Elysium in the other,

and for a week each lived absorbed in the other till keepers from a neighbourhood lunatic asylum arrived with handcuffs. "A dangerous madman," they told the lady, and congratulated her on her escape, as they got their prisoner into the carriage.

"A very unfeeling story," Lewis exclaimed, "one strangely unsuitable for a honeymoon," he muttered, and his thoughts went back to Lucy, to her sweet kindly nature, and he remembered with a pang that he abandoned her for one who, though she had lain in his arms all night, seemed further from him than any other woman he had ever known. Maybe that was why he took her in his arms again and kissed her passionately.

"Helen, darling, why did you tell me that story? Am I a madman?"

"My dear Lewis, you take things so seriously; all great passions are allied to madness. You're a madman in your art and in your love"; and not knowing what to make of her, he began thinking of his art.

But she knew how to uncreate the mood that she had created in him, and the suggestion that they might sit together on a bench melted it nearly away; Lucy was again forgotten in the course of the conversation that ensued regarding the drawing he had begun, and in the questions that she adroitly put to him, whether her figure would be of use to him; whether he could paint from her better than from any other model he had seen, even the French models.

"But no figure that I have ever seen is as perfect as yours."

"But there are imperfections?" she said. "Am I not too thin in the arms?" and he answered that there were certain thinnesses in the shoulder-blades, but if these were filled in she would lose a great deal in character, though she might gain a little in beauty. "Your shoulders are

beautifully shaped, as beautiful as any, and your breasts are small."

"Too small?"

"Breasts are never too small. Your breasts are good," he said.

"But you have seen better?" she answered.

"It would not be true to say that I have seen better. I may have seen breasts as shapely, but in an artist's eyes the gift of beautiful breasts is not the supreme gift. Beautiful breasts are necessary; but it is not the beauty of breasts that compels my wonder, but the belly when it is beautiful, the low vault rising imperceptibly and in such exact architecture that I think of Euclid. Either one is crazed with the beauty of the human body or one has no eyes for it, as some have no ears for music; but if one sees it, what enchantment one gets from observing it, and of all in a woman like you. Were it my fate to see you borne away by angels, the spring of your hips would be before me always, and the smooth thighs that support the body, the small knees of such simple form——"

"Why are my knees simple?" she asked.

"Because," he answered, "they are free from unnecessary detail. In you there are no broken lines. The line undulates from the hip to the ankle, simple in its variety. Your feet are miracles; long and narrow, the second toe longer than the big toe, as it always is in statues, but never in common nature. Your head is in keeping with your figure. A small rounded head crowned with gold. There is a Greek marble like you by Lysippus, I think, one of the late Greek sculptors before art fell into decadence. His Venus had no more hips than you. A Venus of pleasure rather than of maternity. It was her belly that set me thinking of yours. The same rhythms, the same proportions, the same navel, a gem carved inward with cunning hand, and finely set."

"I've never thought much about my belly."

"That was on account of the word!" he interjected.

"But when I look over my shoulder," she continued, "my back seems shapely enough."

"Lysippus must have foreseen your back," he said.

"My back, perhaps; but my arms and shoulders are scraggy, aren't they?"

"Not scraggy, but delicate in their thinness, which is quite different." And he swore to her that he would not have her arms otherwise than as they were; nor her hands, though her hands were not as distinguished as her feet; still, there were beautiful lines in them.

"It is pleasant," she said, "to hear how others see us, but in a quiet alley like this by the river-side one should be thinking of the round spots of light on the pathway and the twittering of the birds in the leaves rather than of bellies. Listen! That bird has a dear little song. Do you know what bird it is?"

Lewis thought it was a willow wren, and Helen reproved the answer, which she said was casual. A man with so keen an interest in anatomical subjects could only be faintly interested in bird-life. "You see willows, and you hear a bird, and have read of willow wrens, but you can't tell me if the bird has a long or a short tail. You are thinking of—— Modesty forbids me to say of what you are thinking."

"All that I told you," he said, "of your figure was the artist's appreciation of it, but had I known that you desired to hear the lover's, I should have gratified you, imitating a lunatic, your ideal lover."

She had to pacify him.

"You are curious to know of what I was thinking when you asked the name of the bird; I will tell you. I was thinking of the quiet, moist atmosphere of this river-side lawn, and of a picture of you emerging from the screening willows, a bather, one foot on the low bank, supporting herself, one hand on a willow branch."

" The light changes in the open air," she said, and he answered that it did, except on grey days. But the artist's difficulties were not limited to a changing light. To render the woman attractive it would be necessary that she should be well within the picture. " There must be atmosphere between her and the spectator," he said, " and to draw a naked woman is difficult, but to draw her in the atmosphere is ten times more difficult."

" How interesting art is when one comes to understand the difficulties with which the artist has to contend," Lady Helen said; and during luncheon Lewis began to talk more freely of his art, saying that modern art was more personal than ancient—more journalistic. The individual had no thought for himself in ancient Egypt; he was only aware of himself as part of a community, and figs were probably sold in Memphis to a ritual. Even the Greek artists sought the type much more than the individual, and the secularisation of life and art have continued till both life and art have become incoherent zigzags, observing no order, obedient to no rule.

Helen had never heard anyone æstheticise before, and she at once became a listener whose intentness flattered Lewis and beguiled him onward. That the Renaissance owed a great deal to antiquity is one of the platitudes of the critics, but Lewis did not know that any of the critics had remarked that among the thousands of naked women that have been painted in modern times it would be difficult to discover six in which the artist had tried to do more than to paint the individual woman before his eyes.

" It is, indeed," he said, " a shameful admission that from the fifteenth century onwards, down to the end of the nineteenth, we cannot discover six figures, six pictures or statues, that tell us that the human being is the most beautiful thing in Nature. If men continue to

paint naked women it is for the sake of their sex, not for the sake of their beauty. Men, being merely men, are never naked except in sculpture. Ingres and David," he said, "were the last whose aim seems to have been to represent the archetype, and as soon as Napoleon's empire passed away painters turned their eyes from antiquity, falling back into individualism of the Renaissance. For why? Because men were no longer prone to see men and women in all their attributes of perfections, as a point in Nature around which all else revolves. Or it may be," he said, "that Nature no longer produces the archetypal woman. Once I would have accepted this explanation of the great change, but last night has convinced me that Nature is the same as she always was, producing great quantities of common stock and occasionally a miracle, so that we may carry our heads high." As soon as Helen had divested herself of her chemise, he had seen in her Lysippus's Venus, only more beautiful. "In some respects more beautiful in the flesh than in the marble," he added; and he began to tell Helen that she was in his eyes a resurrection of ancient beauty. Breaking off suddenly, he said: "Perhaps you have found the realisation of your story in me. I am mad in front of a well-proportioned rhythmical belly, and am not ashamed of my madness."

Her eyes were filled with wonder, for she had not heard these things before, and possessed by a great curiosity to understand, she said: "But, Lewis, why do you say that from the fifteenth century onwards there are not six women in art that represent female beauty?"

"I said, Helen, that there are not six in which the artist attempted to tell more than he saw in the individual, and I doubt if there be six. The first Venus is Botticelli's, but she stands on a shell, if I remember rightly. There may be some art-books here that will

help us." And they admired the handsomely bound books on the different tables. "Mrs. Cartwright seems to be a woman of taste and culture," Lewis said; "and I suppose Kate can give us the keys of these bookcases."

"Here is a Life of Botticelli, and his works," Helen said. "And here are the works of Titian and Veronese and of Tintoretto. We have everything we require for the prosecution of our inquiry. Botticelli, you said, was the first to paint Venus?"

"Yes, he goes back to the fifteenth century, to the end of the century. There was very little painting before the end of the fifteenth century, and he abandoned painting, I believe, and became very pious."

"Was not everybody pious in those days?"

"But, my dear Helen, the Renaissance was a revival of Paganism," Lewis said; "and here is the Venus we are seeking, on page 124"; and turning the pages over he came upon the "Birth of Venus." "'The Birth of Art,' it might be called"; and they sat admiring the figure standing timidly on the shell, that kind and beneficent zephyrs are blowing onwards: "rising," Lewis said, "out of the gulf of the Middle Ages. The first blossom of the Renaissance comes to us hiding her sex with a tress of hair. Not knowing how she will be received, she comes timidly. She had heard of the monk, Savonarola, the one that good Pope Alexander VI. caused to be put to death along with his company, three others of the same kidney. She doesn't know the treatment that may be meted out to her. The monk may be even now knotting the whip, a great thick whip, to strike her across those dear little buttocks. A detestable man was Savonarola, darling; he wanted to revive the Middle Ages—the ages of faith, but the good Pope burnt him."

Helen thought that she had never heard anyone speak

more beautifully than Lewis, and she took pleasure in the timid Venus on her voyage.

"Whether the idea was present in the painter's mind we do not know, but, consciously or unconsciously, he painted her afraid."

"Could it have been," she asked, "that Botticelli saw that his Venus was the first?"

"The Renaissance was the return of life to the world," Lewis answered. "Here we have his 'Springtide'"; and Lewis pointed out to Helen three women, "their hands raised and their fingers interlocked, pacing to a rhythm, while behind them in the background is the Spring herself, watchful, benign, and sad——"

"Why sad?" Helen asked.

And Lewis answered: "She is quick with child, and whosoever is quick is sad; there is something of you, Helen, in that mad figure in the spotted dress whom the faun would embrace."

"Go on talking, Lewis; I like to hear you"; and, feeling as if he were speaking out of an inspiration, he began to tell how life had begun to return to the world in the fifteenth century, and how Botticelli was the first harbinger of the spring, saying that, just as the birds know by instinct when the rain is about to fall, and when the time has come to leave their summer haunts, Botticelli seemed to have received premonitions of the spring that was about to break upon the world. Be this as it may, he could not keep the spring out of his work even when painting Madonnas—women with a look of surprise in their eyes, we know not whether to call it gladness or sorrow, sorrow rather than gladness, for they are not sure that they have not come before their time. "It is a wonderful thought to ponder," Lewis said, "whether Botticelli was conscious of the spring that was breaking, or if he only knew it instinctively," and said he would like to believe that Botticelli was aware of the extraor-

dinary circumstance of the world in which he lived; but he admitted that a contemporary never knows if he be living in a great or a humble period. So it must have been instinct as vague and as intense as that which animates birds and trees that caused Botticelli to put that strange look of surprise upon his Madonnas, and to paint St. John and the Holy Babe from village boys without alteration, and to leave these suddenly to paint the spring-tide in an April wood, choosing for his first group three women with linked hands raised in a mystic dance, their faces telling us of the solemn rhythm that their feet are bent on following. As a contrast to these he placed a girl in a spotted dress, who might well be a Madonna in another picture, and we wonder whether she is glad or sorry, whether she desires the satyr who, with outstretched hands, would seize her for his pleasure. It is not even certain that she is aware of his presence. In the picture she walks forward, her eyes wide open, like a somnambulist. What mission Botticelli had assigned to her Lewis could not remember. "As likely as not," he said, "she scatters flowers. No one remembers the whole of a picture, however much he admires it; and to no one has this picture ever meant as much as it has meant to me." And then feeling that he was saying things worth saying, so strangely intimate were they to him, he continued to talk for a long while, telling many other things, saying that no story or order of ideas or action connects the figures in this picture, every one seeming to live and to act without knowledge of the next one. And to make plain his meaning, he spoke of the young man on the left gathering grapes, without regard to the pagan rout of nymphs and satyrs pouring into the quiet wood. Yet the picture, he affirmed, did not seem to him to lack synthesis. It all rose, he said, out of a single thought, and the mind was not distracted by conflicting things; yet it would be difficult to say how this unity had been obtained: whether

it had been gotten by the all-pervading languor or by the dominating figure of Spring herself, heavy with child, at the edge of the filmy wood—a strange and mournful figure, who overlooks the glad pageant apparently without seeing it, yet conscious of it. All we can say is that the gesture of one hand seems to imply something less than a benediction—a sort of acquiescence. "Let it be so," the hand says.

And becoming interested in this strange painter, whose handicraft was sufficient (when it was his) to keep the legend out of sight, and to charm us with the beauty of the thing represented, Helen asked Lewis to tell her some story relating to his life. Lewis answered her that, just as harsh winds lurk about the frontiers of spring ready to cut down the blossom, so it is in the lives of men; and he told her how Botticelli's art had been blighted by the influence of a monk, one named Savonarola, who hated the spring days and all their concomitants—laughter, dancing, kisses, and wine; one who sought to drive the world back unto prayers and repentance; and Botticelli would have destroyed his picture of Venus returning from the underworld if it had not passed out of his possession. "His last years, Helen, were spent thinking how he might save his soul depicting Dante's hell."

"How wonderful!" Helen cried; and encouraged by the interest she showed in his words, Lewis spoke of the great Pope that had lived at that time, Alexander VI.—"one," he said, "who knew that the world had had enough of the Middle Ages; and fearing lest the friar's influence might bring about a revival of them, he signed the decree for his burning with three disciples."

"But, Lewis, you said that no man is conscious of the value and the potency of the circumstances amid which he lives. Do you believe that Alexander VI. was an exception, and that he foresaw in Savonarola a return to childishness?"

Lewis answered her, saying that we do not know what is passing in the heart of her who is talking to us. "How, then," he asked, "can we tell what passed in the heart of a man who died four hundred years ago? But this we do know—that he burnt Savonarola and his disciples with him." And the twain passed on to Titian, who, Lewis said, had been from the beginning enchanted and beguiled by his vision of women's curving bodies. He laid his vision down in open landscapes, whither satyrs came from neighbouring thickets, and in richly tapestried saloons, on couches spread with fine linen, where lying at length she could listen at ease to the music a young man was playing on an organ. In another picture, by the same master, two women listen by a well to the tinkling of a guitar that accompanies the song of some entreating cavalier. Sexual reveries, Lewis averred these pictures to be; beautiful, of course; yet he could not help feeling that the great painter had pursued a fleeting phantom, till in a sudden detachment of the senses he saw two women seated, one on the ground clad in great robes, the other naked on the edge of the well, poised in a movement lyrical as a swallow's flight. The picture has been named, he said, "Sacred and Profane Love," which shows how little the art of painting may be understood, for it is certain that Titian's mind, while painting this picture, was possessed only of a pure desire to represent life in all its fulness and beauty—the divine essence rather than the actual manifestation. "Dearest Lewis," Helen murmured; and Lewis asked her if it were not a temptation to believe that while painting this picture Titian had looked back to Botticelli's timid Venus, saying to himself, "His was the bud, mine is the blown flower."

In works of the highest inspiration, Lewis said, the artist is always detached from his subject. He was moved to think this detachment the supreme inspiration, and he spoke again of the women couchant and sleeping,

Titian's or Giorgione's, no matter which, as sexual reveries, whereas in the figure beside the well there is nothing personal. By nothing personal he meant that it contained nothing of the artist's daily nature, but was lifted above it, beyond his desires, his dreams, beyond even his aspirations. And it being within the schemes of Providence to see woman glorified at that moment, Titian was chosen as her mouthpiece. We may therefore admire and ponder on this picture, but we should not try to seek a meaning that may be confined to words and phrases. . . . The meaning of a great picture is in the heart; it speaks to an inner sense, like flowers; "it rises to the condition of music"; and the Renaissance, having obtained from Titian a representation of woman in the fulness and perfection of her beauty, did not seek again to inspire an artist in that direction. "Nature," he affirmed, "never repeats itself." And he reminded Helen that Raphael had continued the pagan tradition of the Renaissance, painting his mistress as Mary Mother, surrounding her with beautiful children, so that she might seem more beautiful, creating a new type of woman, but no supreme song like the woman at the well. Lewis thought awhile, and admitted that he could not remember a Venus among Raphael's works. "There is," he said, "the Galatea; but we may pass her by, and say that the desire to represent abstract beauty seems to have faded from man's mind, till it was revived by Ingres in a pose invented by him, or gathered from a Greek vase and modified to his own purpose." He asked Helen what age she would put upon the child from whose shoulder water flows from the canted urn. Helen answered about fifteen; but to Lewis she represented a child of thirteen or fourteen—not more than fourteen. "A child of fourteen," he said, "seen with the mind's eye"; and on these words he lay back in his chair so that he might think better. "Yes," he said, "there is one more Venus. Ingres's pupil, his follower, his

disciple, Cabanel, certainly devised a Venus—a Parisian Venus, but still a Venus"; and he described to Helen the woman that the wave carries up on to the shore vibrating from the distended toe to the arm outstretched beyond the head, the fingers twisted in the coils of hair. "The left arm is thrown across her face, and out of its shadow we see the laughing face—laughing at what? At the wives weeping on the shore, Swinburne would have us think. Be this as it may, it is a perfect illustration of the lines:

> 'A perilous goddess was born
> Of sea-foam and the frothing of blood.'

The Cupids with which he has filled the air, rejoicing and blowing conch shells, do not draw attention from the woman's beauty. His subject was woman's beauty in all its attributes and perfections, and it might have been better to let the single figure tell its own story. Cabanel was not as great an artist as Ingres. Lefebvre, who used to correct in the school in the Passage des Panoramas, painted a woman afloat in a cloud—a beautiful pose, a lovely idea, but insufficiently executed. As I said this morning, a man, if he perceives the beauty of the human form, is crazed with it, just as men who hear sounds are crazed with music, and never happy except when admiring it. I am like that, Helen, and I beg of you to take off those vain garments, for I would continue the sketches that I began this morning."

"But you began them in my bedroom," she said, "and Polly cannot endure you in my bedroom. She is like that with everybody she loves, Kate tells me, but quite possibly in any other room——"

"Then I will draw you in this room."

"But somebody will come in, Lewis, I——"

"No, we can lock the door."

"Wait till I fetch Polly"; and Helen went out and

brought the bird back with her cooing softly and climbing up the cage for Helen to scratch her head.

"I think the bird should remain in her cage, or it will be impossible for me to draw."

"She'll not attack you," she answered, "if you don't come too near me," and she took out the bird and allowed Polly to climb on to her shoulder.

"Polly! Your claws are too sharp, Polly! I shall have to put you back into your cage."

"It's a pity the bird is so savage," Lewis said; "with a more docile parrot I might discover a pose; put her back into her cage and lean over it with a piece of apricot between your teeth."

"Beauty and the bird," she said; "do you remember Rossetti's sonnet?" He was too busy drawing to remember sonnets, and when Helen could keep the pose no longer he said that without the bird he might discover a pose that expressed Helen. He could do nothing as long as the bird was present.

She said she would keep the bird quiet, and he answered that it was not the bird's restlessness, but the bird herself. "You see, Helen, the subject is you, not you and the bird. I must get another piece of paper."

"You'll shut the door after you. I'll lock it to make sure and open it to three knocks."

"Well, I wasn't long," he said. "I hope Mrs. Cartwright won't mind my using her things"; and he sat down in front of a drawing-board on which he had pinned a sheet of Whatman.

"Move about," he said; "don't think of me. I shall see something presently"; and he watched her figure, "a sort of visible music," it seemed to him to be, and it was not long before she took a pose that was very nearly what he was seeking for; he had caught her leaning against a cabinet on which stood a large majolica vase, and remembering at the same moment the

youth gathering grapes in the Botticelli picture, he said to himself: "That vase shall be the god Pan." "Now, Helen, drop the right leg and stand on the left: raise your hand to gather fruit in the vine above your head. I think I've got the pose," he said, "in which all your beauty appears. Some silken folds about the dropping knee and thigh will add to it. A goblet in your right hand, into which you will squeeze the juice of the grapes, will explain the idea. My idea of you transpires in that pose. Now, before we lose it. Don't try to hold up your hand any longer; you will tire yourself. I must give you something to hold on to by to-morrow, a string fixed somewhere. Now, don't move for ten minutes; ten minutes are all I ask." At the end of ten minutes he asked her if she could hold up her hand to gather the grapes that were supposed to be growing on the trellis above her. She raised her arm, and he said: "How long can you hold it so?"

"Two or three minutes, perhaps," she answered; and he said that three or four minutes would be long enough.

CHAP. XXXI.

AS a hole could not be bored through the ceiling to let a cord through for Helen to hold on by, a carpenter was sent for, and after a great deal of talk he seemed to understand what was required, and returned with an upright and a cross-beam with a hook in it, to which he attached a piece of rope. The upright was placed against the wall, and the rope fell over Helen's shoulder.

"He isn't such a fool as we thought he was," Lewis whispered to Helen.

"You see, sir, it is quite strong. The lady needn't be afraid to cling on by it."

"I believe he thinks you are an acrobat," Lewis said as soon as the carpenter left the room. "And now, Helen, we'll begin." And he began what is known in the schools as an "academy," which he said he would square out on to a canvas. Three-quarters of an hour passed away, and so absorbed was he in his work that he did not see that Helen was losing consciousness.

"Those who aren't used to sitting . . ." he said. "I should have been more watchful."

"Get me a little water; I shall be all right presently, and bring me a shawl."

After half an hour's rest she resumed the pose and was able to hold it for about twenty minutes longer.

"I've done pretty well," he said; "three-quarters of an hour and twenty minutes—an hour and five minutes in all. All the movement is there, and the proportions, I think; we shall see to-morrow how it works out. And now, Helen, dear, get on your clothes, and I will take you for a row on the river. And while you are dressing I will write to London for a canvas. You are five feet seven, and there must be six inches at the bottom of the canvas and eighteen at the top. I shall require an eight-foot canvas. If there is too much, a piece can be taken off. It is easier to take off a piece than to add one. Eight feet by five feet. If you'll sit to-morrow for three half-hours, I shall be quite sure of my drawing, and to complete the drawing, to get all the modelling, a drawing from which I shall be able to paint, three or four more sittings will be required. But I shall have to make a separate drawing of the head."

"But will you put my head upon this figure?"

Lewis said he had only been thinking of the picture as a work of art, without a thought of the conventional proprieties; and later in the afternoon, while paddling up and down the river from lock to lock, they talked of the picture in the making—how the drawing had come right

from the very first, the movement and the proportions. Her figure had inspired him as he expected it would. He had always wished to draw from somebody like her, and at last he had found his model. The only point he had any doubt about was the drapery. Without some drapery the picture would seem a little naked. All the old masters painted draperies from their drawings, and after the sitting they went up to London to seek for some soft silken or satin material that would reveal rather than hide the shape of the limb.

And the very stuff needed to clothe Helen's thigh with elegance was caught sight of in a shop window. Her arm upheld this fortuitous drapery, in the representation of which Lewis expected to meet with many checks. But he met with none; fold after fold came together, and stepping back so that he might obtain a better view of his work, he said: "Halcyon days! But beneath this calm a storm may be brewing."

Helen answered that one must not foresee misfortune, "else it will come"; and her words seemed to Lewis like a prophecy, for at the end of the week they were fulfilled.

He took up his palette one morning with reluctance, feeling that some of the life of the picture had fled from it during the night. He could put on paint here and there, but his brush could not create; and feeling that he was merely daubing canvas he said to Helen: "I'm feeling a little stale. I'd like to put this picture aside for a day or two, and to draw you in some other pose in the interval. There is one that remains in my mind, the parrot walking up the bed to nestle herself under your chin. There was a pretty movement in the arm: we spoke of *la chemise volée.*" He would like to do a drawing, a pastel, a water-colour. He might see the Bacchante in a different light to-morrow.

The hope took him out of bed next morning quickly. He was loath to leave his bed to see his picture, but there

was no help for it. After all, there was nothing derogatory to Helen in the action. Helen was his picture, and his picture was Helen; and with these excuses on his lips, he hurried to a great disappointment. His picture seemed to him more trite and commonplace than it had done the day before, and falling into his chair he sat with his back to his picture, his heart brimmed with melancholy. And seeing what had befallen him, Helen declared the picture to be a masterpiece, and he put some vine leaves in her hair: he thought these an improvement. But next day he took them out, and his discontent finding its way into Helen's mind, she wearied of the labour of sitting, and said:

"Lewis, don't you think it is time we were married?"

"Of course I do, Helen. I've thought so all along"; and then, feeling that he must not betray too much enthusiasm for marriage, lest she should come to look upon his picture as a failure, he suffered his voice to drop into a soberer tone. "We've been here now nearly three weeks," he said, "and how would it be for our future if we were discovered here?" He regretted his words, feeling they had let out to her his moral cowardice. "She is turning me over in her mind," he said to himself; but in truth she was not thinking of him at all, but of a letter to her father, which she would write after the wedding.

"There must be a registry office in Twickenham," she said, and they went out to seek one after luncheon; and finding one, were told that if they had lived in the district fifteen days, and gave notice that day, they could be married the day after to-morrow by special licence. They were told that, being British subjects, there would be no necessity for them to procure birth certificates, "which was," Helen said, and Lewis agreed with her, "very lucky," for it would take a long time before they could produce theirs.

Very little more was said during the course of their walk to "The Willows," and the next day Lewis could not paint. Nor could he draw; and when Helen asked him the cause of his disquiet he said: "We are about to take a great step; everything will be different to-morrow when we return from that little office. . . ." He stopped suddenly, and she answered that it would be pleasant being married, settling up with her father and mother, who she had no doubt would condone her conduct; and imperceptibly their talk glided into dreams of how their life would plan out, and how they would manage it. "Something might happen yet to prevent our marriage," Helen said. Lewis wondered at her audacity; but nothing happened, and they returned to "The Willows," having come to a decision that for the time being they could not do better than to live in the Vale.

"You like the house?" Lewis said, and she answered that she did, but she would miss the parrot.

"That horrid bird that bit my ear," Lewis interjected, but their laughter was forced. Already they were conscious that they were no longer the same as they were yesterday. It seemed that marriage had even changed their identities. Each was conscious of another self and of another attitude towards life, and life seemed to have changed towards them. All reality seemed to have passed out of "The Willows," just as it had out of the picture. Helen suggested that they should remain so, so that Lewis might finish his picture; but Lewis did not know how long it would take to finish it. "You see, a picture of those dimensions would take a long time. Perhaps if it was laid aside and taken up again it would be better."

"Have you got any orders?" she asked, and the question made plain the new relations they had entered into one to the other. His money was her money, her money was his. She had five hundred a year of her own, which was fortunate, for he could not support her upon his

painting in any way in which she would be content to live. There was Carver's portrait, which he would have to begin the moment he returned to London. He wrote to him asking when he would be able to sit, informing him at the same time of his marriage; and when they arrived at the Vale it was pleasing to find several presents from the Carver family. One had sent him a Rockingham tea-service—" A very pretty one, too," he said; " I saw it in the shop." Mrs. Carver sent Lady Helen a French clock —two nude figures on either side, the woman showing a back view very modestly, the man bending over the clock to whisper the time in her ear.

" Bed-time," Helen suggested, and they laughed and turned to the present that the young ladies had sent them.

" We must ask them to dinner. You'll think them rather vulgar people, but they are important, and there is a whole tribe of Carvers—Benjamins, Phillips, Myers, and the rest, all of which will give me orders for portraits. There are thousands of pounds in this connection, and there are thousands of pounds, Helen, if you can persuade your father to overlook our Twickenham adventure."

" But he need know nothing about it. We just married—that is all," she answered, and went over to the escritoire and sat there writing letters until dinner-time. After dinner a telegram came from Carver saying that Lewis might expect him to-morrow at half-past ten, and that he would give sittings for his portrait all through August.

Lady Helen knew how to be gracious; and her presence in the studio flattered Carver, and when the Carvers came to see the portrait they were invited to dinner, and these hospitalities produced, as Lewis suspected they would, a new group of Jews and Jewesses anxious to have their portraits painted. And when Lewis's success reached Lord Granderville's ears, he said he would have preferred

one of his own set for a son-in-law, but failing that, he accepted a man of talent; and as nothing would be gained by harshness, he decided that Lewis should paint the portrait that his Colonial admirers were anxious to present him with. Lady Granderville thought some little scandal might ensue if he were to choose another painter.

The fates seemed to be working for Lewis's welfare. Lady Granderville's admirers wished to present a portrait to her ladyship in token of the good work she had done during the five years she had lived amongst them, and Lady Granderville was overjoyed at presenting her daughter with another five hundred pounds. It never rains but it pours, and the Carver family proved such a great success in the Academy that Lewis had more work on his hands than he had time to execute. He made a great deal of money during these first years of married life, and he could have made a great deal more if he had consented to devote himself entirely to portrait painting, but he wished to become a member of the Academy, and his election would be advanced were he to exhibit a picture. No picture could be devised more likely to attract the attention of the whole town than the one he had begun in the Twickenham villa—the Bacchante leaning against the statue of Pan, gathering grapes over her head.

"But if it should become known that you sat for the picture?" Lewis asked.

"But what does it matter if it does become known? The news will only serve to make the picture more remarkable," she replied; and having obtained in the last two years a greater mastery over his material than he had ever possessed before, he was able to finish the picture without difficulty, all of it but the head, for which he required some sittings, his wife's head being in such keeping with the figure that it could not be changed. "If we could get a description of the picture into the newspaper

before the exhibition," he said; and Helen began a poem that evening, and Harding was invited to dinner to hear the poem at the end of the week. The verses were not without merit, and Harding had no difficulty in getting one of his newspapers to print them, and from that day he became a constant visitor at the Vale, revising Helen's poetry and encouraging her to write more.

CHAP. XXXII.

"WE must see his 'Bacchante'; I hear that——"

"My dear Henrietta, I'm afraid we cannot stay another minute. Remember we have friends coming to luncheon."

"My dear, I didn't know you had asked anybody to luncheon. You said nothing to me about it. Whom did you ask? . . ."

"He has painted Helen's face on his 'Bacchante'; a most—I may say a most impolite, a most ungentlemanly thing to do. Everybody is talking about it."

"But Helen must have seen the picture before it went in, dear."

"Very likely she did, but Helen's notions of propriety and mine have never been the same. I think we had better be going. . . . I take it that there is nothing you particularly wish to see again?"

As the Grandervilles passed through the turnstile they were greeted by Lady Marion, who cried out to them that she was afraid she had forgotten her invitation card. "Would they call at Charles Street and ask for it? I've found it!" she cried.

"We're so glad; we're so glad," Lord Granderville cried, as he hurried away, afraid lest she should ask if they had seen the "Bacchante."

"There they go!" Lady Marion cried to Mr. Ripple, who accompanied her. "More shocked than I've ever

seen them before. All their lives they have been looking for something to shock them. Well, they've found the real thing this time. Think of it! Painting his wife without a stitch of clothing on her, except a scarf falling about her thigh—only over one thigh, mind you, so I'm told. Helen always liked exhibiting herself. I remember her quarrelling with her dressmaker for not cutting her gowns low enough, and I dare say you remember how they always seemed on the point of escaping from the diamond star or arrow, and how frightened we used to be. I wonder if the Grandervilles have seen the picture? Perhaps that is why they were hurrying away. I must drop in about tea-time to hear what Henrietta has to say."

"I'm afraid, Lady Marion, that you needn't go to your sister to hear about this picture; everybody is talking about it," the young man replied.

"Are they really?" she answered. "Let us hasten, then"; and very soon after they found themselves among a group of acquaintances engaged in discussing if Lewis had not flattered his wife's figure—her arms he had certainly. "Helen never had good arms," somebody avouched, "and her hands are large, but in the picture——"

"Her arms are but a small portion of the picture," Lady Marion interjected; and criticism turned on Helen's legs, and several ladies agreed among themselves that nobody had as beautiful feet.

"Helen's feet," said her aunt, "are the most beautiful—— I've never seen such beautiful feet! The feet in the picture are certainly her feet."

At that moment a broadly built, square-shouldered man, with visionary eyes, beckoned to Ripple, who, loath to lose a word of Lady Marion's appreciation of her niece's bodily perfections, obeyed Leek's summons reluctantly; but he obeyed it, Leek being an editor of coming impor-

tance—one who had been summoned from the chaste North to purify the sensual South, and the news that Lewis Seymour had painted his "Bacchante" from his wife seemed to him to be the very opportunity he needed. "The right of the artist to paint the naked should stir the heart of Puritan London, which is not dead, but sleepeth," he was muttering to himself when he caught sight of Ripple.

"I'm sorry to call you away from your friends," Mr. Leek began.

"It doesn't matter," Ripple answered somewhat obsequiously; and the journalist asked him the name of the lady who seemed the principal of the group.

"Lady Marion—Lady Helen Seymour's aunt," Ripple answered. And Mr. Leek asked if she was not very angry at the scandal.

"Scandal?" repeated Ripple.

"You have heard, I suppose," Leek continued, "that——"

"Ah, yes, of course!" Ripple interjected, anxious to return to his friends.

"It would be very interesting," Leek said, "to have Lady Marion's views. She has views, I suppose? She cannot be else than indignant."

"I don't think that Lady Marion is ever very indignant at anything," Ripple replied. At which a gloom overspread the journalist's face, and he began to speak of the profligacy of great cities, and to vent a theory that morality driven out of the city retires into the hills to hide itself among the peasantry, and then at last descends upon the city and destroys it.

Lady Marion had moved away with her friends into the next gallery, and Ripple, seeing them depart, yielded himself to Leek's importunities.

Leek would like to walk round and see the pictures with him, and to hear what he had to say; but Ripple soon

found that Leek's notion of appreciating pictures was to stand with his back to them and to moralise.

"The story that has reached me," he began, "is that Lewis Seymour insisted that his wife should sit naked for him for this picture, and if this be true we have a very important matter to settle in the newspapers regarding marital rights. Has a husband a right to make his wife a gazing-stock, and to draw her and to paint her, and to exhibit her nakedness to the multitude?" He averred that all right-minded people would say that marriage did not confer any such right; and he was sure that there were many right-minded people who would regard such conduct as sufficient cause for a divorce. The courts would hold it to be cruelty to force a wife to stand naked and unashamed hour after hour.

"But, Mr. Leek, it may have been Lady Helen's own wish to sit for this picture."

Leek had considered this possibility; but he soon recovered himself, and answered that, if that were so, the moral degradation of London was even greater than he had supposed it to be; and, warming up to his subject, he declared that the exhibition of the "Bacchante" raised a much larger issue than that of a husband's rights to obtain sittings from his wife in a state of nakedness. The point that he would like to see settled was the right of the artist to paint naked figures from naked human beings—a point that went to the very heart of social life. The County Council subventions schools of art, in which a naked man sits one week and a naked woman sits another week for classes composed of young men and young women. The money for the support of these schools came out of the rates, therefore the conscientious ratepayer was paying young girls to exhibit themselves naked to the inquiring eyes of art students of both sexes.

He was not at all certain that the ratepayer would not be justified in refusing to pay rates for such purposes

on conscientious grounds; and he believed that an agitation could be set on foot to defend the conscientious ratepayer. He believed, too, that he would find a very large mass supporting him in this matter. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishop of London would not be able to refuse to support him. He was not a friend of the Bishops; they were a pusillanimous lot, always with the majority. But he thought he could rouse them. And there were many men on the County Council who, when they got the matter well before them, would see that they were not justified in voting for young girls to degrade themselves.

"But would you banish young male models from the schools of art?"

"Not if females were excluded from the schools."

"But the exclusion of the female will raise a very indignant protest."

The remark caused some disquiet, and Leek thought for a moment before he answered that the indignant protest would have to be faced courageously. He was always on the side of the oppressed; and this much he was prepared to admit—that the naked male was not as flagrant an appeal to the female as the naked female was to the male.

"You may be right, Mr. Leek, in that opinion; but as you are not a woman you cannot speak authoritatively on the matter."

"This, however, is certain," Leek continued, "that if the opportunity be given to women to draw from a male or a female, you will find that they will choose the female."

"Now there, Mr. Leek, I'm bound to say that I disagree with you, for if the model be an Italian youth you'll find all the girls drawing in that class, and the girl model almost deserted by her sex."

Ripple's statement carried the discussion into all sorts

of byways; and when it returned to the point from which it started, whether the State should pay money to support art schools in which young girls exhibited themselves naked, Leek said: "I put it to you this way, Ripple—we have been engaged in a crusade against the morality of the music-hall, and with the help of the clergy we have forced the proprietors to abolish promenades in which vicious women collect. Of what use will be the abolition of the promenades if models are paid by the County Council to sit naked at classes composed of both sexes?"

In arguments of this kind Scripture is always quoted, and Ripple reminded Leek that our Lord Jesus Christ did not encourage the Pharisees to stone the woman taken in adultery. He merely said: "Whosoever is without sin amongst you, let him cast the first stone." "And of what use would it be," he asked Leek, "to drive the women out of the promenades into the streets unless they were driven out of the streets into the river? And to do this," he urged, "would be most unchristian—so unchristian that he doubted very much if even a Bishop could agree that the crusade against vice should be pressed as far as the river's bank. You see," he went on, "we live in an imperfect world, Mr. Leek; one that even journalism has not succeeded in purifying as yet, and it is doubtful if it ever will." At which remark Leek laughed. He was neither stupid nor mercenary, and being anxious to hear every side of the question, he listened to Ripple, who asked him if he were quite sure that the Bishops would agree with him in this—that nakedness is in itself sinful.

"Nakedness may not be sinful in itself," Leek replied, "but it leads to sin." Whereupon Ripple, who by this time had given up all hopes of rejoining Lady Marion, answered that the naked races are the most moral. He instanced the Zulus, and as Leek had no facts wherewith to confute Ripple, he replied that the morality of the

unclothed was merely that of animals. A good thing in its way, but uninteresting compared with the higher morality which implied a knowledge of sin. "Man must be aware of sin, Mr. Ripple, and resist it, else there can be no merit." A dogma that put the question into Ripple's mouth: "Am I to understand, then, that man should seek out temptation so that he may resist it? A dangerous practice, Mr. Leek, and one that was condemned by the Church, so productive of scandals were these attestations in those early times."

Mr. Leek answered with a quotation from Scripture: "That likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety-and-nine just persons, which need no repentance."

"You would not go so far as to say that repentance is necessary to salvation?"

"I would, indeed," Leek replied.

"But the races that have no knowledge of sin?" Ripple interposed.

"I deny, and emphatically, that races exist without knowledge of sin."

"Well, of course, if you are certain," Ripple answered; and he was preparing to turn away, regardless of the fate of the contribution he had posted that morning, when Harding clapped him on the shoulder, and, being anxious to parade his friendship with the great critic, Ripple said, as soon as he recovered himself: "Mr. Harding, let me introduce you to London's new editor."

"I'm very glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Harding"; and Leek's voice dropped into more conciliatory tones, for he was anxious to hear what Harding would have to say on the question he was about to raise in his paper—the moral effect of the naked female in the Royal Academy.

"We were talking of the influence of the naked, or the nude, as it is usually termed. My contributor—Mr.

Ripple—and myself are not altogether in agreement as to which word should be used."

Harding interposed that whenever we wish to be over-nice or snobbish we use words without any specific meaning. "It is more polite to call a shop an establishment than to call it merely a shop. All violent imagery, Mr. Leek, is reprehensible." And Harding told a story of an Irish sergeant who, whilst giving his evidence in a divorce suit, described the guilty pair as being "as naked as two worrums," but the newspapers, thinking the image too vivid, reported him as saying "as naked as two snakes." "Snakes are not naked, Mr. Leek, as you know."

"Bad editing," Leek replied. "I should have allowed the sergeant's words to stand. Of course, all you say about the use of words is extremely interesting, Mr. Harding, but for the moment I'd like to talk to you about the relation of art to morals, if you don't mind."

"And of morals to art," Harding said—"which begat which, and on which side the greatest debt lies."

"We were asking—myself and Mr. Ripple—before you arrived, if art did not owe to morality more than morality did to art."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Leek. You were saying," Ripple interrupted, "that without consciousness of sin there could be no human morality."

"Without consciousness of sin there could be no clerical morality," Harding answered; and then, as if he felt the discussion was falling into the pure abstract, and as if anxious to lead it back to the Academy, to the prevalence of the naked female, he asked Leek if he were prepared to submit the annual exhibition to a censorship, or, in other words, to a high-class committee of gentlemen whose business it would be to guide the public taste.

"A censorship is a difficult matter; liberal opinion is against censorship, but I should like to get an answer to

this question from you. Do you think that if the naked be harmful, it should be prohibited?"

"If the naked be harmful it certainly should be prohibited, life being more important than art."

"I'm glad to hear you admit so much, Mr. Harding, and you will not mind my mentioning in my newspaper that that is your opinion; if the naked be harmful, it should be suppressed, life being more important than art."

"If there were no publication there would be few, if any, opinions, just as there would be no immorality if we all went naked. . . ."

"But is that so?" Leek answered. "Mr. Ripple, my contributor, seems to think with you that we should be more moral if we didn't wear clothes. But it seems to me that in England we must be as moral as petticoats allow us to be. We cannot compel our women to go naked, so that our minds may be free from sinful thoughts; and as clothes are a necessary condition of our existence, clothes should be observed in our pictures as in our daily life, surely. You will admit that, Mr. Harding. Of course, there is Greek example, and talking of Greece reminds me that, despite their lack of clothing, the Greeks were not an entirely moral race." Whereupon Harding, who feared that Leek was about to speak of Alcibiades's shocking proposals to Socrates, begged him to remember that complete nakedness was necessary to insure complete morality. And to make his views on this subject clear to Leek, he told a story of four sisters, natives of Patagonia, who had discovered a torn glove on the seashore, and deeming it to be an article of apparel, disputed it so eagerly that the parents of the girls advised that each should share a finger. Lots were drawn for the different fingers (there was no thumb). The first, second and third fell to the younger sisters, the little finger went to the eldest sister, who wore her prize humbly till it was noticed that her finger alone was covered perfectly, her

sisters' skins being visible through rents and tears. Thereupon her little finger became the highest curiosity among the village swains. For some reason, difficult to determine, so imperfect is our psychological sense, the eldest sister, though the plainest, was henceforth preferred to all the others, and a great store of mealies and the finest hut in the village were proposed to her. But she would uncover her little finger to no one, till at last she was led deep into the forest, far from all curious eyes, where, after protracted pleadings, she revealed her little finger naked to the swain's adoring eyes: and at the word naked Ripple interjected and went off into a giggling fit.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Harding, that I cannot get your opinion regarding a matter that many serious people look upon as of great importance. When you said, 'If the naked be harmful it must be suppressed, life being more important than art,' I hoped that we were about to fall to a rational discussion, but I fear——"

"Forgive me for interrupting you, Mr. Leek, but I would remind you that if the naked be harmful we must order the destruction of all our examples of Greek sculpture that have been transported with much cost and labour to the British Museum."

"Marble is but a slight enticement," Leek muttered.

"The authorities think otherwise, for a vine-leaf has been hung over the middle of all the male figures. But waiving that point, Mr. Leek, let us consider the National Gallery, which is open two days a week for boys and girls to set up their easels before pictures in which nakedness abounds. If nakedness be harmful, we must order the destruction not only of Greek sculpture, but of all the frescoes of Michael Angelo, the canvases and the panels of Titian—even Raphael will hardly escape, for he has not always draped his saints and angels."

Leek interposed with a suggestion that "painting of the highest genius raised itself."

"Not above morality, surely, Mr. Leek. I hope you will not put forward so heretical an opinion as that, and one that cuts the ground from under your feet; for we are not discussing æsthetics, Mr. Leek, but morality, and if certain paintings do harm they must be destroyed, no matter who painted them, life being more important than art—remember that, Mr. Leek. The British Museum, the National Gallery, the Wallace Collection, the Tate Gallery, have now been condemned, and the moralists, having had their way with the plastic arts, should begin at once, if they have not begun already, to turn their eyes towards literature. I read in your journal that much literature is being published that should be prosecuted, and every week I ask myself why you do not apply for a summons against the publisher of Shakespeare, the crudeness of whose speech only yields to Beaumont and Fletcher, whose plays you yourself edited in your younger days and held up to admiration as great poetry. I need not ask you if you have read *The Custom of the Country*—of course you have, and will admit that from your present point of view no more indecent piece of literature was ever put upon paper. You complain that I cannot be serious. I'm serious, and will ask you to tell me which Leek we are to follow—the Leek of thirty years ago or the present Leek? And then, again, who is to decide between the different Leeks? You would have an interview with me—well, let it be so. Before Beaumont and Fletcher come the Elizabethan poets, and nearly all of them would fall under your present censure. The Restoration dramatists—they, too, would have to be destroyed. Sterne, Fielding, and Smollett, would have to go; Byron, without question; *Pepys's Diary*—who is the publisher? How many have published Pepys, how many Byron? Your society must agitate, too, for the suppression of the public libraries. Think of the books they put into the hands of boys and girls—Shakespeare, Boc-

caccio, Balzac and, last but not least, your own unexpurgated edition of Beaumont and Fletcher. The newspapers are full of divorce court and criminal proceedings of all kinds—all will have to be suppressed. What a holocaust of editors and literature! Nor is the end in sight. You will have to send spies into society who will report all that they see and hear, for we don't go to evening parties for ideas, Mr. Leek, mind that, but for the pleasure of sex, direct or indirect. Women cut their frocks to their waists, and the food and the drink consumed at these parties inflame our passions; therefore there must be a dietary and a sartorial censorship, and when all these reforms are accomplished, then you will still be confronted with the spring days which are, perhaps, more than the sculpture, the pictures, more than the literature, the wine and the food, more than anything else, an incentive to immorality."

"You're speaking very well, Mr. Harding; I like to listen to you, but I don't agree with a single word you're saying."

"Of course, you don't, Mr. Leek; morality is your foible, and without calling your sincerity in the prosecution of your foible into question, I would ask you if you are not influenced by what may be termed a sort of inverted immorality?"

"You would suggest, Mr. Harding, that money is my motive."

"No, Mr. Leek, I wouldn't look into your pocket, but into your heart, and that is why I put that question to you. I read in your paper that you meet your friends in council to consider the books your secretary has collected —women with long upper lips, and men with rings of hair under their chins. You ask each other: 'Now, Mr. So-and-so, may I call your attention to this passage? Do you think such writing should be allowed? Is not our civilisation disgraced by such books?' 'We agree with

you, Mrs. So-and-so, but it is hard indeed at times like the present to devise any method whereby society can be cleansed.' And with this I am in agreement, Mr. Leek; it is very difficult, and perhaps the would-be reformers are, before God, the dirtiest parts of the community. We will examine that question."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Harding; I have attended a great many of the meetings of our society, and I assure you all our discussions regarding the books that we think should not be read by the general public are conducted with extreme seriousness, and our aim is to preserve the public as far as lies in our power——"

"All those that persecute plead as you do—that they are acting for the public good; but the most disgraceful pages in history are those that tell of ecclesiastical persecutors, and the most sordid motives often hide behind concern for the morals of others. My memory is a good one, Mr. Leek, and I would ask you if it has never seemed to you that if you could look into the minds of the gentlemen collected round the table, you would read stories that conflict strangely with the sentiments that fall from their lips? Have you never caught yourself wondering what was the private life of ——?" and Harding whispered a name in Leek's ear. "You remember he left a standing order with a procuress for virgins and was convicted at the Old Bailey for inveigling a young cook to Paris."

"I had forgotten him," Leek answered; and he admitted that during the discussions regarding the literature that was to be prohibited and disallowed this gentleman had looked at his watch often, and had often seemed anxious to bring the discussion to a close, pleading appointments of great urgency. "A very strange case, indeed," Leek interjected; and he asked Harding if he thought that the man joined the society merely to ward off suspicion, or if he recognised the weakness of his own nature, and tried to atone for it by persecuting others?

To which Harding answered that the motive he would prefer if he were obliged to write out the soul of a religious lecher would be the desire to indulge two vices at once—lust and cruelty. "On every persecutor's heart the suspicion feeds that the alleged motive is but a lie. But no man speaks of his vice, nor does he meditate upon it—he keeps it out of his mind; and your Mr. —— shrank from examination of conscience and thought instead of the cook. Are you sure yourself, Mr. Leek, that in prosecuting the inquiries in which you are at present engaged you are not in your subconsciousness influenced by some vanity, some hope of renown or journalistic interest?"

"No nan knows himself throughout," Leek answered, and his face became overcast; "and were we to refrain from all action till we were certain of our own complete sincerity, we should be as inactive as cauliflowers and kidney beans."

Harding raised his eyes, and the glance was appreciative. "The subject is an intricate one," he said.

"And that being so," Leek replied, "I would ask you one more question. Is there no book, no picture, no statue, that you yourself would condemn?"

"I think that the modern writer should remain within the traditions set by Chaucer, Shakespeare, the Elizabethan dramatists, the Bible, and that if he be condemned they should be condemned with him. If the tradition of literature be not accepted as setting the standard of literary morality, I do not know where to look for another. You yourself would not hand over art and literature to personal prejudice and sordid motive. Your own life tells you that opinions change on these matters, and you will admit that a book is valuable for what the author puts into it rather than for what he leaves out. Or am I wrong; is your present aim the merely innocuous? Your own Beaumont and Fletcher——"

At that moment, Mr. Ripple said:

"Hush! there is Lady Helen."

And Harding was about to go forward to speak to her when Leek laid his hands upon his arm, saying, "Will you not introduce me?"

"Certainly, Mr. Leek; morality and beauty are sisters; though, like sisters, they are not always on speaking terms"; and the introduction being accepted, Lady Helen walked down the room with Leek in attendance.

CHAP. XXXIII.

A FASHIONABLE crowd continued to pour into the Royal Academy, and for many hours it was difficult to force a passage from room to room; to see the pictures was impossible, but nobody wanted to see them, and after a few remarks regarding somebody's portrait and somebody else's landscape, the sightseers directed their remarks to a woman's hat, to the colour of her dress. One heard: "She is very handsome." "Which one?" "The woman in the yellow dress, walking with the broad-shouldered young man with the black moustache."

And the chatter continued, till at last the Academy became unbearable. "If the pictures aren't interesting," a lady said as she made for the turnstile, "at all events they create a desire for tea. So much to the good! Let's get out!" And at six o'clock the number of visitors was reduced to some dozen or more people in the small rooms, and to some thirty or forty in the larger rooms.

"Well, Mr. Leek," Harding began, "what conclusion have you arrived at regarding Lewis Seymour's 'Bacchante'? Do you think he has done his wife's body justice?"

"Only her face is on the canvas," Leek began.

"Have you had tea?" Harding asked.

The journalist replied that he had had the honour of taking Lady Helen out to tea; and mentioned the shop at the corner of Bond Street.

"And did she admit to having sat for the picture?"

"I'm quite satisfied," Leek answered, "that she didn't sit for the figure. In fact, I know she didn't."

"How can you be certain of that?" Harding asked.

"Oh, yes, I know!" Leek returned. "I know for certain."

"How can you know for certain?"

"I asked her, and she told me she had only sat for the head."

"But," Harding replied, a little softened at Leek's innocence, "even if she had sat for the figure, do you think she would have admitted it? She could hardly have said, 'There is my body . . . up there; look at it!'"

"Do you think, then," Leek asked, in a slightly angered tone, "that Lady Helen would tell me a deliberate lie?"

"My dear Mr. Leek, you've come from the North, where lies are unknown; but in the sensual South even Duchesses don't always tell the truth."

"I've no care for Duchesses," Leek replied.

"But all women Duchesses included are angels in your opinion. Now in *The Custom of the Country* . . ."

"I don't remember any angels in *The Custom of the Country*," Leek replied, and Harding, who did not wish to push off again into the raging flood of controversy, answered:

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Leek; I see some friends of mine—Thompson, the great Modernist. You will excuse me, Mr. Leek," he cried, escaping from the journalist. "I was just saying, my dear Thompson, to Mr. Leek, that we've not had an opportunity of saying half a dozen words to each other. I want to congratulate you"; and

on these words he took his friend's arm, and they walked towards a group of painters who were waiting for their chief. "I missed you all day," Harding continued, addressing the group.

"We've seen you, however," Frazer answered, "and have been asking ourselves how it is that you care to waste time on an uninteresting vegetable."

"You think of him, then," Harding said, "as a vegetable, and not as a small aperture through which liquid percolates?" And turning to Thompson he asked him which definition he preferred.

Thompson raised his eyebrows, and without troubling to answer the question that had been put to him he said: "We saw him passing up and down the room in conversation with Lady Helen Seymour, the model for the 'Bacchante.' We used to know Seymour in bygone years, before he took up with a rich grass-widow. Do you remember, Harding?"

And Harding answered that he remembered a certain luncheon in the Gaiety bar. "We were all there, and Lewis Seymour had just come from a shop in Bond Street very flushed and excited. He had taken a small panel picture there and had been asked by the rich grass-widow, Lucy Bentham, to decorate her ballroom. That was the first rung of the ladder, and he's been climbing ever since. You used to think well of him, Thompson. I believe that you once hoped to keep him in the path that he was not destined by nature to walk in."

"We're all falling into that mistake, Harding, yourself as much as another. Lewis Seymour goes to make up the world as we do. A plausive, pleasant fellow, with a temperament not unlike Leek's, and who might have been Leek if he had not brought into the world a certain gift of hand that enables him to turn out an article that ladies and gentlemen like. He could always express

himself like the journalist. He used to speak of his gift of expression, and he could talk as well as Leek or Ripple—a great deal better, for however bad a painter may be he knows more about paint than one who has never tried to paint, and he admired the best things. The National Gallery was known to him as none of us here know it." And Thompson began laughing, and when asked at what he was laughing he told a story, how one day Seymour had come up to his studio with four or five figures, heads, landscapes, and that while exhibiting these on the easel for Thompson to criticise he had said: "Of course, you recognise whence they have come—the master. Yes, the master is unforgettable." "I made no answer, and putting up another picture on the easel Seymour continued: 'There is no getting away from him, is there? Once he gets hold of you he has you for ever.' As I could see no trace of any master in the pictures I was looking at, I was sorely tempted to ask Seymour who the master was, but not wishing to hurt his feelings I asked him to stay and have some luncheon with me, which he did, and at every opportunity he spoke of the master, of the influence he exercised, sometimes admitting the influence to be regrettable. 'One should be influenced by nobody, of course,' he said; 'but everybody is influenced by somebody, and after all, the best thing to do is to be influenced by the best.' So he continued. We were still talking of the master over our cigarettes, myself wondering who the master could be, till at last my curiosity got the better of me, and I said: 'I don't know what master you are speaking of'—not so suddenly as that, for I didn't wish to offend him, but as delicately as the question could be put. An embarrassed look came into his face and he said, 'Well, Titian, of course. Didn't you see?' Whereupon I said: 'Oh! of course, of course.'"

"No, Thompson; you didn't answer, 'Of course, of

course.' You just looked embarrassed." And Thompson answered that it was a long time ago, and that he didn't remember what answer he had given, only that he felt very disconcerted.

"But he must have been a fool to think that he was painting like Titian."

"He didn't mean that he was painting like Titian, but that he was thinking all the time of Titian. I suppose the belief somehow found a way into his mind that the romantic figures he introduced into the dark backgrounds were derived from Titian. How he could think such a thing, I don't know; but he could talk about Titian better than Titian could have talked about himself. I don't know that I've ever heard anybody talk art with the same fluency. A certain gift of facile drawing robbed the world of an excellent art critic."

"But I thought you despised criticism, Thompson?"

"I like it better than the picture we are looking at."

"It is very pathetic," Harding broke in, "very pathetic;" and the painters, looking up, waited for him to continue, for the pathos of Lewis Seymour's career was not obvious to them. And nothing loath, Harding began: "Who shall say that the green-grocer's assistant, when he takes out his sweetheart for a walk, doesn't feel as deeply as Wagner did when, on the occasion of the first writing of 'Tristan,' Mathilde fell into his arms, unable to bear the love any longer that she had been smothering for many months past? Wagner declared again and again that 'Tristan' would never have been written if Mathilde had withheld her caresses, and no doubt Mathilde's caresses differed very little in intensity from the caresses that the green-grocer's assistant receives at the end of the evening's walk; but in one case the caresses brought forth a masterpiece and in the other —let us hope—brought forth no artistic flower or fruit, not even occasional verses in the poet's corner, only a

little break after keeping company for two years, or a little marriage in a registry office. I've tried to believe, but cannot, that artistic expression springs from intensity of feeling; it must be an independent gift, for were it else we should have to suppose that Wagner experienced a much deeper emotion than the grocer's assistant. But we know he didn't, for though he was often tempted to throw himself into the canal at Venice, he returned home to finish the song that he had composed to her words, 'Dreams.' The grocer's assistant very often kills himself, and it is difficult to say that a man who dies for an idea has not given ultimate proof of his attachment to it."

"It seems to me," Thompson said, "that the supreme test of an attachment to an idea is to live for it; a much more difficult task than to die for it."

"I'll admit that you're right, Thompson, for to pursue the argument would involve us very soon in metaphysics; pure reason leaves me indifferent. But I warm up when I fall to thinking that the emotion that Lewis Seymour experienced when he first looked upon his wife in that stupid movement was no less than Titian's when he saw the woman seated at the edge of the well."

"Lewis Seymour always admired that picture more than any other," Thompson said, "and I remember his talking to me about it, saying that Titian had never seen a woman in that pose. No woman could take the pose, he said, but a woman had appeared to Titian as women might in a dream. The dreamer is the cause of the women who appeared, but he doesn't know that he is the cause, and he is surprised at seeing them. So did Titian paint, according to Lewis Seymour."

"That bears out," Harding interjected, "my theory that men all feel the same!"

"But they don't all feel the same," interrupted Frazer. "Pain, for instance."

"It may require more to make one man feel pain than it does another," Harding replied, "but the pain they feel is the same."

The argument became entangled, drifting from psychology into physiology, but at length Harding, who had been thinking for some time, turning his thoughts over and over, claimed speech.

"Seymour felt as much as Titian, only he could not express what he felt. His wife's beauty entranced him while he was looking at it. He was possessed by a vision and by an emotion, but both faded in the passage from the brain to the canvas. I refuse to believe that Lewis Seymour's vision of his wife naked corresponds in the least with the very moderate picture which Thompson has, with some severity, termed a piece of linoleum. Yet he accepts it as the equivalent." "But does anyone," Frazer asked, "succeed in transposing his vision exactly as it is on to canvas or paper? It comes out better or worse, but it comes out different." The point was discussed, and at last Harding, who was tired of standing, said: "I think we have talked of Lewis Seymour long enough for one afternoon."

"We have, indeed," Thompson answered. "The artist doesn't talk much about art; he leaves æsthetics to critics. His contribution to the subject is the picture be exhibits, and, if he be a writer, the book that he publishes. We know the difference between bad pictures and good ones; and it is really much better to look at the pictures themselves than to stand with our backs to them talking." "There being no pictures to look at," Harding interjected, "we have to talk."

"There are always a few, even at the Academy," Thompson said. "Come and let us look round the walls, and see if we can find a few pictures in this house of ill-

fame that will justify us in continuing to exhibit here." The group walked round the walls, finding little except their own pictures to interest them, and on going through the turnstile Thompson called his disciples together. "I think you will agree with me it would be well for us to leave this great palace of morals and commercialism. Its splendours oppress us, and if you are all agreeable, we will retire to some little hall in Chelsea and exhibit our pictures to our friends and sympathisers."

CHAP. XXXIV.

THE success obtained by the "Bacchante" did not, however, lift Lewis immediately to the rank of an Academician, and the reasons that persuaded the Academicians to overlook his claims were in the first place their dislike to the publication of the naked wife. Rubens's practice was referred to, but it was pointed out by more than one Academician that Rubens had drawn a cloak about the middle of her body. Moreover, Lewis Seymour was not Rubens, and, though attractive to the public, could not be held to be of such striking merit as to overrule all social usages. "We have had Mrs. Bentham in the Academy in all her fineries," said an R.A., "and for all we know we may have her without them next year." And then it came to be whispered that Mr. Carver, of Bond Street, had obtained from Mrs. Bentham a large commission to buy Lewis's pictures whenever they came into the market. The phrase, "whenever they came into the market," was picked up by the Academicians. "They never come into the market," cried an Associate. "Carver bought them off the easel." Another Academician interjected that the pictures Lewis had painted of the Carver family were charged in whole or in part to Mrs. Bentham; and the

fact that they were popular did not justify Carver in threatening to present them to the nation. The reproach of popularity would not have been allowed in any other circumstances; but as nobody wanted to have Lewis Seymour in the Academy—for the moment, at least—the younger men were listened to, and painters of no greater merit than Lewis Seymour were elected one after the other.

The Academy would not have him as a member; but his portraits pleased. His sitters were nearly all titled folk, and, as an Academician put it, "If we didn't hang his Countesses we should hear of it in the newspapers."

Pictures beget pictures, and every portrait that Lewis Seymour painted brought him another order; and the money that came in put the thought into Lewis's head that it would be to his advantage to live in a more fashionable part of London. He often mentioned to his wife that he had outgrown Chelsea; but Helen said it would be impossible to find an open space like the Vale in Mayfair, unless, indeed, one were the Duke of Devonshire or Westminster. Helen preferred to live in the Vale in a Georgian house, and "the lovely twain" were often seen driving forth, Lewis extended in the victoria, looking, so a painter once said, like a Venus, a sort of damaged Guido Reni—a remark that amused everybody. When asked what Helen looked like, he compared her to a caryatid; and when asked to make plain his meaning, he said she supports the house; but the criticism did not strike the imagination like the first—"extended in a victoria looking like a Venus or a damaged Guido Reni." In society the Seymours were always conspicuous. Lady Helen in front of the box at the opera, drawing up her shoulders in front of the audience, and then presenting a view of her back, and in this way becoming known to the general public. In the newspapers her name was mentioned as having been present at all social functions,

talking and smiling, encouraging a crowd to assemble about her. At the other end of the room Lewis courted the dowagers. Leaning over the backs of their chairs, he whispered in their ears, and sometimes turned suddenly upon a woman, and, after staring at her almost rudely for some time, he would say: "Good heavens! What a profile!" "You like my profile," the fair one answered; and then Lewis became the very image and likeness of the spider crying to the fly: "Belle mouche, belle mouche, venez dans ma toile."

Season after season went by, and society was beginning to weary of the Seymours, when one day Lewis appeared without his wife, and some time after, suddenly and altogether, people began to notice that Lady Helen was absent from all social functions. A few conjectures were hazarded, and then suddenly everybody whispered: "She is carrying;" and the section of society to which the Seymours belonged fell to discussing how Lewis's classical studies might be continued after his wife's lying-in. It was urged that a woman's figure could not be the same after a birth of a child as before; the lines are always thicker, it was said. "And Lewis's art is so *raffiné*," babbled a number of voices. "Which of us will he ask to sit for him?" the eyes seemed to say; and a young man related all he knew and learnt of the bosom after child-birth. He had seen women that child-bearing had robbed of no charm, and he had seen women that even the first child had robbed of all physical charm. There was no rule. Helen might rise from *le lit de misère* (the language spoken in this society is neither English nor French, but a sort of mule language) the Venus she was a few months ago, or so much changed that she would never be able to pose before her husband again. It all depended upon the figure; and Helen's figure would probably undergo no change, at which the young girls smiled approval, whereas the matrons looked incredulous;

and to break an awkward silence somebody said that Lewis spent his evenings at home with his wife, and drew a somewhat fond picture of the twain. He even ventured out into a prediction that the child, which would be born towards the end of the year, would unite them in a deeper love than any they had known in the Twickenham villa, when the parrot, Lewis's first rival, had bitten his ear. The anecdote had been told again and again at luncheon-tables. All their friends and acquaintances had enjoyed it; and while new luncheon-tables were asking if Lewis's second rival would prove talkative, Helen was thinking that it was nice to get back to a figure again.

"Do you think I shall be able to sit for you again, Lewis?"

"So far as I can see, Helen, your figure has not changed in the least; but I won't express a definite opinion for another two months. I have an order for another picture, something that will go along with the 'Bacchante'; and if I can get another subject that catches the public taste my election will be secure, if X—— and Y—— and Z—— can be won over. . . ."

"They shall be won over," Helen answered; and very soon after, at every dinner and luncheon party, Helen was at work, bestowing smiles on every man, upon Leek and Ripple, upon all of the newspaper kin. She was determined to conquer the Academy, and to do this it might be necessary for them to go to Park Lane. Chelsea was too far to ask the Academicians to come to dinner. But dinner in Park Lane to meet the Grandervilles! A carriage—not a one-horse brougham, but two horses—would overawe; Hilton and Holt, Murray and Bevis, would open their eyes, saying: "Two horses!"

There were studios within ten minutes' walk, and a ten minutes' walk to and fro would keep down Lewis's figure. He didn't walk enough, and was beginning to

develop—well, a girdlestead. Her father and mother approved of her plans, and it was while spending the week-end with them that she met two young men who had taken her fancy—the taller of the two very smartly indeed; and her father, seeing that she was captivated, took her aside, saying: "Helen, these young men, though their appearance doesn't betray them, are not desirable acquaintances for you."

"Then why are they here, father?"

To which Lord Granderville answered: "They are here by mistake, and will never be asked again."

Helen was sorry to hear her father speak ill of two such good-looking, well-valeted young men, whose velvet-like black hair was brushed smoothly back from their foreheads, and she was tempted to resent his description of them—"young men out for pleasure, on the watch for money."

"I've never heard before, father, that a man who marries for money——"

The word "marry" seemed to embarrass Lord Granderville; and Helen, who had already understood, and was but playing with her father, listened to her aunt, who did not hesitate to make plain what Granderville would have been willing to leave in respectable shadow.

"A young man of very shady character, indeed, Helen; one of the band known in the clubs as 'money-kissers.'"

"Money-kissers, aunt! What are money-kissers?"

"One who lives upon women," Lady Marion answered. "I'll explain to Helen, Granderville, that she cannot possibly ask young Hepworth to her house"; and, taking Helen aside, she confided to her some worldly knowledge. "The taller man—the one you admire, Helen—is the worser of the two. The shorter man may be all right, I know nothing about him; but he is the intimate friend of the other—the one you admire. He is notoriously an evil liver. One hears of the women he has plundered

wherever one goes. For some time past he has been getting money from ——" Lady Marion whispered a name in her niece's ear. There was no reason why she should have whispered it unless walls have ears. They stood alone at the end of a shady saloon almost within the folds of the window curtains, Helen receiving instructions from her aunt, an old lady, garrulous, in a fair wig and a beribboned cap. "Have nothing to do with him, Helen. He is one of a band"; and Helen was told of a number of young men out for pleasure.

"That is what father says—'out for pleasure.'"

"Well, that is just what it is, Helen. Pleasure costs money, therefore money is the one important thing in their eyes. The means they employ to get it are of no moment in their appreciations, and scruple with them is contemptible."

"But if the woman has ten thousand a year and the man two hundred, do you think, aunt——"

"Do I think they should go to Italy together?" Lady Marion interjected. "It all depends; my morality is wide, but I dislike the bird of prey."

"The bird of prey," Helen repeated, "is certainly undesirable"; and a few minutes afterwards, catching sight of the young man in question walking down the terrace, she was struck by his appearance, and she wondered how it was that the same young man who had pleased and attracted her half an hour before now repelled her. She disliked the neck and shoulders that she had admired, and found fault with his gait. Yet he was the same young man—but was he the same young man? He was transformed from what he was, and by an idea that had been put into her mind. She did not know that she could be influenced, and so easily. How very strange. The young man passed away; she did not wish ever to see him again, but in passing out of her life he seemed to have left something of himself behind;

or was it that somebody like him had always been in her mind? "How very strange! Why do I put such senseless questions to myself?"

It was not till some days later that she remembered that Lewis had been in love with Lucy Bentham. She had always known of this old attachment, and could not understand how it was that this clandestine love story should appear to her in a new and almost menacing light. The book dropped from her lap, and she fell to thinking, and a connection of ideas soon formed in her mind. She remembered things she had forgotten or that had remained hidden at the back of her mind. Lewis had accepted money from a woman, just as the young man she had met at her father's house had done. He may have accepted money from many women, and she sat surprised that she had never thought of these things before. She seemed to understand Lewis for the first time, and she compared his physical appearance as she remembered it with the appearance of the young man that her aunt had warned her against, and, finding him true to type, she began to hate the very aspects that once attracted her—the shoulders, the waist, the gait.

A visitor was announced, and Helen started so abruptly out of her chair that the visitor could not do else than express regret for having awakened her.

"I was not asleep," she answered, "only thinking; but of what I was thinking I haven't the faintest notion. I was away, that is all. You'll have tea? I'm longing for a cup"; and the two women talked of indifferent things for about half an hour; and when her visitor left her, Helen remembered that when her aunt had told her that the young man at Ham was kept by—Helen had forgotten the lady's name—she had said: "But if a woman has ten thousand a year and wants to go to Italy, I don't see why, if the man cannot afford the journey, the woman should not pay for it." Her aunt had seen

no harm in the arrangement. . . . Society doesn't think the worse of a man if he marries a rich woman. Why should society forbid a rich mistress? "Society doesn't," Aunt Marion had answered, "but Society doesn't like birds of prey." Lewis wasn't a bird of prey. She was sure of that. A weak, sensual man, perhaps, but not a bird of prey. The young men at Ham were "out for pleasure"; her aunt's very words—week-ends, tennis, fashionable restaurants, race meetings, and such like. But Lewis was devoted to his art—no one had striven harder than he. How unjust she was! Lewis had never pretended to her that he was a virgin, and she had not hoped to marry one. All the same, she would have liked a man who was himself, and nothing but himself. If a stream has many affluents, the quality of the original water becomes less and less pure, and so it is with human beings. If Lewis had merely kissed Lucy Bentham once or twice, three times, or half a dozen times, it would not have mattered. But he had lived with her for years, absorbing her personality, till a great part of himself was lost. She had married Lewis Seymour plus Lucy Bentham. She had not a lover, only part of a lover. Of the original Lewis Seymour nothing was left; and considering her husband closely, she noticed how he had been woven along and across by other influences, principally by Lucy Bentham. He spoke like Lucy Bentham on many occasions. She had never noticed it before; or, if she had noticed it, her knowledge of the adulteration remained in her subconsciousness, but now it was apparent, and it was her fate to bear with it.

She had not got a genuine article—that was the long and the short of it. Many had preceded and many would follow her, and they that had preceded her had, no doubt, tried to make the best of it, and those that followed her would do the same. She couldn't do else. She had a child, and she must be content with the

husband for the sake of her child. How strange it all seemed, and what a deception life was for everybody! She seemed to understand many things which she had never understood before, and was soon asking herself if life had come to seem to Lewis as shallow as it had come to seem to her. She was minded to ask him, and remembered that there are secrets which one cannot disclose to anybody. Life was but make-believe, a discovery which she must keep locked in her heart while she went about trying to cajole the Academicians to elect her husband a member of the Academy. It was her duty to do this; and she was conscious of a deep impulse in her to contribute to her husband's fortune and reputation. She was conscious also of the feeling that as soon as he was elected a member of the Academy she would be free. She asked herself why she was not free now, and as her heart did not answer her, it seemed that her thoughts were nonsense. . . . We live, she said, in a nonsense world—the silliest that whirls through the Milky Way.

CHAP. XXXV.

THE month was July; the season was dragging itself into August, and Helen and a seamstress, or a lady's maid—Helen judged her to be one or the other—were almost alone in the Academy. "She is too old to be a model, and not well dressed enough to be a lady's maid. A seamstress, no doubt"; and she watched the woman seeking a particular picture. "But why should a seamstress, a working woman of some kind for certain, be interested in pictures?" and her curiosity now fully awakened, Helen watched the woman look into the corners of the pictures for the artist's signature. "Too poor," she said, "to buy a catalogue." And she was moved to go and buy one at the turnstile and offer it to

her. A way, she thought, of getting into conversation with her and finding out which picture the woman was seeking, and why she was seeking it. "She will be glad to have the catalogue," Helen continued, and on her return from the turnstile she followed the seamstress or the lady's maid into the long gallery, certain that it could not be a picture, but the painter of a picture, that interested her. And as the conviction took possession of her mind, she saw the woman stand before Lewis's "Clytæmnestra" enrapt.

Half a minute, a minute at most, is the time that a visitor to the Academy devotes to a picture, whereas Lewis Seymour's admirer seemed as if she could not tear herself away from the "Clytæmnestra," and when she moved away from it she stopped before one of Lewis's portraits. "It is, then, the quality of the painting that attracts her," Helen said to herself, and began to wonder if Lewis's admirer was an artist. "But she doesn't look like an artist--a model, perhaps, whom Lewis painted many years ago." And feeling that the artist-seamstress or model held the secret that had eluded her so long, she felt she must speak to the woman, though she knew full well that to do so was not honourable nor just nor right. She tried to resist the temptation, but it overpowered her, and she offered her catalogue to the seamstress, whom she now recognised by her speech as of the working class, the wife of a carpenter, glazier, or bricklayer.

"You need not return it," Helen answered; and the women stood staring at each other. It was not till the working woman was about to pass on that Helen mustered sufficient courage to ask her if she liked pictures.

"I like Mr. Seymour's pictures. The picture over yonder with a long name to it is as beautiful as any that he has painted; and if you'd be so kind, ma'am, would you tell me what it is all about?"

Helen related the story of Clytæmnestra to her companion, who listened with an attention that surprised her.

"Now that you have told the story to me, ma'am, I can see it all in the picture."

"So you like Mr. Seymour's pictures?" Helen said, as they walked towards the sculpture room.

"So much, ma'am, that I come to see them every year. I used to know him a long time ago. We lived together in the same house, and I sat to him."

"Ah! A model?"

"Only to him, ma'am. Do you know Mr. Seymour? Have you sat to him?"

"You say you come to see his pictures every year," Helen interjected hurriedly. "Do you remember the 'Bacchante' that he exhibited some years ago?"

"Yes, indeed I do! But what a beautiful figure you must have if you sat for that! Do you do much sitting?"

"No; like you, I never sat for anybody but Mr. Seymour. I am his wife. And now that I have told you who I am, perhaps you will please tell me your name?"

"My name, ma'am, is Fuller. But he wouldn't know me by that name. I was Gwynnie Lloyd when he knew me"; and Helen heard the story of how Mr. Jacobs had come to the lodging-house in the Waterloo Road with a panel, and a request that Mr. Seymour should paint a Venus with some Cupids upon it, and take it up to Bond Street. "I was so silly in those days, ma'am, that I ran away, fearing that worse might happen to me than sitting to him; but he had gone away to the country when I pulled myself together and went down to Mr. Carver's shop to ask after him. I hoped he'd write, but he didn't, which was just as well, for shortly after I met Fuller, a house-breaker—not a burglar—Mark Fuller, who died last year. He left me with three children." Finding an indulgent listener in Helen, she related her

prospects of a second marriage. " It is strange how things come about. And fancy my meeting you this day in the Academy!"

" Since you come here every year to see his pictures, it is strange that we didn't meet before. I wonder you never tried to see him."

" I'd like to see him well enough in a way, ma'am; but everything is so different. It might be painful to us both."

And Helen wondered at this very true comprehension of life. Lewis would certainly be embarrassed, and would transfer his embarrassment to Mrs. Fuller. The interview would be a pleasure to neither. But how wonderful that she should know that to seek him out would spoil everything. " His pictures are enough," she said to herself; and asked Mrs. Fuller if there was any message.

" No, ma'am—no message of any account; but I'd like to have a photo, if you can spare one, just to see how he looks now."

" I don't think you'll find him much changed." And after taking Mrs. Fuller's address Helen returned home, thinking how all things come together again in life. " Once an attraction has been set up," she said, " the atoms are drawn into the circle of gravitation, however widely they may have been scattered." And then, her thoughts descending suddenly from the general to the particular, she began to understand how the chance meeting in the house in the Waterloo Road had created an idea that time could not quench in Mrs. Fuller. Her life was often a struggle for mere bread, but the struggle had not been able to kill her love, nor marriage, nor child-bearing; Lewis remained the romance of this woman's life. " And how wise she is not to pitch her romance into the arena of reality. If she accepted my invitation to come to William Street to see Lewis, she'd

leave it with an empty heart. Only by remaining away can she retain him. Her wisdom is truly the wisdom of the wise." And Helen asked herself if the photograph she had promised to send Mrs. Fuller would not conflict with the image in her heart. Even so, she must send the photo. . . . Perhaps it would be better if they hadn't met in the Academy. Should romance and reality ever overlap?

As her carriage drove up the King's Road she asked herself which photograph she would send, and it seemed to her that Mrs. Fuller would like the one standing on the table in the studio.

"Have you got any news, Helen?" her husband asked her.

"Yes," she said, "I have news." He had just laid down his palette, and was walking up and down the studio.

"I'm elected, then?"

"I haven't heard."

"Then, what news? You must forgive me," he said, "if I seem egotistical, but one's nerves are on edge on a day like this, when any hour may bring the news. Do sit down and tell me where you've been."

She threw herself into a chair, and her eyes went round the walls.

"What are you looking for?"

Helen did not answer, and he asked her whence she had come.

"From the Academy," she answered.

"Just turned in," he said, "to see how the 'Clytæmnestra' was looking? And how was it looking? Did it strike you that I might be passed over again? Were there many people?"

"No," she answered, "the galleries were nearly empty; but it contained one of your admirers."

"Who was she?"

"You jump at once to the conclusion that it was a woman. Well, it was a woman; one whom you knew many, many years ago—a Mrs. Fuller."

"Mrs. Fuller!" he repeated. And Helen studied his blank face as he searched for somebody that had borne that name.

"A model, perhaps?"

"Yes, a model," Helen answered. "Somebody you once knew in the Waterloo Road when you lodged there." She could tell by his face that he remembered Gwynnie Lloyd, and it pleased her to indulge in pin-pricks. "Fuller was not her name then; when you knew her it was Gwynnie Lloyd, a little Welsh girl who sat to you for a panel that a man called Jacobs took to your lodgings."

"Yes, I remember Gwynnie Lloyd. But what of that? You met her in the Academy. How did you know her?" and Helen told him of Mrs. Fuller's interest in his pictures: how she had stood before the "Clytæmnestra" for many minutes, and then looked round for another picture and found it in Lewis's portrait of Lord Worthing.

"It seems strange that a working woman should like my pictures," Lewis interrupted. "I always try for a permanent human interest—something beyond the mere craft."

"I told her the story of Clytæmnestra, and she said she could read the watch-fires in the painted eyes. I expected that she would find another subject-picture to admire, but when I saw her standing enrapt before Lord Worthing's portrait I said, 'It is quality she is after.'"

"I don't think she could appreciate quality—that's the painter's business; but Worthing's portrait is typical."

"I offered her my catalogue, and she told me her story."

"Did you ask her to come here?"

Helen said she had suggested a visit; but Mrs. Fuller felt that there was no bridge across the long interval of years that separated them, and their circumstances, too, divided them. "But she asked for a photograph, and I was thinking of sending her the one that stands on the table."

"No, don't send that one," Lewis answered; "it isn't a good one."

The door opened, and Mrs. Bentham came into the room; and passing by Helen, who in her excitement escaped her notice, she walked towards Lewis, and took his hands, saying: "Oh, Lewis, I'm so glad that it is I that bring you the news!"

"That I'm elected? Is that so?" he cried.

"Yes," she said. And looking round the studio she caught sight of Helen dimly, and went to her, saying: "I beg your pardon, Helen; I didn't see you. I can think of nothing but the good news."

"My dear Lucy, it is very good of you to come with it," Helen answered. "I've been to the Academy, but came back with no news. Go and tell Lewis how you heard the news; he'll be interested to hear the details."

"Won't you, too, be interested in the story? I assure you it is rather interesting."

"I shall listen, of course." And Lady Helen sat, her legs crossed, her foot dangling outside her skirt, thinking still of Gwynnie Lloyd, and the elder-bush growing in the corner of the Vale garden appeared to her as an image of Gwynnie Lloyd. Both were humble and almost unnoticed. The elder-bush produced a pleasant blossom. And then, awakening a little from her reverie, she listened to Lucy, who for years had striven after Lewis's welfare, protecting him, loving him always. And she thought of the lime-tree in front of the house on the Vale—a shapely tree, rising to a great height, casting a pleasant shade, emitting a delightful perfume. And

Lucy appeared to her like a lime-tree. Gwynnie was the shrub, Lucy was the tree. Helen asked herself what tree she resembled, without being able to find one that exactly fitted her case. She felt ugly towards him. She was not like the oak, nor the pine, nor the elm. She was at that moment more like a holly than any other tree. She was all thorns, and anybody that might try to creep under her branches would encounter thorns. As aggressive as a holly to Lewis; but to some other man she might become as dulcet as the aspen. But the aspen wavers in every breath of wind. She wasn't an aspen, but a holly, and a holly she would remain till she and Lewis were separated—not formally separated by law, but as soon as they began to go their different ways.

His painting concerned her no more, and he concerned her even less than his painting.

The door opened, and Mr. Harding was announced.

"Ah!" he said, "I see Mrs. Bentham is before me. She has brought you the news."

"How good of you, Harding, to think of me! Come and sit here and tell us what you've heard about my election.

"Now that I am an Associate, I suppose there can be no doubt that at the first vacancy I shall be elected a full R.A. Come, let us talk about it."

"Well, my dear Seymour, I shall be very glad to do so; but your wife has sent me some manuscript to look over, and I should like to have a word with her about her poems."

"If you don't mind walking round to Park Lane with me I'll give you a cup of tea, and we can go through the poems together. Lewis, you will bring Lucy on with you; or perhaps she'll take you to tea at Carlton House Terrace. Just as you like."

Harding did not altogether approve of this plainness

of speech, and he sought to overcome his disquiet with quotations from her poems.

At last they reached 34, and Helen said: "At the end of the passage I have a little nook."

"I think the sonnet beginning, 'When faded are the chaplets woven of May,' quite perfect."

"I hope it isn't the only poem that you can admire without reservation."

"As soon as one praises a poem to a poet," Harding answered, "he fancies that his critic dislikes the rest."

"Let me read this to you, Lady Helen:

"When faded are the chaplets woven of May,
Unto the deepening darkness of the skies
Goes forth a train of human memories
Crying: 'The past must never pass away.'

"Yet, in this time of ruin and decay,
The fragrance of an unborn summer sighs
Within the sense, before my dreaming eyes
Passes the spirit of an ideal day.

"Then, fervid hours of sunlight and repose,
The warm delights, the tears that true love knows,
Are mine, are thine; until in sweet belief

"We dream, beside our broken prison bars,
Of love exceeding joy, defying grief,
And higher than the throbbing of the stars."

"I'm so glad you like the sonnet. But there are others"; and during the course of the afternoon they read poem after poem together; and at the end of the afternoon, when he stood up to go, and extended his hand, he said:

"Then I may expect you at tea-time to-morrow."

"Oui, monsieur; madame se présentera demain chez monsieur à l'heure du thé."

THE END