

# GEORGE MEREDITH

ONE OF OUR  
CONQUERORS.  
VOLUME 3

**George Meredith**  
**One of Our Conquerors. Volume 3**

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One of Our Conquerors – Volume 3:*

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# **George Meredith**

## **One of Our Conquerors – Volume 3**

### **CHAPTER XIX**

#### **TREATS OF NATURE AND CIRCUMSTANCE AND THE DISSENSION BETWEEN THEM AND OF A SATIRIST'S MALIGNITY IN THE DIRECTION OF HIS COUNTRY**

There is at times in the hearts of all men of active life a vivid wild moment or two of dramatic dialogue between the veteran antagonists, Nature and Circumstance, when they, whose business it should be to be joyfully one, furiously split; and the Dame is up with her shrillest querulousness to inquire of her offspring, for the distinct original motive of his conduct. Why did he bring her to such a pass! And what is the gain? If he be not an alienated issue of the great Mother, he will strongly

incline to her view, that he put himself into harness to join with a machine going the dead contrary way of her welfare; and thereby wrote himself donkey, for his present reading. Soldiers, heroes, even the braided, even the wearers of the gay cock's feathers, who get the honours and the pocket-pieces, know the moment of her electrical eloquence. They have no answer for her, save an index at the machine pushing them on yet farther under the enemy's line of fire, where they pluck the golden wreath or the livid, and in either case listen no more. They glorify her topping wisdom while on the march to confound it. She is wise in her way. But, it is asked by the disputant, If we had followed her exclusively, how far should we have travelled from our starting-point? We of the world and its prizes and duties must do her an injury to make her tongue musical to us, and her argument worthy of attention. So it seems. How to keep the proper balance between those two testy old wranglers, that rarely pull the right way together, is as much the task for men in the grip of the world, as for the wanton youthful fry under dominion of their instincts; and probably, when it is done, man will have attained the golden age of his retirement from service.

Why be scheming? Victor asked. Unlike the gallant soldiery, his question was raised in the blush of a success, from an examination of the quality of the thing won; although it had not changed since it was first coveted; it was demonstrably the same: and an astonishing dry stick he held, as a reward for perpetual agitations and perversions of his natural tastes. Here

was a Dudley Sowerby, the direct issue of the conception of Lakelands; if indeed they were not conceived together in one; and the young gentleman had moral character, good citizen substance, and station, rank, prospect of a title; and the grasp of him was firm. Yet so far was it from hearty, that when hearing a professed satirist like Colney Durance remark on the decorous manner of Dudley's transparent courtship of the girl, under his look of an awakened approval of himself, that he appeared to be asking everybody:—Do you not think I bid fair for an excellent father of Philistines?—Victor had a nip of spite at the thought of Dudley's dragging him bodily to be the grandfather. Poor Fredi, too!—necessarily the mother: condemned by her hard fate to feel proud of Philistine babies! Though women soon get reconciled to it! Or do they? They did once. What if his Fredi turned out one of the modern young women, who have drunk of ideas? He caught himself speculating on that, as on a danger. The alliance with Dudley really seemed to set him facing backward.

Colney might not have been under prompting of Nataly when he derided Dudley; but Victor was at war with the picture of her, in her compression of a cruel laugh, while her eyelids were hard shut, as if to exclude the young patriarch of Philistines' ridiculous image.

He hearkened to the Nature interrogating him, why had he stepped on a path to put division between himself and his beloved?—the smallest of gaps; and still the very smallest between nuptial lovers is a division— and that may become a

mortal wound to their one-life. Why had he roused a slumbering world? Glimpses of the world's nurse-like, old-fashioned, mother-nightcap benevolence to its kicking favourites; its long-suffering tolerance for the heroic breakers of its rough-cast laws, while the decent curtain continues dropped, or lifted only ankle-high; together with many scenes, lively suggestions, of the choice of ways he liked best, told of things, which were better things, incomprehensibly forfeited. So that the plain sense of value insisted on more than one weighing of the gain in hand: a dubious measure.

He was as little disposed to reject it as to stop his course at a goal of his aim. Nevertheless, a gain thus poorly estimated, could not command him to do a deed of humiliation on account of it. The speaking to this dry young Dudley was not imperative at present. A word would do in the day to come.

Nataly was busy with her purchases of furniture, and the practise for the great August Concert. He dealt her liberal encouragements, up to the verge of Dr. Themison's latest hummed words touching Mrs. Burman, from which he jumped in alarm lest he should paralyze her again: the dear soul's dreaded aspect of an earthy pallor was a spectre behind her cheeks, ready to rush forth. Fenellan brought Carling to dine with him; and Themison was confirmed by Carting, with incidents in proof; Caning by Jarniman, also with incidents; one very odd one—or so it seemed, in the fury of the first savour of it:—she informed Jarniman, Skepsey said his friend Jarniman said, that she had

dreamed of making her appearance to him on the night of the 23rd August, and of setting the date on the calendar over his desk, when she entered his room: 'Sitting-room, not bedroom; she was always quite the lady,' Skepsey reported his Jarniman. Mrs. Burman, as a ghost, would respect herself; she would keep to her character. Jarniman quite expected the dream to be verified; she was a woman of her word: he believed she had received a revelation of the approaching fact: he was preparing for the scene.

Victor had to keep silent and discourse of general prosperity. His happy vivaciousness assisted him to feel it by day. Nataly heard him at night, on a moan: 'Poor soul!' and loudly once while performing an abrupt demi-vault from back to side: 'Perhaps now!' in a voice through doors. She schooled herself to breathe equably.

Not being allowed to impart the distressing dose of comfort he was charged with, he swallowed it himself; and these were the consequences. And an uneasy sleep was traditionally a matter for grave debate in the Radnor family. The Duvidney ladies, Dorothea and Virginia, would have cited ancestral names, showing it to be the worst of intimations. At night, lying on his back beneath a weight of darkness, one heavily craped figure, distinguishable through the gloom, as a blot on a black pad, accused the answering darkness within him, until his mind was dragged to go through the whole case by morning light; and the compassionate man appealed to common sense, to stamp

and pass his delectable sophistries; as, that it was his intense humaneness, which exposed him to an accusation of inhumanity; his prayer for the truly best to happen, which anticipated Mrs. Burman's expiry. They were simple sophistries, fabricated to suit his needs, readily taking and bearing the imprimatur of common sense. They refreshed him, as a chemical scent a crowded room.

All because he could not open his breast to Nataly, by reason of her feebleness; or feel enthusiasm in the possession of young Dudley! A dry stick indeed beside him on the walk Westward. Good quality wood, no doubt, but dry, varnished for conventional uses. Poor dear Fredi would have to crown it like the May-day posy of the urchins of Craye Farm and Creckholt!

Dudley wished the great City-merchant to appreciate him as a diligent student of commercial matters: rivalries of Banks; Foreign and Municipal Loans, American Rails, and Argentine; new Companies of wholesome appearance or sinister; or starting with a dram in the stomach, or born to bleat prostrate, like sheep on their backs in a ditch; Trusts and Founders; Breweries bursting vats upon the markets, and England prone along the gutters, gobbling, drunk for shares, and sober in the possession of certain of them. But when, as Colney says, a grateful England has conferred the Lordship on her Brewer, he gratefully hands-over the establishment to his country; and both may disregard the howls of a Salvation Army of shareholders.—Beaten by the Germans in Brewery, too! Dr. Schlesien has his right to crow. We were ahead of them, and they came and studied us, and they

studied Chemistry as well; while we went on down our happy-go-lucky old road; and then had to hire their young Professors, and then to import their beer.

Have the Germans more brains than we English? Victor's blood up to the dome of his cranium knocked the patriotic negative. But, as old Colney says (and bother him, for constantly intruding!), the comfortably successful have the habit of sitting, and that dulls the brain yet more than it eases the person: hence are we outpaced; we have now to know we are racing. Victor scored a mark for one of his projects. A well-conducted Journal of the sharpest pens in the land might, at a sacrifice of money grandly sunk, expose to his English how and to what degree their sports, and their fierce feastings, and their opposition to ideas, and their timidity in regard to change, and their execration of criticism applied to themselves, and their unanimous adoption of it for a weapon against others, are signs of a prolonged indulgence in the cushioned seat. Victor saw it. But would the people he loved? He agreed with Colney, forgetting the satirist's venom: to-wit; that the journalists should be close under their editor's rod to put it in sound bold English;—no metaphors, no similes, nor flowery insubstantiality: but honest Saxon manger stuff: and put it repeatedly, in contempt of the disgust of iteration; hammering so a soft place on the Anglican skull, which is rubbed in consequence, and taught at last through soreness to reflect.—A Journal?—with Colney Durance for Editor?—and called conformably THE WHIPPING-TOP? Why not, if it exactly hits

the signification of the Journal and that which it would have the country do to itself, to keep it going and truly topping? For there is no vulgarity in a title strongly signifying the intent. Victor wrote it at night, naming Colney for Editor, with a sum of his money to be devoted to the publication, in a form of memorandum; and threw it among the papers in his desk.

Young Dudley had a funny inquisitiveness about Dartrey Fenellan; owing to Fredi's reproduction or imitation of her mother's romantic sentiment for Dartrey, doubtless: a bit of jealousy, indicating that the dry fellow had his feelings. Victor touched—off an outline of Dartrey's history and character:—the half-brother of Simeon, considerably younger, and totally different. 'Dartrey's mother was Lady Charlotte Kiltorne, one of the Clanconans; better mother than wife, perhaps; and no reproach on her, not a shadow; only she made the General's Bank-notes fly black paper. And— if you 're for heredity—the queer point is, that Simeon, whose mother was a sober-minded woman, has always been the spendthrift. Dartrey married one of the Hennen women, all an odd lot, all handsome. I met her once. Colney said, she came up here with a special commission from the Prince of Darkness. There are women who stir the unholy in men—whether they mean it or not, you know.'

Dudley pursed to remark, that he could not say he did know. And good for Fredi if he did not know, and had his objections to the knowledge! But he was like the men who escape colds by wrapping in comforters instead of trusting to the spin of the

blood.

'She played poor Dartrey pranks before he buried—he, behaved well to her; and that says much for him; he has: a devil of a temper. I've seen the blood in his veins, mount to cracking. But there's the man: because she was a woman, he never let it break out with her. And, by heaven, he had cause. She couldn't be left. She tricked him, and she loved him—passionately, I believe. You don't understand women loving the husband they drag through the mire?'

Dudley did not. He sharpened his mouth.

'Buried, you said, sir?—a widower?'

'I've no positive information; we shall hear when he: comes back,' Victor replied hurriedly. 'He got a drenching of all the damns in the British service from his. Generalissimo one day at a Review, for a trooper's negligence—button or stock missing, or something; and off goes Dartrey to his hut, and breaks his sword, and sends in his resignation. Good soldier lost. And I can't complain; he has been a right-hand man to me over in Africa. But a man ought to have some control of his temper, especially a soldier.'

Dudley put emphasis into his acquiescence.

'Worse than that temper of Dartrey's, he can't forgive an injury. He bears a grudge against his country. You've heard Colney Durance abuse old England. It's three parts factitious-literary exercise. It 's milk beside the contempt of Dartrey's shrug. He thinks we're a dead people, if a people; "subsisting on

our fat," as Colney says.'

'I am not of opinion that we show it,' observed Dudley.

'We don't,' Victor agreed. He disrelished his companion's mincing tone of a monumental security, and yearned for Dartrey or Simeon or Colney to be at his elbow rather than this most commendable of orderly citizens, who little imagined the treacherous revolt from him in the bosom of the gentleman cordially signifying full agreement. But Dudley was not gifted to read behind words and looks.

They were in the Park of the dwindling press of carriages, and here was this young Dudley saying, quite commendably: 'It's a pity we seem to have no means of keeping our parks select.'

Victor flung Simeon Fenellan at him in thought. He remembered a fable of Fenellan's, about a Society of the Blest, and the salt it was to them to discover an intruder from below, and the consequent accelerated measure in their hymning.

'Have you seen anything offensive to you?' he asked.

'One sees notorious persons.'

Dudley spoke aloof from them—'out of his cold attics,' Fenellan would have said.

Victor approved: with the deadened feeling common to us when first in sad earnest we consent to take life as it is.

He perceived, too, the comicality of his having to resign himself to the fatherly embrace of goodness.

Lakelands had him fast, and this young Dudley was the kernel of Lakelands. If he had only been intellectually a little flexible in

his morality! But no; he wore it cap a pie, like a mediaeval knight his armour. One had to approve. And there was no getting away from him. He was good enough to stay in town for the practise of the opening overture of the amateurs, and the flute-duet, when his family were looking for him at Tunbridge Wells; and almost every day Victor was waylaid by him at a corner of the Strand.

Occasionally, Victor appeared at the point of interception armed with Colney Durance, for whom he had called in the Temple, bent on self-defence, although Colney was often as bitter to his taste as to Dudley's. Latterly the bitter had become a tonic. We rejoice in the presence of goodness, let us hope; and still an impersonation of conventional, goodness perpetually about us depresses. Dudley drove him to Colney for relief. Besides it pleased Nataly that he should be bringing Colney home; it looked to her as if he were subjecting Dudley to critical inspection before he decided a certain question much, and foolishly, dreaded by the dear soul. That quieted her. And another thing, she liked him to be with Colney, for a clog on him; as it were, a tuning-fork for the wild airs he started. A little pessimism, also, she seemed to like; probably as an appeasement after hearing, and having to share, high flights. And she was, in her queer woman's way, always reassured by his endurance of Colney's company:—she read it to mean, that he could bear Colney's perusal of him, and satiric stings. Victor had seen these petty matters among the various which were made to serve his double and treble purposes; now, thanks to the operation of

young Dudley within him, he felt them. Preferring Fenellan's easy humour to Colney's acid, he was nevertheless braced by the latter's antidote to Dudley, while reserving his entire opposition in the abstract.

For Victor Radnor and Colney Durance were the Optimist and Pessimist of their society. They might have headed those tribes in the country. At a period when the omnibus of the world appears to its quaint occupants to be going faster, men are shaken into the acceptance, if not performance, of one part or the other as it is dictated to them by their temperaments. Compose the parts, and you come nigh to the meaning of the Nineteenth Century: the mother of these gosling affirmatives and negatives divorced from harmony and awakened by the slight increase of incubating motion to vitality. Victor and Colney had been champion duellists for the rosy and the saturnine since the former cheerfully slaved for a small stipend in the City of his affection, and the latter entered on an inheritance counted in niggard hundreds, that withdrew a briefless barrister disposed for scholarship from the forlornest of seats in the Courts. They had foretold of one another each the unfulfilled; each claimed the actual as the child of his prediction. Victor was to have been ruined long back; Colney the prey of independent bachelors. Colney had escaped his harpy, and Victor could be called a millionaire and more. Prophecy was crowned by Colney's dyspepsia, by Victor's ticklish domestic position. Their pity for one another, their warm regard, was genuine; only, they were of

different temperaments; and we have to distinguish, that in many estimable and some gifted human creatures, it is the quality of the blood which directs the current of opinion.

Victor played-off Colney upon Dudley, for his internal satisfaction, and to lull Nataly and make her laugh; but he could not, as she hoped he was doing, take Colney into his confidence; inasmuch as the Optimist, impelled by his exuberant anticipatory trustfulness, is an author, and does things; whereas the Pessimist is your chaired critic, with the delivery of a censor, generally an undoer of things. Our Optimy has his instinct to tell him of the cast of Pessimy's countenance at the confession of a dilemma-foreseen! He hands himself to Pessimy, as it were a sugar-cane, for the sour brute to suck the sugar and whack with the wood. But he cannot perform his part in return; he gets no compensation: Pessimy is invulnerable. You waste your time in hurling a common 'tu-quoque' at one who hugs the worst.

The three walking in the park, with their bright view, and black view, and neutral view of life, were a comical trio. They had come upon the days of the unfanned electric furnace, proper to London's early August when it is not pipeing March. Victor complacently bore heat as well as cold: but young Dudley was a drought, and Colney a drug to refresh it; and why was he stewing in London? It was for this young Dudley, who resembled a London of the sparrowy roadways and wearisome pavements and blocks of fortress mansions, by chance a water-cart spiriting a stale water: or a London of the farewell dinner-parties, where

London's professed anecdotist lays the dust with his ten times told: Why was not Nataly relieved of her dreary round of the purchases of furniture! They ought all now to be in Switzerland or Tyrol. Nesta had of late been turning over leaves of an Illustrated book of Tyrol, dear to her after a run through the Innthal to the Dolomites one splendid August; and she and Nataly had read there of Hofer, Speckbacher, Haspinger; and wrath had filled them at the meanness of the Corsican, who posed after it as victim on St. Helena's rock; the scene in grey dawn on Mantua's fortress-walls blasting him in the Courts of History, when he strikes for his pathetic sublime.

Victor remembered how he had been rhetorical, as the mouthpiece of his darlings. But he had in memory prominently now the many glorious pictures of that mountain-land beckoning to him, waving him to fly forth from the London oven:—lo, the Tyrolese limestone crags with livid peaks and snow lining shelves and veins of the crevices; and folds of pinewood undulations closed by a shoulder of snow large on the blue; and a dazzling pinnacle rising over green pasture-Alps, the head of it shooting aloft as the blown billow, high off a broken ridge, and wide-armed in its pure white shroud beneath; tranced, but all motion in immobility, to the heart in the eye; a splendid image of striving, up to crowned victory. And see the long valley-sweeps of the hanging meadows and maize, and lower vineyards and central tall green spires! Walking beside young Dudley, conversing, observing too, Victor followed the trips and twists of a rill,

that was lured a little further down through scoops, ducts, and scaffolded channels to serve a wainwright.

He heard the mountain-song of the joyful water: a wren-robin-thrush on the dance down of a faun; till it was caught and muted, and the silver foot slid along the channel, swift as moonbeams through a cloud, with an air of 'Whither you will, so it be on'; happy for service as in freedom. Then the yard of the inn below, and the rillwater twirling rounded through the trout-trough, subdued, still lively for its beloved onward: dues to business, dues to pleasure; a wedding of the two, and the wisest on earth:-eh? like some one we know, and Nataly has made the comparison. Fresh forellen for lunch: rhyming to Fenellan, he had said to her; and that recollection struck the day to blaze; for his friend was a ruined military captain living on a literary quill at the time; and Nataly's tender pleading, 'Could you not help to give him another chance, dear Victor?'—signifying her absolute trust in his ability to do that or more or anything, had actually set him thinking of the Insurance Office; which he started to prosperity, and Fenellan in it, previously an untutored rill of the mountains, if ever was one.

Useless to be dwelling on holiday pictures: Lakelands had hold of him!

Colney or somebody says, that the greater our successes, the greater the slaves we become.—But we must have an aim, my friend, and success must be the aim of any aim!—Yes, and, says Colney, you are to rejoice in the disappointing miss, which saved

you from being damned by your bullet on the centre.—You're dead against Nature, old Colney.—That is to carry the flag of Liberty.—By clipping a limb!

Victor overcame the Pessimist in his own royal cranium-Court. He entertained a pronounced dissension with bachelors pretending to independence. It could not be argued publicly, and the more the pity:— for a slight encouragement, he would have done it: his outlook over the waves of bachelors and (by present conditions mostly constrained) spinsters—and another outlook, midnight upon Phlegethon to the thoughts of men, made him deem it urgent. And it helped the plea in his own excuse, as Colney pointed out to the son of Nature. That, he had to admit, was true. He charged it upon Mrs. Burman, for twisting the most unselfish and noblest of his thoughts; and he promised himself it was to cease on the instant when the circumstance, which Nature was remiss in not bringing about to-day or to-morrow, had come to pass. He could see his Nataly's pained endurance beneath her habitual submission. Her effort was a poor one, to conceal her dread of the day of the gathering at Lakelands.

On the Sunday previous to the day, Dr. Themison accompanied the amateurs by rail to Wrensham, to hear 'trial of the acoustics' of the Concert-hall. They were a goodly company; and there was fun in the railway-carriage over Colney's description of Fashionable London's vast octopus Malady-monster, who was letting the doctor fly to the tether of its longest filament for an hour, plying suckers on him the while. He

had the look, to general perception, of a man but half-escaped: and as when the notes of things taken by the vision in front are being set down upon tablets in the head behind. Victor observed his look at Nataly. The look was like a door aswing, revealing in concealing. She was not or did not appear struck by it; perhaps, if observant, she took it for a busy professional gentleman's holiday reckoning of the hours before the return train to his harness, and his arrangements for catching it. She was, as she could be on a day of trial, her enchanting majestic self again— defying suspicions. She was his true mate for breasting a world honoured in uplifting her.

Her singing of a duet with Nesta, called forth Dr. Themison's very warm applause. He named the greatest of contraltos. Colney did better service than Fenellan at the luncheon-table: he diverted Nataly and captured Dr. Themison's ear with the narrative of his momentous expedition of European Emissaries, to plead the cause of their several languages at the Court of Japan: a Satiric Serial tale, that hit incidentally the follies of the countries of Europe, and intentionally, one had to think, those of Old England. Nesta set him going. Just when he was about to begin, she made her father laugh by crying out in a rapture, 'Oh! Delphica!' For she was naughtily aware of Dudley Sowerby's distaste for the story and disgust with the damsel Delphica.

Nesta gave Dr. Themison the preliminary sketch of the grand object of the expedition: indeed one of the eminent ones of the world; matter for an Epic; though it is to be feared, that our

part in it will not encourage a Cis-Atlantic bard. To America the honours from beginning to end belong.

So, then, Japan has decided to renounce its language, for the adoption of the language it may choose among the foremost famous European tongues. Japan becomes the word for miraculous transformations of a whole people at the stroke of a wand; and let our English enrol it as the most precious of the powerful verbs. An envoy visits the principal Seats of Learning in Europe. He is of a gravity to match that of his unexampled and all but stupefying mission. A fluent linguist, yet an Englishman, the slight American accent contracted during a lengthened residence in the United States is no bar to the patriotism urging him to pay his visit of exposition and invitation from the Japanese Court to the distinguished Doctor of Divinity Dr. Bouthoin. The renown of Dr. Bouthoin among the learned of Japan has caused the special invitation to him; a scholar endowed by an ample knowledge and persuasive eloquence to cite and instance as well as illustrate the superior advantages to Japan and civilization in the filial embrace of mother English. 'For to this it must come predestinated,' says the astonishing applicant. 'We seem to see a fitness in it,' says the cogitative Rev. Doctor. 'And an Island England in those waters, will do wonders for Commerce,' adds the former. 'We think of things more pregnant,' concludes the latter, with a dry gleam of ecclesiastical knowingness. And let the Editor of the Review upon his recent pamphlet, and let the prelate reprimanding him, and let the newspapers criticizing his

pure Saxon, have a care!

Funds, universally the most convincing of credentials, are placed at Dr. Bouthoin's disposal: only it is requested, that for the present the expedition be secret. 'Better so,' says pure Saxon's champion. On a day patented for secrecy, and swearing-in the whole American Continent through the cables to keep the secret by declaring the patent, the Rev. Dr. Bouthoin, accompanied by his curate, the Rev. Mancate Semhians, stumbling across portmanteaux crammed with lexicons and dictionaries and other tubes of the voice of Hermes, takes possession of berths in the ship Polypheme, bound, as they mutually conceive, for the biggest adventure ever embarked on by a far-thoughted, high-thoughted, patriotic pair speaking pure Saxon or other.

Colney, with apologies to his hearers, avoided the custom of our period (called the Realistic) to create, when casual opportunity offers, a belief in the narrative by promoting nausea in the audience. He passed under veil the Rev. Doctor's acknowledgement of Neptune's power, and the temporary collapse of Mr. Semhians. Proceeding at once to the comments of these high-class missionaries on the really curious inquisitiveness of certain of the foreign passengers on board, he introduced to them the indisputably learned, the very argumentative, crashing, arrogant, pedantic, dogmatic, philological German gentleman, Dr. Gannius, reeking of the Teutonic Professor, as a library volume of its leather. With him is his fairhaired artless daughter Delphica. An interesting couple

for the beguilement of a voyage: she so beautifully moderates his irascible incisiveness! Yet there is a strange tone that they have. What, then, of the polite, the anecdotic Gallic M. Falarique, who studiously engages the young lady in colloquy when Mr. Semhians is agitating outside them to say a word? What of that outpouring, explosive, equally voluble, uncontrolled M. Bobinikine, a Mongol Russian, shaped, featured, hued like the pot-boiled, round and tight young dumpling of our primitive boyhood, which smokes on the dish from the pot? And what of another, hitherto unnoticed, whose nose is of the hooked vulturine, whose name transpires as Pisistratus Mytharete? He hears Dr. Bouthoin declaim some lines of Homer, and beseeches him for the designation of that language. Greek, is it? Greek of the Asiatic ancient days of the beginning of the poetic chants? Dr. Gannius crashes cachinnation. Dr. Bouthoin caps himself with the offended Don. Mr. Semhians opens half an eye and a whole mouth. There must be a mystery, these two exclaim to one another in privacy. Delphica draws Mr. Semhians aside.

Blushing over his white necktie, like the coast of Labrador at the transient wink of its Jack-in-the-box Apollo, Mr. Semhians faintly tells of a conversation he has had with the ingenuous fair one; and she ardent as he for the throning of our incomparable Saxon English in the mouths of the races of mankind. Strange!—she partly suspects the Frenchman, the Russian, the attentive silent Greek, to be all of them bound for the Court of Japan. Concurrents? Can it be? We are absolutely to enter on a

contention with rivals? Dr. Bouthoin speaks to Dr. Gannius. He is astonished, he says; he could not have imagined it

'Have you ever imagined anything?' Dr. Gannius asks him. Entomologist, botanist, palaeontologist, philologist, and at sound of horn a ready regimental corporal, Dr. Gannius wears good manners as a pair of bath-slippers, to rally and kick his old infant of an Englishman; who, in awe of his later renown and manifest might, makes it a point of discretion to be ultra-amiable; for he certainly is not in training, he has no alliances, and he must diplomatize; and the German is a strong one; a relative too; he is the Saxon's cousin, to say the least. This German has the habit of pushing past politeness to carry his argumentative war into the enemy's country: and he presents on all sides a solid rampart of recent great deeds done, and mailed readiness for the doing of more, if we think of assailing him in that way. We are really like the poor beasts which have cast their shells or cases, helpless flesh to his beak. So we are cousinly.

Whether more amused than amazed, we know not, Dr. Gannius hears from 'our simpleton of the pastures,' as he calls the Rev. Doctor to his daughter, that he and Mr. Semhians have absolutely pushed forth upon this most mighty of enterprises naked of any backing from their Government! Babes in the Wood that they are! 'a la grace de dieu' at every turn that cries for astutia, they show no sign or symbol of English arms behind them, to support—and with the grandest of national prizes in view!—the pleading oration before the Court of the elect,

erudites, we will call them, of an intelligent, yet half barbarous, people; hesitating, these, between eloquence and rival eloquence, cunning and rival cunning. Why, in such a case, the shadow-nimbus of Force is needed to decide the sinking of the scale. But have these English never read their Shakespeare, that they show so barren an acquaintance with human, to say nothing of semi-barbaric, nature? But it is here that we Germans prove our claim to being the sons of his mind.—Dr. Gannius, in contempt, throws off the mask: he also is a concurrent. And not only is he the chosen by election of the chief Universities of his land, he has behind him, as Athene dilating Achilles, the clenched fist of the Prince of thunder and lightning of his time. German, Japan shall be! he publicly swears before them all. M. Falarique damascenes his sharpest smile; M. Bobinikine double-dimples his puddingest; M. Mytharete rolls a forefinger over his beak; Dr. Bouthoin enlarges his eye on a sunny mote. And such is the masterful effect of a frank diplomacy, that when one party shows his hand, the others find the reverse of concealment in hiding their own.

Dr. Bouthoin and Mr. Semhians are compelled to suspect themselves to be encompassed with rivals, presumptively supported by their Governments. The worthy gentlemen had hoped to tumble into good fortune, as in the blessed old English manner. 'It has even been thus with us: unhelped we do it!' exclaims the Rev. Doctor. He is roused from dejection by hearing Mr. Semhians shyly (he has published verse) tell of the

fair-tressed Delphica's phosphorial enthusiasm for our galaxy of British Poets. Assisted by Mr. Semhians, he begins to imagine, that he has, in the person of this artless devotee an ally, who will, through her worship of our poets (by treachery to her sire—a small matter) sacrifice her guttural tongue, by enabling him (through the exercise of her arts, charms, intrigues—also a small matter) to obtain the first audience of the Japanese erudites. Delphica, with each of the rivals in turn, is very pretty Comedy. She is aware that M. Falarique is her most redoubtable adversary, by the time that the vast fleet of steamboats (containing newspaper reporters) is beheld from the decks of the Polypheme puffing past Sandy Hook.

There Colney left them, for the next instalment of the serial.

Nesta glanced at Dudley Sowerby. She liked him for his pained frown at the part his countrymen were made to play, but did wish that he would keep from expressing it in a countenance that suggested a worried knot; and mischievously she said: 'Do you take to Delphica?'

He replied, with an evident sincerity, 'I cannot say I do.'

Had Mr. Semhians been modelled on him?

'One bets on the German, of course—with Colney Durance,' Victor said to

Dr. Themison, leading him over the grounds of Lakelands.

'In any case, the author teaches us to feel an interest in the rivals.

I want to know what comes of it,' said the doctor.

'There's a good opportunity, one sees. But, mark me, it will all end in satire upon poor Old England. According to Colney, we excel in nothing.'

'I do not think there is a country that could offer the entertainment for which I am indebted to you to-day.'

'Ah, my friend, and you like their voices? The contralto?'

'Exquisite.'

Dr. Themison had not spoken the name of Radnor.

'Shall we see you at our next Concert-evening in town?' said Victor; and hearing 'the privilege' mentioned, his sharp bright gaze cleared to limpid. 'You have seen how it stands with us here!' At once he related what indeed Dr. Themison had begun speculatively to think might be the case.

Mrs. Burman Radnor had dropped words touching a husband, and of her desire to communicate with him, in the event of her being given over to the surgeons: she had said, that her husband was a greatly gifted man; setting her head in a compassionate swing. This revelation of the husband soon after, was filling. And this Mr. Radnor's comrade's manner of it, was winning: a not too self-justifying tone; not void of feeling for the elder woman; with a manly eulogy of the younger, who had flung away the world for him and borne him their one dear child. Victor took the blame wholly upon himself. 'It is right that you should know,' he said to the doctor's thoughtful posture; and he stressed the blame; and a flame shot across his eyeballs. He brought home to his hearer the hurricane of a man he was in the passion: indicating

the subjection of such a temperament as this Victor Radnor's to trials of the moral restraints beyond his human power.

Dr. Themison said: 'Would you—we postpone that as long as we can: but supposing the poor lady . . . ?'

Victor broke in: 'I see her wish: I will.'

The clash of his answer rang beside Dr. Themison's faltering query.

We are grateful when spared the conclusion of a sentence born to stammer.

If for that only, the doctor pressed Victor's hand warmly.

'I may, then, convey some form of assurance, that a request of the kind will be granted?' he said.

'She has but to call me to her,' said Victor, stiffening his back.

# CHAPTER XX

## THE GREAT ASSEMBLY AT LAKELANDS

Round the neighbourhood of Lakelands it was known that the day of the great gathering there had been authoritatively foretold as fine, by Mr. Victor Radnor; and he delivered his prophecy in the teeth of the South-western gale familiar to our yachting month; and he really inspired belief or a kind of trust; some supposing him to draw from reserves of observation, some choosing to confide in the singularly winged sparkle of his eyes. Lady Rodwell Blachington did; and young Mrs. Blathenoy; and Mrs. Fanning; they were enamoured of it. And when women stand for Hope, and any worshipped man for Promise, nothing less than redoubled confusion of him dissolves the union. Even then they cling to it, under an ejaculation, that it might and should have been otherwise; fancy partly has it otherwise, in her caerulean home above the weeping. So it is good at all points to prophecy with the aspect of the radiant day foretold.

A storm, bearing battle overhead, tore the night to pieces. Nataly's faith in the pleasant prognostic wavered beneath the crashes. She had not much power of heart to desire anything save that which her bosom disavowed. Uproar rather appeased her, calmness agitated. She wished her beloved to be spared from a

disappointment, thinking he deserved all successes, because of the rigours inflicted by her present tonelessness of blood and being. Her unresponsive manner with him was not due to lack of fire in the blood or a loss of tenderness. The tender feeling, under privations unwillingly imposed, though willingly shared, now suffused her reflections, owing to a gratitude induced by a novel experience of him; known, as it may chance, and as it does not always chance, to both sexes in wedded intimacy here and there; known to women whose mates are proved quick to compliance with delicate intuitions of their moods of nature. A constant, almost visible, image of the dark thing she desired, and was bound not to desire, and was remorseful for desiring, oppressed her; a perpetual consequent warfare of her spirit and the nature subject to the thousand sensational hypocrisies invoked for concealment of its reviled brutish baseness, held the woman suspended from her emotions. She coldly felt that a caress would have melted her, would have been the temporary rapture. Coldly she had the knowledge that the considerate withholding of it helped her spirit to escape a stain. Less coldly, she thanked at heart her beloved, for being a gentleman in their yoke. It plighted them over flesh.

He talked to her on the pillow, just a few sentences; and, unlike himself, a word of City affairs: 'That fellow Blathenoy, with his increasing multitude of bills at the Bank: must watch him there, sit there regularly. One rather likes his wife. By the way, if you see him near me to-morrow, praise the Spanish climate;

don't forget. He heads the subscription list of Lady Blachington's Charity.'

Victor chuckled at Colney's humping of shoulders and mouth, while the tempest seemed echoing a sulphurous pessimist. 'If old Colney had listened to me, when India gave proof of the metal and South Africa began heaving, he'd have been a fairly wealthy man by now . . . ha! it would have genialized him. A man may be a curmudgeon with money: the rule is for him to cuddle himself and take a side, instead of dashing at his countrymen all round and getting hated. Well, Colney popular, can't be imagined; but entertaining guests would have diluted his acid. He has the six hundred or so a year he started old bachelor on; add his miserable pay for Essays. Literature! Of course, he sours. But don't let me hear of bachelors moralists. There he sits at his Temple Chambers hatching epigrams . . . pretends to have the office of critic! Honest old fellow, as far as his condition permits. I tell him it will be fine to-morrow.'

'You are generally right, dear,' Nataly said.

Her dropping breath was audible.

Victor smartly commended her to slumber, with heaven's blessing on her and a dose of soft nursery prattle.

He squeezed her hand. He kissed her lips by day. She heard him sigh settling himself into the breast of night for milk of sleep, like one of the world's good children. She could have turned to him, to show him she was in harmony with the holy night and loving world, but for the fear founded on a knowledge of the man

he was; it held her frozen to the semblance of a tombstone lady beside her lord, in the aisle where horror kindles pitchy blackness with its legions at one movement. Verily it was the ghost of Mrs. Burman come to the bed, between them.

Meanwhile the sun of Victor Radnor's popularity was already up over the extended circle likely to be drenched by a falsification of his daring augury, though the scud flew swift, and the beeches raved, and the oaks roared and snarled, and pine-trees fell their lengths. Fine tomorrow, to a certainty! he had been heard to say. The doubt weighed for something; the balance inclined with the gentleman who had become so popular: for he had done the trick so suddenly, like a stroke of the wizard; and was a real man, not one of your spangled zodiacs selling for sixpence and hopping to a lucky hit, laughed at nine times out of ten. The reasoning went—and it somewhat affected the mansion as well as the cottage,—that if he had become popular in this astonishing fashion, after making one of the biggest fortunes of modern times, he might, he must, have secret gifts. 'You can't foretell weather!' cried a pothouse sceptic. But the workmen at Lakelands declared that he had foretold it. Sceptics among the common folk were quaintly silenced by other tales of him, being a whiff from the delirium attending any mention of his name.

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