

GEORGE MEREDITH

THE ORDEAL OF
RICHARD FEVEREL.
VOLUME 5

George Meredith

**The Ordeal of Richard
Feverel. Volume 5**

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CHAPTER XXXIV

It was the month of July. The Solent ran up green waves before a full- blowing South-wester. Gay little yachts bounded out like foam, and flashed their sails, light as sea-nymphs. A crown of deep Summer blue topped the flying mountains of cloud.

By an open window that looked on the brine through nodding roses, our young bridal pair were at breakfast, regaling worthily, both of them. Had the Scientific Humanist observed them, he could not have contested the fact, that as a couple who had set up to be father and mother of Britons, they were doing their duty. Files of egg-cups with disintegrated shells bore witness to it, and they were still at work, hardly talking from rapidity of exercise. Both were dressed for an expedition. She had her bonnet on, and he his yachting-hat. His sleeves were turned over at the wrists, and her gown showed its lining on her lap. At times a chance word might spring a laugh, but eating was the business of the hour, as I would have you to know it always will be where Cupid is in earnest. Tribute flowed in to them from the subject land. Neglected lies Love's penny-whistle on which they played so prettily and charmed the spheres to hear them. What do they care for the spheres, who have one another? Come, eggs! come, bread and butter! come, tea with sugar in it and milk! and welcome, the jolly hours. That is a fair interpretation of the music in them just now. Yonder instrument was good only for the overture. After all, what finer aspiration can lovers have, than to be free man and woman in the heart of plenty? And is it not a glorious level to have attained? Ah, wretched Scientific Humanist! not to be by and mark the admirable sight of these young creatures feeding. It would have been a spell to exorcise the Manichee, methinks.

The mighty performance came to an end, and then, with a flourish of his table-napkin, husband stood over wife, who met him on the confident budding of her mouth. The poetry of mortals is their daily prose. Is it not a glorious level to have attained? A short, quick-blooded kiss, radiant, fresh, and honest as Aurora, and then Richard says without lack of cheer, "No letter to-day, my Lucy!" whereat her sweet eyes dwell on him a little seriously, but he cries, "Never mind! he'll be coming down himself some morning. He has only to know her, and all's well! eh?" and so saying he puts a hand beneath her chin, and seems to frame her fair face in fancy, she smiling up to be looked at.

"But one thing I do want to ask my darling," says Lucy, and dropped into his bosom with hands of petition. "Take me on board his yacht with him to-day—not leave me with those people! Will he? I'm a good sailor, he knows!"

"The best afloat!" laughs Richard, hugging her, "but, you know, you darling bit of a sailor, they don't allow more than a certain number on board for the race, and if they hear you've been with me, there'll be cries of foul play! Besides, there's Lady Judith to talk to you about Austin, and Lord Mountfalcon's compliments for you to listen to, and Mr. Morton to take care of you."

Lucy's eyes fixed sideways an instant.

"I hope I don't frown and blush as I did?" she said, screwing her pliable brows up to him winningly, and he bent his cheek against hers, and murmured something delicious.

"And we shall be separated for—how many hours? one, two, three hours!" she pouted to his flatteries.

"And then I shall come on board to receive my bride's congratulations."

"And then my husband will talk all the time to Lady Judith."

"And then I shall see my wife frowning and blushing at Lord Mountfalcon."

"Am I so foolish, Richard?" she forgot her trifling to ask in an earnest way, and had another Aureorean kiss, just brushing the dew on her lips, for answer.

After hiding a month in shyest shade, the pair of happy sinners had wandered forth one day to look on men and marvel at them, and had chanced to meet Mr. Morton of Poer Hall, Austin Wentworth's friend, and Ralph's uncle. Mr. Morton had once been intimate with the baronet, but had given him up for many years as impracticable and hopeless, for which reason he was the more inclined to regard Richard's misdemeanour charitably, and to lay the faults of the son on the father; and thinking society to be the one thing requisite to the young man, he had introduced him to the people he knew in the island; among others to the Lady Judith Felle, a fair young dame, who introduced him to Lord Mountfalcon, a puissant nobleman; who introduced him to the yachtsmen beginning to congregate; so that in a few weeks he found himself in the centre of a brilliant company, and for the first time in his life tasted what it was to have free intercourse with his fellow-creatures of both sexes. The son of a System was, therefore, launched; not only through the surf, but in deep waters.

Now the baronet had so far compromised between the recurrence of his softer feelings and the suggestions of his new familiar, that he had determined to act toward Richard with justness. The world called it magnanimity, and even Lady Blandish had some thoughts of the same kind when she heard that he had decreed to Richard a handsome allowance, and had scouted Mrs. Doria's proposal for him to contest the legality of the marriage; but Sir Austin knew well he was simply just in not withholding money from a youth so situated. And here again the world deceived him by embellishing his conduct. For what is it to be just to whom we love! He knew it was not magnanimous, but the cry of the world somehow fortified him in the conceit that in dealing perfect justice to his son he was doing all that was possible, because so much more than common fathers would have done. He had shut his heart.

Consequently Richard did not want money. What he wanted more, and did not get, was a word from his father, and though he said nothing to sadden his young bride, she felt how much it preyed upon him to be at variance with the man whom, now that he had offended him and gone against him, he would have fallen on his knees to; the man who was as no other man to him. She heard him of nights when she lay by his side, and the darkness, and the broken mutterings, of those nights clothed the figure of the strange stern man in her mind. Not that it affected the appetites of the pretty pair. We must not expect that of Cupid enthroned and in condition; under the influence of sea-air, too. The files of egg-cups laugh at such an idea. Still the worm did gnaw them. Judge, then, of their delight when, on this pleasant morning, as they were issuing from the garden of their cottage to go down to the sea, they caught sight of Tom Bakewell rushing up the road with a portmanteau on his shoulders, and, some distance behind him, discerned Adrian.

"It's all right!" shouted Richard, and ran off to meet him, and never left his hand till he had hauled him up, firing questions at him all the way, to where Lucy stood.

"Lucy! this is Adrian, my cousin."—"Isn't he an angel?" his eyes seemed to add; while Lucy's clearly answered, "That he is!"

The full-bodied angel ceremoniously bowed to her, and acted with reserved unction the benefactor he saw in their greetings. "I think we are not strangers," he was good enough to remark, and very quickly let them know he had not breakfasted; on hearing which they hurried him into the house, and Lucy put herself in motion to have him served.

"Dear old Rady," said Richard, tugging at his hand again, "how glad I am you've come! I don't mind telling you we've been horridly wretched."

"Six, seven, eight, nine eggs," was Adrian's comment on a survey of the breakfast-table.

"Why wouldn't he write? Why didn't he answer one of my letters? But here you are, so I don't mind now. He wants to see us, does he? We'll go up to-night. I've a match on at eleven; my little yacht—I've called her the 'Blandish'—against Fred Cuirie's 'Begum.' I shall beat, but whether I do or not, we'll go up to-night. What's the news? What are they all doing?"

"My dear boy!" Adrian returned, sitting comfortably down, "let me put myself a little more on an equal footing with you before I undertake to reply. Half that number of eggs will be sufficient for an unmarried man, and then we'll talk. They're all very well, as well as I can recollect after the shaking my total vacuity has had this morning. I came over by the first boat, and the sea, the sea has made me love mother earth, and desire of her fruits."

Richard fretted restlessly opposite his cool relative.

"Adrian! what did he say when he heard of it? I want to know exactly what words he said."

"Well says the sage, my son! 'Speech is the small change of Silence.'

He said less than I do."

"That's how he took it!" cried Richard, and plunged in meditation.

Soon the table was cleared, and laid out afresh, and Lucy preceded the maid bearing eggs on the tray, and sat down unbonneted, and like a thorough-bred housewife, to pour out the tea for him.

"Now we'll commence," said Adrian, tapping his egg with meditative cheerfulness; but his expression soon changed to one of pain, all the more alarming for his benevolent efforts to conceal it. Could it be possible the egg was bad? oh, horror! Lucy watched him, and waited in trepidation.

"This egg has boiled three minutes and three-quarters," he observed, ceasing to contemplate it.

"Dear, dear!" said Lucy, "I boiled them myself exactly that time.

Richard likes them so. And you like them hard, Mr. Harley?"

"On the contrary, I like them soft. Two minutes and a half, or three-quarters at the outside. An egg should never rashly verge upon hardness—never. Three minutes is the excess of temerity."

"If Richard had told me! If I had only known!" the lovely little hostess interjected ruefully, biting her lip.

"We mustn't expect him to pay attention to such matters," said Adrian, trying to smile.

"Hang it! there are more eggs in the house," cried Richard, and pulled savagely at the bell.

Lucy jumped up, saying, "Oh, yes! I will go and boil some exactly the time you like. Pray let me go, Mr. Harley."

Adrian restrained her departure with a motion of his hand. "No," he said, "I will be ruled by Richard's tastes, and heaven grant me his digestion!"

Lucy threw a sad look at Richard, who stretched on a sofa, and left the burden of the entertainment entirely to her. The eggs were a melancholy beginning, but her ardour to please Adrian would not be damped, and she deeply admired his resignation. If she failed in pleasing this glorious herald of peace, no matter by what small misadventure, she apprehended calamity; so there sat this fair dove with brows at work above her serious smiling blue eyes, covertly studying every aspect of the plump-faced epicure, that she might learn to propitiate him. "He shall not think me timid and stupid," thought this brave girl, and indeed Adrian was astonished to find that she could both chat and be useful, as well as look ornamental. When he had finished one egg, behold, two fresh ones came in, boiled according to his prescription. She had quietly given her orders to the maid, and he had them without fuss. Possibly his look of dismay at the offending eggs had not been altogether involuntary, and her woman's instinct, inexperienced as she was, may have told her that he had come prepared to be not very well satisfied with anything in Love's cottage. There was mental faculty in those pliable brows to see through, and combat, an unwitting wise youth.

How much she had achieved already she partly divined when Adrian said: "I think now I'm in case to answer your questions, my dear boy—thanks to Mrs. Richard," and he bowed to her his first direct acknowledgment of her position. Lucy thrilled with pleasure.

"Ah!" cried Richard, and settled easily on his back.

"To begin, the Pilgrim has lost his Note-book, and has been persuaded to offer a reward which shall maintain the happy finder thereof in an asylum for life. Benson—superlative Benson—has turned his shoulders upon Raynham. None know whither he has departed. It is believed that the sole surviving member of the sect of the Shaddock-Dogmatists is under a total eclipse of Woman."

"Benson gone?" Richard exclaimed. "What a tremendous time it seems since I left Raynham!"

"So it is, my dear boy. The honeymoon is Mahomet's minute; or say, the Persian King's water-pail that you read of in the story: You dip your head in it, and when you draw it out, you discover that you have lived a life. To resume your uncle Algernon still roams in pursuit of the lost one—I should say, hops. Your uncle Hippias has a new and most perplexing symptom; a determination of bride-cake to the nose. Ever since your generous present to him, though he declares he never consumed a morsel of it, he has been under the distressing illusion that his nose is enormous, and I assure you he exhibits quite a maidenly timidity in following it—through a doorway, for instance. He complains of its terrible weight. I have conceived that Benson invisible might be sitting on it. His hand, and the doctor's, are in hourly consultation with it, but I fear it will not grow smaller. The Pilgrim has begotten upon it a new Aphorism: that Size is a matter of opinion."

"Poor uncle Hippy!" said Richard, "I wonder he doesn't believe in magic. There's nothing supernatural to rival the wonderful sensations he does believe in. Good God! fancy coming to that!"

"I'm sure I'm very sorry," Lucy protested, "but I can't help laughing."

Charming to the wise youth her pretty laughter sounded.

"The Pilgrim has your notion, Richard. Whom does he not forestall? 'Confirmed dyspepsia is the apparatus of illusions,' and he accuses the Ages that put faith in sorcery, of universal indigestion, which may have been the case, owing to their infamous cookery. He says again, if you remember, that our own Age is travelling back to darkness and ignorance through dyspepsia. He lays the seat of wisdom in the centre of our system, Mrs. Richard: for which reason you will understand how sensible I am of the vast obligation I am under to you at the present moment, for your especial care of mine."

Richard looked on at Lucy's little triumph, attributing Adrian's subjugation to her beauty and sweetness. She had latterly received a great many compliments on that score, which she did not care to hear, and Adrian's homage to a practical quality was far pleasanter to the young wife, who shrewdly guessed that her beauty would not help her much in the struggle she had now to maintain. Adrian continuing to lecture on the excelling virtues of wise cookery, a thought struck her: Where, where had she tossed Mrs. Berry's book?

"So that's all about the home-people?" said Richard.

"All!" replied Adrian. "Or stay: you know Clare's going to be married?"

Not? Your Aunt Helen"—

"Oh, bother my Aunt Helen! What do you think she had the impertinence to write—but never mind! Is it to Ralph?"

"Your Aunt Helen, I was going to say, my dear boy, is an extraordinary woman. It was from her originally that the Pilgrim first learnt to call the female the practical animal. He studies us all, you know. The Pilgrim's Scrip is the abstract portraiture of his surrounding relatives. Well, your Aunt Helen"—

"Mrs. Doria Battledoria!" laughed Richard.

"—being foiled in a little pet scheme of her own—call it a System if you like—of some ten or fifteen years' standing, with regard to Miss Clare!"—

The fair Shuttlecockiana!"

"—instead of fretting like a man, and questioning Providence, and turning herself and everybody else inside out, and seeing the world upside down, what does the practical animal do? She wanted to marry her to somebody she couldn't marry her to, so she resolved instantly to marry her to somebody she could marry her to: and as old gentlemen enter into these transactions with the practical animal the most readily, she fixed upon an old gentleman; an unmarried old gentleman, a rich old gentleman, and now a captive old gentleman. The ceremony takes place in about a week from the present time. No doubt you will receive your invitation in a day or two."

"And that cold, icy, wretched Clare has consented to marry an old man!" groaned Richard. "I'll put a stop to that when I go to town."

Richard got up and strode about the room. Then he bethought him it was time to go on board and make preparations.

"I'm off," he said. "Adrian, you'll take her. She goes in the Empress, Mountfalcon's vessel. He starts us. A little schooner-yacht—such a beauty! I'll have one like her some day. Good-bye, darling!" he whispered to Lucy, and his hand and eyes lingered on her, and hers on him, seeking to make up for the priceless kiss they were debarred from. But she quickly looked away from him as he held her:—Adrian stood silent: his brows were up, and his mouth dubiously contracted. He spoke at last.

"Go on the water?"

"Yes. It's only to St. Helen's. Short and sharp."

"Do you grudge me the nourishment my poor system has just received, my son?"

"Oh, bother your system! Put on your hat, and come along. I'll put you on board in my boat."

"Richard! I have already paid the penalty of them who are condemned to come to an island. I will go with you to the edge of the sea, and I will meet you there when you return, and take up the Tale of the Tritons: but, though I forfeit the pleasure of Mrs. Richard's company, I refuse to quit the land."

"Yes, oh, Mr. Harley!" Lucy broke from her husband, "and I will stay with you, if you please. I don't want to go among those people, and we can see it all from the shore."

"Dearest! I don't want to go. You don't mind? Of course, I will go if you wish, but I would so much rather stay;" and she lengthened her plea in her attitude and look to melt the discontent she saw gathering.

Adrian protested that she had much better go; that he could amuse himself very well till their return, and so forth; but she had schemes in her pretty head, and held to it to be allowed to stay in spite of Lord Mountfalcon's disappointment, cited by Richard, and at the great risk of vexing her darling, as she saw. Richard pushed, and glanced contemptuously at Adrian. He gave way ungraciously.

"There, do as you like. Get your things ready to leave this evening. No, I'm not angry."—Who could be? he seemed as he looked up from her modest fondling to ask Adrian, and seized the indemnity of a kiss on her forehead, which, however, did not immediately disperse the shade of annoyance he felt.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "Such a day as this, and a fellow refuses to come on the water! Well, come along to the edge of the sea." Adrian's angelic quality had quite worn off to him. He never thought of devoting himself to make the most of the material there was: but somebody else did, and that fair somebody succeeded wonderfully in a few short hours. She induced Adrian to reflect that the baronet had only to see her, and the family muddle would be smoothed at once. He came to it by degrees; still the gradations were rapid. Her manner he liked; she was certainly a nice picture: best of all, she was sensible. He forgot the farmer's niece in her, she was so very sensible. She appeared really to understand that it was a woman's duty to know how to cook.

But the difficulty was, by what means the baronet could be brought to consent to see her. He had not yet consented to see his son, and Adrian, spurred by Lady Blandish, had ventured something in coming down. He was not inclined to venture more. The small debate in his mind ended by his throwing the burden on time. Time would bring the matter about. Christians as well as Pagans are in the habit of phrasing this excuse for folding their arms; "forgetful," says The Pilgrim's Scrip, "that the devil's imps enter into no such armistice."

As she loitered along the shore with her amusing companion, Lucy had many things to think of. There was her darling's match. The yachts were started by pistol-shot by Lord Mountfalcon on board the Empress, and her little heart beat after Richard's straining sails. Then there was the strangeness of walking with a relative of Richard's, one who had lived by his side so long. And the thought that perhaps this night she would have to appear before the dreaded father of her husband.

"O Mr. Harley!" she said, "is it true—are we to go tonight? And me," she faltered, "will he see me?"

"Ah! that is what I wanted to talk to you about," said Adrian. "I made some reply to our dear boy which he has slightly misinterpreted. Our second person plural is liable to misconstruction by an ardent mind. I said 'see you,' and he supposed—now, Mrs. Richard, I am sure you will understand me. Just at present perhaps it would be advisable—when the father and son have settled their accounts, the daughter-in-law can't be a debtor."...

Lucy threw up her blue eyes. A half-cowardly delight at the chance of a respite from the awful interview made her quickly apprehensive.

"O Mr. Harley! you think he should go alone first?"

"Well, that is my notion. But the fact is, he is such an excellent husband that I fancy it will require more than a man's power of persuasion to get him to go."

"But I will persuade him, Mr. Harley."

"Perhaps, if you would..."

"There is nothing I would not do for his happiness," murmured Lucy.

The wise youth pressed her hand with lymphatic approbation. They walked on till the yachts had rounded the point.

"Is it to-night, Mr. Harley?" she asked with some trouble in her voice now that her darling was out of sight.

"I don't imagine your eloquence even will get him to leave you to-night," Adrian replied gallantly. "Besides, I must speak for myself. To achieve the passage to an island is enough for one day. No necessity exists for any hurry, except in the brain of that impetuous boy. You must correct it, Mrs. Richard. Men are made to be managed, and women are born managers. Now, if you were to let him know that you don't want to go to-night, and let him guess, after a day or two, that you would very much rather... you might affect a peculiar repugnance. By taking it on yourself, you see, this wild young man will not require such frightful efforts of persuasion. Both his father and he are exceedingly delicate subjects, and his father unfortunately is not in a position to be managed directly. It's a strange office to propose to you, but it appears to devolve upon you to manage the father through the son. Prodigal having made his peace, you, who have done all the work from a distance, naturally come into the circle of the paternal smile, knowing it due to you. I see no other way. If Richard suspects that his father objects for the present to welcome his daughter-in-law, hostilities will be continued, the breach will be widened, bad will grow to worse, and I see no end to it."

Adrian looked in her face, as much as to say: Now are you capable of this piece of heroism? And it did seem hard to her that she should have to tell Richard she shrank from any trial. But the proposition chimed in with her fears and her wishes: she thought the wise youth very wise: the poor child was not insensible to his flattery, and the subtler flattery of making herself in some measure a sacrifice to the home she had disturbed. She agreed to simulate as Adrian had suggested.

Victory is the commonest heritage of the hero, and when Richard came on shore proclaiming that the Blandish had beaten the Begum by seven minutes and three-quarters, he was hastily kissed and congratulated by his bride with her fingers among the leaves of Dr. Kitchener, and anxiously questioned about wine.

"Dearest! Mr. Harley wants to stay with us a little, and he thinks we ought not to go immediately—that is, before he has had some letters, and I feel... I would so much rather..."

"Ah! that's it, you coward!" said Richard. "Well, then, to-morrow. We had a splendid race. Did you see us?"

"Oh, yes! I saw you and was sure my darling would win." And again she threw on him the cold water of that solicitude about wine. "Mr. Harley must have the best, you know, and we never drink it, and I'm so silly, I don't know good wine, and if you would send Tom where he can get good wine. I have seen to the dinner."

"So that's why you didn't come to meet me?"

"Pardon me, darling."

Well, I do, but Mountfalcon doesn't, and Lady Judith thinks you ought to have been there."

"Ah, but my heart was with you!"

Richard put his hand to feel for the little heart: her eyelids softened, and she ran away.

It is to say much of the dinner that Adrian found no fault with it, and was in perfect good-humour at the conclusion of the service. He did not abuse the wine they were able to procure for him, which was also much. The coffee, too, had the honour of passing without comment. These were sound first steps toward the conquest of an epicure, and as yet Cupid did not grumble.

After coffee they strolled out to see the sun set from Lady Judith's grounds. The wind had dropped. The clouds had rolled from the zenith, and ranged in amphitheatre with distant flushed bodies over sea and land: Titanic crimson head and chest rising from the wave faced Hyperion falling. There hung Briareus with deep-indented trunk and ravined brows, stretching all his hands up to unattainable blue summits. North-west the range had a rich white glow, as if shining to the moon, and westward, streams of amber, melting into upper rose, shot out from the dipping disk.

"What Sandoe calls the passion-flower of heaven," said Richard under his breath to Adrian, who was serenely chanting Greek hexameters, and answered, in the swing of the caesura, "He might as well have said cauliflower."

Lady Judith, with a black lace veil tied over her head, met them in the walk. She was tall and dark; dark-haired, dark-eyed, sweet and persuasive in her accent and manner. "A second edition of the Blandish," thinks Adrian. She welcomed him as one who had claims on her affability. She kissed Lucy protectingly, and remarking on the wonders of the evening, appropriated her husband. Adrian and Lucy found themselves walking behind them.

The sun was under. All the spaces of the sky were alight, and Richard's fancy flamed.

"So you're not intoxicated with your immense triumph this morning?" said

Lady Judith

"Don't laugh at me. When it's over I feel ashamed of the trouble I've taken. Look at that glory! —I'm sure you despise me for it."

"Was I not there to applaud you? I only think such energies should be turned into some definitely useful channel. But you must not go into the Army."

"What else can I do?"

"You are fit for so much that is better."

"I never can be anything like Austin."

"But I think you can do more."

"Well, I thank you for thinking it, Lady Judith. Something I will do.

A man must deserve to live, as you say.

"Sauces," Adrian was heard to articulate distinctly in the rear, "Sauces are the top tree of this science. A woman who has mastered sauces sits on the apex of civilization."

Briareus reddened duskily seaward. The West was all a burning rose.

"How can men see such sights as those, and live idle?" Richard resumed.

"I feel ashamed of asking my men to work for me.—Or I feel so now."

"Not when you're racing the Begum, I think. There's no necessity for you to turn democrat like Austin. Do you write now?"

"No. What is writing like mine? It doesn't deceive me. I know it's only the excuse I'm making to myself for remaining idle. I haven't written a line since—lately."

"Because you are so happy."

"No, not because of that. Of course I'm very happy..." He did not finish.

Vague, shapeless ambition had replaced love in yonder skies. No Scientific Humanist was by to study the natural development, and guide him. This lady would hardly be deemed a very proper

guide to the undirected energies of the youth, yet they had established relations of that nature. She was five years older than he, and a woman, which may explain her serene presumption.

The cloud-giants had broken up: a brawny shoulder smouldered over the sea.

"We'll work together in town, at all events," said Richard,

"Why can't we go about together at night and find out people who want help?"

Lady Judith smiled, and only corrected his nonsense by saying, "I think we mustn't be too romantic. You will become a knight-errant, I suppose. You have the characteristics of one."

"Especially at breakfast," Adrian's unnecessarily emphatic gastronomical lessons to the young wife here came in.

"You must be our champion," continued Lady Judith: "the rescuer and succourer of distressed dames and damsels. We want one badly."

"You do," said Richard, earnestly: "from what I hear: from what I know!" His thoughts flew off with him as knight-errant hailed shrilly at exceeding critical moment by distressed dames and damsels. Images of airy towers hung around. His fancy performed miraculous feats. The towers crumbled. The stars grew larger, seemed to throb with lustre. His fancy crumbled with the towers of the air, his heart gave a leap, he turned to Lucy.

"My darling! what have you been doing?" And as if to compensate her for his little knight-errant infidelity, he pressed very tenderly to her.

"We have been engaged in a charming conversation on domestic cookery," interposed Adrian.

"Cookery! such an evening as this?" His face was a handsome likeness of Hippias at the presentation of bridecake.

"Dearest! you know it's very useful," Lucy mirthfully pleaded.

"Indeed I quite agree with you, child," said Lady Judith, and I think you have the laugh of us. I certainly will learn to cook some day."

"Woman's mission, in so many words," ejaculated Adrian.

"And pray, what is man's?"

"To taste thereof, and pronounce thereupon."

"Let us give it up to them," said Lady Judith to Richard. "You and I never will make so delightful and beautifully balanced a world of it."

Richard appeared to have grown perfectly willing to give everything up to the fair face, his bridal Hesper.

Neat day Lucy had to act the coward anew, and, as she did so, her heart sank to see how painfully it affected him that she should hesitate to go with him to his father. He was patient, gentle; he sat down by her side to appeal to her reason, and used all the arguments he could think of to persuade her.

"If we go together and make him see us both: if he sees he has nothing to be ashamed of in you—rather everything to be proud of; if you are only near him, you will not have to speak a word, and I'm certain—as certain as that I live—that in a week we shall be settled happily at Raynham. I know my father so well, Lucy. Nobody knows him but I."

Lucy asked whether Mr. Harley did not.

"Adrian? Not a bit. Adrian only knows a part of people, Lucy; and not the best part."

Lucy was disposed to think more highly of the object of her conquest.

"Is it he that has been frightening you, Lucy?"

"No, no, Richard; oh, dear no!" she cried, and looked at him more tenderly because she was not quite truthful.

"He doesn't know my father at all," said Richard. But Lucy had another opinion of the wise youth, and secretly maintained it. She could not be won to imagine the baronet a man of human mould, generous, forgiving, full of passionate love at heart, as Richard tried to picture him, and thought him, now that he beheld him again through Adrian's embassy. To her he was that awful figure, shrouded

by the midnight. "Why are you so harsh?" she had heard Richard cry more than once. She was sure that Adrian must be right.

"Well, I tell you I won't go without you," said Richard, and Lucy begged for a little more time.

Cupid now began to grumble, and with cause. Adrian positively refused to go on the water unless that element were smooth as a plate. The South-west still joked boisterously at any comparison of the sort; the days were magnificent; Richard had yachting engagements; and Lucy always petitioned to stay to keep Adrian company, concerning it her duty as hostess. Arguing with Adrian was an absurd idea. If Richard hinted at his retaining Lucy, the wise youth would remark: "It's a wholesome interlude to your extremely Cupidinous behaviour, my dear boy."

Richard asked his wife what they could possibly find to talk about.

"All manner of things," said Lucy; "not only cookery. He is so amusing, though he does make fun of The Pilgrim's Scrip, and I think he ought not. And then, do you know, darling—you won't think me vain?—I think he is beginning to like me a little."

Richard laughed at the humble mind of his Beauty.

"Doesn't everybody like you, admire you? Doesn't Lord Mountfalcon, and Mr. Morton, and Lady Judith?"

"But he is one of your family, Richard."

"And they all will, if she isn't a coward."

"Ah, no!" she sighs, and is chidden.

The conquest of an epicure, or any young wife's conquest beyond her husband, however loyally devised for their mutual happiness, may be costly to her. Richard in his hours of excitement was thrown very much with Lady Judith. He consulted her regarding what he termed Lucy's cowardice. Lady Judith said: "I think she's wrong, but you must learn to humour little women."

"Then would you advise me to go up alone?" he asked, with a cloudy forehead.

"What else can you do? Be reconciled yourself as quickly as you can."

You can't drag her like a captive, you know?"

It is not pleasant for a young husband, fancying his bride the peerless flower of Creation, to learn that he must humour a little woman in her. It was revolting to Richard.

"What I fear," he said, "is, that my father will make it smooth with me, and not acknowledge her: so that whenever I go to him, I shall have to leave her, and tit for tat—an abominable existence, like a ball on a billiard-table. I won't bear that ignominy. And this I know, I know! she might prevent it at once, if she would only be brave, and face it. You, you, Lady Judith, you wouldn't be a coward?"

"Where my old lord tells me to go, I go," the lady coldly replied. "There's not much merit in that. Pray, don't cite me. Women are born cowards, you know."

"But I love the women who are not cowards."

"The little thing—your wife has not refused to go?"

"No—but tears! Who can stand tears?"

Lucy had come to drop them. Unaccustomed to have his will thwarted, and urgent where he saw the thing to do so clearly, the young husband had spoken strong words: and she, who knew that she would have given her life by inches for him; who knew that she was playing a part for his happiness, and hiding for his sake the nature that was worthy his esteem; the poor little martyr had been weak a moment.

She had Adrian's support. The wise youth was very comfortable. He liked the air of the Island, and he liked being petted. "A nice little woman! a very nice little woman!" Tom Bakewell heard him murmur to himself according to a habit he had; and his air of rather succulent patronage as he walked or sat beside the innocent Beauty, with his head thrown back and a smile that seemed always to be in secret communion with his marked abdominal prominence, showed that she was gaining part of what she played for. Wise youths who buy their loves, are not unwilling, when opportunity offers, to try and obtain the commodity for nothing. Examinations of her hand, as for some occult purpose,

and unctuous pappings of the same, were not infrequent. Adrian waxed now and then Anacreontic in his compliments. Lucy would say: "That's worse than Lord Mountfalcon."

"Better English than the noble lord deigns to employ—allow that?" quoth Adrian.

"He is very kind," said Lucy.

"To all, save to our noble vernacular," added Adrian. "He seems to scent a rival to his dignity there."

It may be that Adrian scented a rival to his lymphatic emotions.

"We are at our ease here in excellent society," he wrote to Lady Blandish. "I am bound to confess that the Huron has a happy fortune, or a superlative instinct. Blindfold he has seized upon a suitable mate. She can look at a lord, and cook for an epicure. Besides Dr. Kitchener, she reads and comments on *The Pilgrim's Scrip*. The 'Love' chapter, of course, takes her fancy. That picture of Woman, 'Drawn by Reverence and coloured by Love,' she thinks beautiful, and repeats it, tossing up pretty eyes. Also the lover's petition: 'Give me purity to be worthy the good in her, and grant her patience to reach the good in me.' 'Tis quite taking to hear her lisp it. Be sure that I am repeating the petition! I make her read me her choice passages. She has not a bad voice.

"The Lady Judith I spoke of is Austin's Miss Menteith, married to the incapable old Lord Felle, or Fellow, as the wits here call him. Lord Mountfalcon is his cousin, and her—what? She has been trying to find out, but they have both got over their perplexity, and act respectively the bad man reproved and the chaste counsellor; a position in which our young couple found them, and haply diverted its perils. They had quite taken them in hand. Lady Judith undertakes to cure the fair Papist of a pretty, modest trick of frowning and blushing when addressed, and his lordship directs the exuberant energies of the original man. 'Tis thus we fulfil our destinies, and are content. Sometimes they change pupils; my lord educates the little dame, and my lady the hope of Raynham. Joy and blessings unto all! as the German poet sings. Lady Judith accepted the hand of her decrepit lord that she might be of potent service to her fellow-creatures. Austin, you know, had great hopes of her.

"I have for the first time in my career a field of lords to study. I think it is not without meaning that I am introduced to it by a yeoman's niece. The language of the two social extremes is similar. I find it to consist in an instinctively lavish use of vowels and adjectives. My lord and Farmer Blaize speak the same tongue, only my lord's has lost its backbone, and is limp, though fluent. Their pursuits are identical; but that one has money, or, as the Pilgrim terms it, vantage, and the other has not. Their ideas seem to have a special relationship in the peculiarity of stopping where they have begun. Young Tom Blaize with vantage would be Lord Mountfalcon. Even in the character of their parasites I see a resemblance, though I am bound to confess that the Hon. Peter Brayder, who is my lord's parasite, is by no means noxious.

"This sounds dreadfully democrat. Pray, don't be alarmed. The discovery of the affinity between the two extremes of the Royal British Oak has made me thrice conservative. I see now that the national love of a lord is less subservience than a form of self-love; putting a gold-lace hat on one's image, as it were, to bow to it. I see, too, the admirable wisdom of our system:—could there be a finer balance of power than in a community where men intellectually nil, have lawful vantage and a gold-lace hat on? How soothing it is to intellect—that noble rebel, as the Pilgrim has it—to stand, and bow, and know itself superior! This exquisite compensation maintains the balance: whereas that period anticipated by the Pilgrim, when science shall have produced an intellectual aristocracy, is indeed horrible to contemplate. For what despotism is so black as one the mind cannot challenge? 'Twill be an iron Age. Wherefore, madam, I cry, and shall continue to cry, 'Vive Lord Mountfalcon! long may he sip his Burgundy! long may the bacon-fed carry him on their shoulders!'

"Mr. Morton (who does me the honour to call me Young Mephisto, and Socrates missed) leaves to-morrow to get Master Ralph out of a scrape. Our Richard has just been elected member of a Club for the promotion of nausea. Is he happy? you ask. As much so as one who has had the misfortune

to obtain what he wanted can be. Speed is his passion. He races from point to point. In emulation of Leander and Don Juan, he swam, I hear, to the opposite shores the other day, or some world-shaking feat of the sort: himself the Hero whom he went to meet: or, as they who pun say, his Hero was a Bet. A pretty little domestic episode occurred this morning. He finds her abstracted in the fire of his caresses: she turns shy and seeks solitude: green jealousy takes hold of him: he lies in wait, and discovers her with his new rival—a veteran edition of the culinary Doctor! Blind to the Doctor's great national services, deaf to her wild music, he grasps the intruder, dismembers him, and performs upon him the treatment he has recommended for dressed cucumber. Tears and shrieks accompany the descent of the gastronome. Down she rushes to secure the cherished fragments: he follows: they find him, true to his character, alighted and straggling over a bed of blooming flowers. Yet ere a fairer flower can gather him, a heel black as Pluto stamps him into earth, flowers and all:—happy burial! Pathetic tribute to his merit is watering his grave, when by saunters my Lord Mountfalcon. 'What's the mattah?' says his lordship, soothing his moustache. They break apart, and 'tis left to me to explain from the window. My lord looks shocked, Richard is angry with her for having to be ashamed of himself, Beauty dries her eyes, and after a pause of general foolishness, the business of life is resumed. I may add that the Doctor has just been dug up, and we are busy, in the enemy's absence, renewing old Aeson with enchanted threads. By the way, a Papist priest has blest them."

A month had passed when Adrian wrote this letter. He was very comfortable; so of course he thought Time was doing his duty. Not a word did he say of Richard's return, and for some reason or other neither Richard nor Lucy spoke of it now.

Lady Blandish wrote back: "His father thinks he has refused to come to him. By your utter silence on the subject, I fear that it must be so. Make him come. Bring him by force. Insist on his coming. Is he mad?"

He must come at once."

To this Adrian replied, after a contemplative comfortable lapse of a day or two, which might be laid to his efforts to adopt the lady's advice, "The point is that the half man declines to come without the whole man.

The terrible question of sex is our obstruction."

Lady Blandish was in despair. She had no positive assurance that the baronet would see his son; the mask put them all in the dark; but she thought she saw in Sir Austin irritation that the offender, at least when the opening to come and make his peace seemed to be before him, should let days and weeks go by. She saw through the mask sufficiently not to have any hope of his consenting to receive the couple at present; she was sure that his equanimity was fictitious; but she pierced no farther, or she might have started and asked herself, Is this the heart of a woman?

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