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Title: "Farewell"

Author: William Henry Stacpoole

Release date: March 10, 2014 [EBook #45104]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Demian Katz and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net> (Images courtesy of the Digital Library@Villanova University (<http://digital.library.villanova.edu/>))

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# "FAREWELL."

BY W. H. STACPOOLE.

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## CONTENTS

[PART I. LONDON.](#)  
[PART II. NICE.](#)

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## PART I.

LONDON.

I am an orphan. My father, who was a curate in the Church of England, died when I was sixteen years of age, leaving me totally unprovided for. I need not trouble the reader with the vicissitudes of fortune which left me, when I was entering my twenty-second year, a shopman in the establishment of Mr. John Conder, hosier and outfitter, of Holborn. I had been a clerk in a city firm; but the firm failed. For some months after that I was out of employment. At last I was compelled to enter Mr. Conder's service. I had been with him for two years, acting as salesman, errand-boy—anything, when one day an accident changed the whole course of my life.

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It was about three o'clock on a broiling July afternoon, 187-. I had to leave a parcel at the Langham Hotel, and another at a house in Wimpole Street. Having discharged my mission at the Langham Hotel, I crossed Portland Place and turned down Chandos Street to get into Cavendish Square. Chandos Street is a very quiet street; and as I turned the corner of the Langham Hotel the only person I could see before me was a tall young lady with a very graceful and aristocratic carriage, who was walking in the direction that I was going. She was just under the tree that grows by the Langham Hotel opposite to the Medical Society of England, when she put her hand in one of those large pockets that ladies wear at the back of their dresses to take out her handkerchief. In taking out the handkerchief, she unconsciously dropped a blue velvet purse on the pavement, and walked on without noticing it. I immediately ran forward and picked it up, and came up to her, with the parcel under my left arm and the purse in my right hand, saying:

"I beg your pardon, madam; you have dropped your purse."

"Miss" would have been the expression that most men in my position would have used; but I had a habit of saying ma'am, or madam, to ladies. [Pg 180]

She started at being spoken to, but recovering herself at once said, in a very clear but soft and musical voice:

"Oh, thank you so very much. There are papers in it of great importance."

I put the purse in her hands, which I could not help noticing were very long and slender. She put down her parasol, and opened it, and having given in an instant a glance at a compartment in the purse in which there were some papers, and a glance at me, she took out what I could see must be several sovereigns, and said:

"The purse was of great importance to me on account of some papers that it contains. I would willingly have given a large reward for it. Will you allow me to offer you this for your kindness in restoring it to me? You cannot think how much obliged I am to you."

All this was said in the same clear and silvery tone, but with a diffident and apologetic manner, as if she were conscious that she was running the risk of giving offense. Perhaps it was this that affected me. Had she spoken in the way in which people usually do when they give such rewards, I should possibly have taken the shining sovereigns that she held in her slender hand, and there the matter would have ended. But there was something in the way in which she addressed me that touched me to the quick. She seemed, so at least I imagined, to feel that she was speaking to one that had belonged to her own class, to one at least to whom some apology was due for making him such an offer. Besides this, it was, perhaps, the first time in my life since I had grown up that I had ever spoken to a lady except on a mere matter of business. But here was a beautiful, refined, high-bred girl, speaking to me not merely as an equal, but actually in a tone of almost supplication. Beautiful? I took that on trust. Her slender, graceful figure was clad in a rich but simple polonaise that showed its lovely contour to perfection. The upper part of her face was hidden, at least from my diffident gaze, by a rather heavy veil; but the piquant chin, the shining teeth, and mobile lips, with the transparency of her complexion, were enough. There are times when we experience the thoughts and emotions of a lifetime in a moment. That I was a gentleman by birth I had never forgotten—I was prevented from doing so by the contrast between my present and my past surroundings. That I was talking to a lady whose equal I was in rank, I now for the first time felt. It was then with an angry flush, and, I am afraid, a not very gracious manner, that I replied:

"No, thank you, madam. I don't require to be paid for such a small service."

"I beg your pardon," she said, while the blush on her face seemed to grow deeper. "I am very sorry if I have offended you; but you have done me a very great service, and I would like to have shown my gratitude if it were possible. You will forgive me, I hope, for my rudeness?"

"I have nothing to forgive, madam," I replied in a more courteous tone. "I am very happy to be of service to you, and I am only surprised that you should think so small a matter——" [Pg 181]

I was trying to find words to finish the sentence, when she said:

"Excuse me for asking you a question, but are you in business?"

"Yes, madam," I said; "I am with Mr. Conder, of Holborn."

She paused for a minute, and then continued in a firmer and more collected manner:

"Do not think me rude if I ask whether you have been in business long?"

Something told me that she wanted to know my history. So, in a very few words, I told her who I was, and how I came to be in my present position.

When I had finished, she said in a manner that gave me more pleasure than I can describe:

"Then your father was a clergyman."

It was not the tribute that was paid to my parentage by the respectful manner in which the words were uttered that pleased me so much as the equality that both the words and the way in which they were spoken seemed in some indefinable manner to establish between us. It seemed to me to be the most deliciously delicate and pointed way of saying, "Then you are a gentleman, and my equal."

I could have thanked her more for the few words that had escaped her than if she had given me ten times the money that was in her purse. However, I merely acknowledged her last remark, which was spoken rather to herself than to me, by saying—

"Yes, madam."

We had nearly got to the corner of Cavendish Square by this time. There was another momentary pause, and then she startled me by saying in a perfectly easy and unconstrained manner:

"Pardon me for asking you another question. You must for the present give me credit for not being actuated by any idle or impertinent motive. Are you married, or, if not, is there any one that you at present think of marrying?"

"No, madam," I answered, "I am not, and I have not any thought of being married."

She paused for a moment, and I was beginning to wonder what would come next, when she asked abruptly:

"At what time will you be disengaged this evening?"

I use the word "abruptly" to denote the suddenness and precision with which the question was put, for her manner was too refined and self-possessed to be characterized as abrupt in the usual

sense of that word.

"We leave business at a little after eight," I replied.

"Then you could be at York Place, Baker Street, at nine—or say half-past nine?" she said.

"Yes, madam," I answered, "I could easily be there by half-past nine."

[Pg 182]

"Then would you call at No. 41 York Place at half-past nine to-night?"

"Certainly, madam."

"Now one word," she said. "Ask for Miss Grey when the door is opened. But do not tell any one about this interview. You will see to-night why you ought not to do so in your own interest. In the meantime keep your own counsel. You will promise me that?"

"Certainly, madam."

"You remember the address—or had you not better take it down?"

"Not at all, madam; the address is No. 41 York Place; Baker Street."

"Then I shall expect you at half-past nine o'clock. Good-bye."

She bowed, and, turning round the corner of Cavendish Place, walked quickly toward Regent Street.

Was I married, or was there any one that I thought of marrying? What could she mean, I wondered, as I looked for a moment after the slight and graceful figure? My coming to see her that evening must have something to do with my marrying somebody? Was it herself? If so, would I marry her? I never thought for a moment about money in connection with the matter. Partly on account of the veil she wore, partly from the strangeness and hurry of our interview, and my own bashfulness, I had not seen her face, at least not so as to be able to form any picture of it. And yet, there was no doubt in my mind as to the answer. Marry her? Why, already I was madly in love with her. In love with a woman whose face you have never clearly seen? It may seem absurd, but so it was. I could not recognize her face since I had never really seen it. But the erect and graceful form, and the dignified carriage of the head, I could have recognized amongst ten thousand figures, and with the mind that gave the grace and loveliness to her presence and words, I felt that I was in love forever. How far all this was due to the effect of the peculiar circumstances of our interview on my imagination, at that time of life when the imagination is most powerful, and how long my passion would have lasted if things had taken any ordinary course, I cannot say; but for the present I was, in downright earnest, madly in love with a form, a voice, and a presence, to which my fancy, taking the key from the little of the face that I had seen, added a countenance whose loveliness and wisdom and purity the mere imagination could not bring into being.

So I went on to Wimpole Street, where I delivered the parcel, and then returned to Holborn, speculating all the way on the one momentous question, Whom did she want me to marry? Was it herself? Now I had learned in what somebody has termed the University of Adversity an art which appears to me to be of even greater practical importance than the arts that are taught at the better-endowed universities. It was the art of taking a candid and unprejudiced view of my own affairs. And, before I got back to Mr. Conder's, my facility in this art had assured me that, whatever might be the ultimate solution of the mystery, there was not, as far as she was concerned, a scintilla of love in the matter. For a few minutes I had some idea of its being a case of love at first sight on her part. But on a little reflection I saw that the quiet business-like manner in which she had asked her questions, and made the appointment, were quite inconsistent with the enthusiasm and self-forgetfulness which accompany the sentiments that arise from love.

[Pg 183]

After what seemed to me to be the longest evening I had ever known, I found myself at the door of 41 York Place.

Then a question arose that gave me keen anxiety for a minute or two. Ought I to ring or knock? To ring seemed timid—almost cowardly. Yet what sort of knock could I give? As a messenger from a shop I had no right to give other than that single knock which had often given me so much anguish. Coming on such an invitation such a knock was clearly out of place. And yet a double knock—at least a loud one—might seem presumptuous—seem imperative. So at last I gave a knock which I intended to be a very quiet double knock, but which, I am afraid, was a very queer and tremulous one, and in a minute or so the door was opened by a maid-servant.

"Is Miss Grey—" I was going, in my nervousness, to say "at home," but I checked myself and substituted the more general particle "in?"

"She will be here in a few minutes, sir. Will you walk into the parlor?"

"Sir!" I had not been addressed as such before since a time that seemed like a phase of my being in another world. She showed me across the hall into a large room that was only partly lighted by an oil-lamp on a round table, and said:

"Will you be seated, sir? Miss Grey will be here in a minute or two." Saying this, she closed the door.

It was a large room, papered with a rich but gloomy-looking red paper. Several bookcases stood against the walls, stored as far as I could see with well-bound volumes. The furniture was simple but massive. Two or three substantial-looking arm-chairs, several equally substantial-looking ordinary chairs, a mantel-piece of solid-looking marble on which were a few somber-looking

ornaments, and a marble clock, and in the center of the room, a heavy round mahogany table on which were a few books, and the lamp, which seemed only to show the darkness of the room. I sat down with a palpitating heart, for there was something weird about the whole scene. It was twenty-seven minutes past nine by the clock when the servant shut the door, so that I was three minutes before my time. The minute hand of the clock was just pointing to the half-hour when a carriage drove up to the house, and a minute afterward the hall-door opened, and then a tall female figure glided noiselessly into the room, and, having shut the parlor door, said, as I rose:

"Please be seated; you must excuse me for wearing this veil until we have finished a conversation which I shall make as brief as possible." [Pg 184]

I recognized the voice of Miss Grey, but it was if anything more calm than when we parted. I sat down again on a chair at some distance from the table, whilst the lady drew her chair near to the table and took out of her pocket a notebook and pencil. She had on a cloak that hid her form, but I thought I could detect the same grace and dignity of carriage.

"As we are strangers," she continued, "you will, I hope, pardon me for making a remark that would otherwise be highly impertinent. But your conduct to-day has satisfied me that in speaking to you I am speaking to a high-minded gentleman, who, if he should decline the proposition which I am going to make, will at least feel in honor bound to observe silence both about this interview and the names I shall have to mention."

I bowed. This speech, with what had preceded it, taught me more of the art of love—an art that the reader will find, if he cares to follow my fortunes, was to become useless to me—than Ovid and all the other poets and philosophers could have done. It is not beauty, any more than dress or wealth, that creates affection, it is manner; and the essence of that manner which produces the mystic complex emotion which we denote by the term "love" is that it is an exposition of genuine deference for the individual—for himself or herself alone—and apart from all such accidents as rank, or wealth, or position. I therefore bowed, and she proceeded.

"My solicitor is Mr. Chambers, of 52 Bedford Row. You will find that he is a gentleman who holds the highest position in his profession. Another friend of mine who would act in this matter is Mr. Charles Duke, of Duke, Furnival & Company, the well-known bankers of Lombard Street. Now I have asked you to come here to-night to put this question to you. Would you marry me within the next week or fortnight, and promise on your word of honor never to attempt to know who I am, or to live with me, or to exercise any marital rights, if you had the guaranty of these two gentlemen that you would be paid five hundred pounds every quarter for the rest of your life? That would be two thousand pounds a year. But the condition is that we are married in this house; that you leave the house immediately after the ceremony, and that you never afterward try to know anything about me."

She had finished speaking, speaking throughout in the same calm, measured, and yet easy intonation. If she had carved the words out on marble they could not have stood more clearly before me. I was silent. "Two thousand pounds a year." All, more than all, the wealth I had ever hoped to acquire suddenly realized. And yet, what was the condition on which I was to possess it? The words of the condition seemed to stand before me, but their meaning was not very clear except in its effects. As well ask a man who has just received a stunning blow to diagnose the reasons why the blow has stunned him, as have asked me to explain why the condition on which I was to receive this wealth seemed to turn the wealth itself into ashes. The tears came into my eyes, and I remained silent. [Pg 185]

"You love some woman, and I should be taking you from her? If so, tell me. God forbid I should do so."

This time she spoke in a tone of sadness and feeling. Why did I not tell her that I did love a woman; that I loved her with my whole soul, and that that woman was herself? That is what a great many people will think a man of spirit would have done. As far as spirit means pride, it was pride that prevented me from even thinking of doing such a thing. Here was a lady, wealthy, refined, highly educated, and highly bred. She had made a plain, business-like proposition to me in a plain, business-like manner. What right had I to introduce into the discussion an element of the possibility of which she had clearly never even dreamt? True, I was a gentleman by birth, but I was a shopman by position. To have avowed my love for her would have been as grotesque as if I were to declare my passion for the next lady who came into Mr. Conder's shop. Of all this I was keenly sensible, for there could be no greater gall to my pride than the tone in which she spoke, which seemed as if she were unconscious that she could be loved by such as I. Instinctively I knew that if I deviated in the least from the purely commercial programme she was dictating, the whole matter would come to an abrupt and final conclusion. I would have liked, goodness knows, to have said that I would obey her behest without reward. But that, I saw, would alter the whole spirit of the contract in such a way as to destroy the contract itself, and thus place us everlastingly apart. If we once went through the form of marriage, there was just a possibility of her yet being my wife in a higher sense. If I returned to Mr. Conder's shop we were parted forever.

This being clearly before my mind, I braced myself up by a strong effort, and said:

"No, madam. I told you the truth to-day. You are not taking me from any woman. But I am surprised, it is a great change for me—I perfectly understand the proposition you have made. We are to go through a form of marriage, and I am never to seek to know anything about you afterward. Yes, madam, I pledge my word of honor to abide by the contract."

She then asked me some questions about myself, taking notes of my answers—who my parents

were, where I was born, and so forth. If she had been a barrister in full practice she could not have made the examination more searching and condensed. The examination over she took down my address both at Mr. Conder's and at 8 Charlton Crescent, High Street, Islington, and then said:

"To-day is Tuesday. You will hear from Mr. Chambers by Saturday morning at the latest—probably before that—in the meantime, will you promise me that you will not talk to anybody about what has occurred? You will see afterward that it will be for your own benefit not to let the world know how you have become possessed of the means that will be yours."

"You may be sure, madam," I answered, "that I shall keep my own counsel. I know nobody that I should be disposed to make a confidante of. And even if I did, I should respect your wishes."

[Pg 186]

"Now," she continued, "there is only one other matter that we need discuss at present. In your present circumstances it is unnecessary for you to return to Mr. Conder, and it is only right that you should at once have the means to live in a manner suitable to your future position. I shall, if you will allow me, instruct Mr. Chambers to see Mr. Conder in the morning and tell him that you have been left a legacy which makes you independent. This will probably be the best way to explain the matter so as to avoid exciting curiosity and gossip. When the necessary arrangements have been made you will be credited by Messrs. Duke, Furnival & Company with a thousand pounds to begin with. In the meantime, you must let me return you the purse you gave me to-day."

She rose and put the purse in my hands, and then said:

"You will very likely hear from Mr. Chambers in the course of Thursday, but by Saturday morning at the latest. I do not think we have anything more to say at present." She opened the door, I followed her into the hall. She opened the hall-door; I could not think of anything more to say than "Good-night, madam."

She bowed, and said very graciously:

"Good-night."

The door closed, and I found myself on the steps with my hat in one hand and the soft velvet purse in the other. It seemed all like a dream. However, I put my hat on my head and the purse in my pocket, and walked down Baker Street toward Oxford Street. When I got through Portman Square I turned up Lower Seymour Street, as I wanted to be quiet, and dreaded the uproar of Oxford Street. I walked on looking for some quiet place where I could sit down for a few minutes and collect myself; I looked into one or two public-houses, but turned away in disgust at the noisy crowds I saw inside them. At length I found a quiet-looking tavern, and entered at the private bar, which I was pleased to find I had to myself. Having called for a glass of ale I sat down. There was no one but myself in the house at the time, so after serving me the young lady went back to the bar-parlor. I took out the purse and, after looking to satisfy myself that no one could observe me, kissed it. It was made of soft blue velvet, with a gold clasp, and felt weighty and bulky. I knew, of course, that there was money in it, but so much was I thinking of the giver, and so little of the gift, that, if my curiosity had not been suddenly excited, I should probably have taken it home unopened.

I was seized, however, by a sudden curiosity, and opened it. In one compartment were a number of sovereigns. In the other two compartments there were rolls of paper. I took out one of these rolls, and, to my astonishment, found ten ten-pound Bank of England notes. Having replaced them, I took out the other roll and found that it was made up of five twenty-pound notes. More than two hundred pounds! With trembling hands I replaced the notes, and put the purse in my pocket again. Was it a mistake? So enormous did the amount seem to me that, for a moment, I thought she must have made some mistake. But a minute's reflection satisfied me on that point. It was only consistent with what she had promised, and with what she had the evident ability to do. I had, then, two hundred pounds that I could call my own! For a moment I sat dazed at the fortune, as it seemed, that I was carrying about with me. When I began to realize that the money was my own, my first definite emotion was a feeling of dread, almost of guilt, at having so much money about me that I could do as I pleased with; and then the thought from which the emotion had unconsciously sprung began to evolve itself, and to present itself more and more clearly to my mind.

[Pg 187]

I was acting in a manner that belied my real character and motives. I was, to all outward appearance, the mere hireling, the paid puppet of the woman who was in reality the mistress of my soul. At first I thought of going back to York Place to return the purse, and tell her that in obeying her wishes I was actuated by sentiment and not by avarice. But a very little reflection told me that if I acted in such a manner there would be fixed between the wealthy lady and the penniless shop-boy an impassable gulf. She might, and probably would, misconstrue my motives. What she would certainly do, if she were still at York Place, for I had no proof that she lived there, would be to wish me good-night, and shut the door against me forever. The only possibility of winning her, I could see clearly, was to take the means that were thus offered to educate and fit myself for the sphere of society in which she lived, and trust to the chapter of accidents for an opportunity of meeting her and gaining her affection. So, resolving that I would make myself worthy to be her husband, and little doubting, in the fondness of the moment, that when I had done so we should meet, I got up and made my way home.

I went to Mr. Conder's shop the next morning, as I thought it would be more friendly, and more dignified, to see him myself before we parted. And, as I anticipated, he made no difficulty in terminating our engagement when I told him that I had come in for a few thousand pounds! After

I left him I went to a shop where they sold ready-made clothes, to get some things for immediate use.

Three o'clock was the time that was arranged for these clothes to be delivered at Charlton Crescent. The intervening time I employed in going to different places in the city to pay some debts I owed, and then took a 'bus to the Angel, and got to Charlton Crescent at about ten minutes past three.

When I opened the door Mrs. Duncan (my landlady) came out of her parlor in a great state of excitement to tell me that there was a large parcel, and a letter, and a telegram in my bedroom; and that the letter had been left about half an hour before by such a fashionable-looking young gentleman, who had asked so particularly whether I had left any word before I went out as to when I would be likely to return.

I ran up to my bedroom. There, sure enough, was a large brown paper parcel on my bed, and on the chest of drawers a telegram and a letter, both of which were addressed to: [Pg 188]

James Brooke, Esq., 8 Charlton Crescent, Islington, N.

The handwriting on the envelope of the letter attracted my attention. I guessed that the letter was from Mr. Chambers. But it was not addressed in the legal hand that I associated with a lawyer's letter. On the contrary, it was addressed in a very flowing and gentlemanly hand. I opened the telegram first, and read:

"William Chambers, 52 Bedford Row, W. C, to James Brooke, Esq., 8 Charlton Crescent, High Street, Islington, N.

"Please favor me with a call immediately you receive this. It is important that I should see you at once."

It had been handed in at the post-office at ten minutes past eleven o'clock. I then opened the letter, which ran as follows:

52 Bedford Row, W. C, July, 187-.

"DEAR SIR.—I was in hopes that you would have been at home when my telegram was delivered. I wish to see you at your earliest convenience, so if you should get this letter in time to be at my office by six o'clock P.M., I shall be glad to see you this evening. If not I shall expect to see you at the above address at ten o'clock to-morrow (Thursday) morning.—I remain, yours faithfully,

WILLIAM CHAMBERS."

James Brooke, Esq.

It took me a little time to dress, but I got to Bedford Row shortly before five o'clock, and, after waiting for a few minutes in the outside office, was shown into Mr. Chambers' private room.

To tell the truth, I had been getting rather anxious as to the reception I should get from Mr. Chambers. Unless there was some deep reason which I could not fathom, or even guess at, it seemed hardly likely that any solicitor would encourage Miss Grey to marry a penniless shop-boy. It was only while I was on my way to Bedford Row that I had begun to see the matter in this light; and I had been preparing myself for an encounter with an imaginary lawyer who was as hard-featured as he was sure to be hard-headed. The appearance and manners, however, of the gentleman about whom I had been speculating rather vaguely, but very anxiously, gave me a complete surprise.

He was a tall, spare man with gray hair and whiskers, and a very kindly and intellectual countenance.

When I entered his room he came forward and shook hands with me very cordially, and then asked me to sit down in an arm-chair by his desk. After a few casual remarks, in which he mentioned that he had not gone to see Mr. Conder lest I might have seen him myself, and, perhaps, have given some version of the matter that would not tally with his, he continued:

"I have seen Miss Grey this morning, and she has told me of what took place yesterday. One of my principal objects in wishing to see you thus early is to place before you, as soon as possible—so that you may have time to consider the matter—what appears to me to be the real aspect of the case as far as you are concerned. I am a good deal older than you are, and have seen a great deal more of the world than you have, and, whether you may act on the advice that I am about to give you or not, you will, I am sure, when you have reflected on it, come to the conclusion that it is at least sensible, and well meant. [Pg 189]

"Miss Grey has, then, I understand, proposed that you shall marry her on the condition that she settles £2,000 a year on you, while you pledge yourself never to seek to know her real name or anything more about her. And you have accepted the conditions. Am I right?"

"Quite right, sir."

"Now, my dear Mr. Brooke, if I were at your age, and if I were situated as you were when the offer was made to you, I am perfectly sure that I should have done exactly as you have done. But, if I had done so, I am sure that I should afterward have been the most miserable man alive. Two thousand a year is a fine income, but believe me, that money, like everything else, can be bought too dearly. In this case you are surrendering yourself to a bondage which, at present, you can hardly understand. That is a consideration I wish most strongly to impress upon you, and I ask you to reflect most seriously upon it. On the other hand, there is the question, What are you to do

if this arrangement is broken off? It would be most cruel and unjust, it would be absurd, to ask you to break off the engagement unless you were otherwise provided for. That is a matter I have carefully considered with Miss Grey; and, as she is solely responsible for the engagement, I am authorized by her to say that if you wish to do that which I most strongly advise you for your own happiness to do, namely, to abandon the engagement, she will acknowledge the obligation that her conduct has imposed upon her by giving me £2,000 to hand over to you. Now, think well of the two sides of the question. On the one hand you are doomed to a life of celibacy—married to a woman whom you can never meet again. Wealthy, it is true; but whether wealth would be worth having under such circumstances, it is for you, from your knowledge of yourself, to say. On the other hand, with youth, and health, and brains, you start in the race of life with a clear £2,000. I have myself no interest in the matter. You are a stranger to me; Miss Grey is merely a client. But I should be false to my duty, and unworthy of my position as a solicitor, if I did not warn you of the probable consequences of acting rashly in this matter."

He paused as if to invite some comment from me on what he had said. I must have looked perplexed, for I had, indeed, a question to ask him, a question that was suggested in some way, I do not know why, by his remarks; but how to put it into words I did not know. Seeing that I was confused, and thinking, probably, that I was weighing the issue he had put to me, he continued:

[Pg 190]

"Perhaps you would like to consider the matter. I shall be here every day between ten and six, and shall be very happy to see you at any time you like to look in. Do not stand on any ceremony about coming to see me. It will give me the greatest pleasure to discuss the matter with you, and, as far as I can, advise you. Do you know the motto that Von Moltke, the great Prussian general, took for his crest after the Franco-German war?"

"No, sir."

"Well, it is four German words, 'Erst wagen, denn tragen.' Literally it means, 'First think, then act,' or, to use our own slang phrase, 'Look before you leap.' Take my advice and follow the motto of the Prussian general."

"Mr. Chambers," I said, "there is a question I should like to ask you, and yet I do not know how to express it."

"When the Roman Catholics go to confession," said Mr. Chambers, "they say what they please to their confessor, because they know that they are protected by what is termed the seal of confession, that is, by the obligation of the priest never, under any circumstances, to divulge what has passed during confession. The obligation of a solicitor to his client is exactly similar. So far I have been acting in this matter as solicitor to both sides. You may regard yourself as a client of mine at present; and you may speak to me with the perfect assurance that anything you may say is as secret as if it were whispered into the tomb."

"It is difficult," I replied, "to ask the question so as not to be misunderstood, or, at least, so as not to run the risk of giving offense. Yet, acting as I am in the dark, I think I am entitled to ask it. You and I, sir, are, as you have said, strangers. Miss Grey is so much a stranger to me that I have never clearly seen her face. For Miss Grey I have the most profound respect. That I have the most implicit confidence in you, the fact of my putting the question to you will show. Speaking, then, as one who knows nothing, to you who know all, or at the least much more than I do, I ask you, as man to man, this question:

"Do I in any way compromise my honor if I marry Miss Grey in the way that is proposed?"

We had been looking each other straight in the face while I spoke. When I had finished, he said, without the slightest change on his countenance, which I had been trying without success to read:

"Why do you ask?"

"Because," I replied firmly, "if that is so I renounce the whole matter."

"But if it is not so?"

"Then I shall marry Miss Grey." I stopped there; I did not think it prudent to say what I felt tempted to say, and what would have been the truth, that I wanted no reward for doing as she wished. For a moment he gave me a look that was searching without being obtrusive. Then he said:

"I believe that if any words of mine could balk you in your purpose it would be the greatest kindness that was ever done you; but I have to speak the truth. As man to man, Miss Grey is a pure-minded and virtuous woman, and your honor is not in any way compromised by marrying her."

[Pg 191]

"Then, sir, you have my final decision."

"I hope not," said Mr. Chambers, very gravely. "A wise man is always prepared to change his mind if fresh knowledge or reflection should make it expedient to do so. Will you look in on me tomorrow afternoon at about this hour? In the meantime, think well of what I have said; remember that liberty, like health, is a thing the value of which we only realize when we have lost it, and that you are sacrificing one of the most precious attributes of liberty if you doom yourself to a life of enforced celibacy."

He saw me to the door, where he shook hands warmly with me, and I left promising to see him the following afternoon.

It is not necessary to do more than describe very briefly what took place during the next ten or

eleven days. On Saturday the marriage was fixed for the following Monday week. In the meantime I removed to a set of chambers in Adelphi Terrace, from which there was a fine view of the river. Mr. Chambers tried several times very hard to alter my resolution, and materially increased the offer of £2,000, if I would give up the marriage; but as his arguments did not apply to the motives which really influenced me, they were rather irrelevant.

One thing that he was surprised at, I could see, was my indifference as to how the money was to be secured to me. The way in which it was done eventually was by a letter to me from Mr. Duke and himself, making themselves and their executors jointly and severally liable to pay me £500 every quarter so long as I abstained from claiming the lady to whom I was about to be married, as my wife. This letter, I may mention, was given to me without any solicitation on my part; for the monetary portion of the transaction was most repulsive to my feelings. I signed without reading the marriage settlement. When Mr. Chambers began, in an apologetic manner, to intimate the reasons why this should be done, I saved him the trouble of entering upon any explanation by saying that the reasons were too obvious to need being repeated, and that I had no wish to pry into Miss Grey's affairs.

On the following Thursday week £1,000 was placed to my credit at Messrs. Duke, Furnival & Company's bank, and on the Monday after, at seven o'clock in the evening, the marriage took place, by special license, at 41 York Place, in the parlor where I had had the interview with Miss Grey.

I walked up to the house at a few minutes to seven o'clock, and was shown into the same parlor by the same servant. I had not been in the room for more than a minute when Mr. Chambers came in looking very fresh and smiling. After a few casual remarks he gave me the wedding-ring, which I was to put on the bride's finger. He had hardly done so when a young clergyman came in in full canonicals, and after him Mr. Duke with a lady who wore a white veil of such a thick texture that it would have been impossible, had I tried, to distinguish her features. The service began at once. I had been previously "coached" by Mr. Chambers, and got through my part of the ceremony pretty well; but her responses were given in a much more steady tone than mine were. The only bit of information that I gained from the marriage service was that her name was Catherine. Otherwise I might as well have been married to a being in another world as to the cold statuesque form which was standing by my side, and which was presently to vanish from my sight forever. The service over, she sat down while I replied to the questions of the clergyman and signed the marriage register. Then, in accordance with our previous arrangements, Mr. Chambers and I quietly left the room and went up-stairs to a richly furnished drawing-room. Here he left me for a few minutes, and then returned, saying:

[Pg 192]

"I think we may leave now. You will do me the pleasure, I hope, to dine with me this evening."

We descended the stairs, and had just got to the hall-door, which Mr. Chambers was in the act of opening, when the parlor door opened, the veiled figure of the lady I had married came out, bowed slightly to both of us—more to me, I thought, than to Mr. Chambers—said in a voice in which I could detect no expression or emotion, "Farewell," glided lightly up the stairs, and disappeared. We both bowed; I could find no word in answer. Mr. Chambers opened the door; in a minute it was shut behind us, and we were walking toward Oxford Street.

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## PART II.

### NICE.

Five years passed away after the marriage in York Place without anything particularly eventful occurring in my life. I finished my education, took a fairly good degree at Cambridge, got called to the Bar, and was, perhaps, neither better nor worse than the majority of bachelors who have uncontrolled possession of a large income. As time passed on, I am ashamed to say that I pretty nearly forgot all about Miss Grey. This seems, no doubt, very fickle and unromantic. But five years is a long time; and the new scenes and circumstances that I was surrounded by after my marriage naturally engrossed my attention in a way that those who have never experienced such a change of fortune can hardly understand or make allowance for.

I shall take up the thread of my story in the December of 187-, when I was stopping at Nice with a Mr. Mervin, who was about my own age, and a great friend of mine. We left London for Nice on the evening after I had gone through the ceremony of being called to the bar; and I devoutly wish that I had space to tell how we left London and Paris wrapped up in cold and fog, and, after traveling all night, woke up in the morning while the train was running along the shores of the Mediterranean, dazzled by the wondrous light of that southern climate. The light seemed a universal presence. It was unlike anything I could have imagined; and the whole of my first day at Nice seemed to me like a continued morning.

[Pg 193]

On the second night after our arrival we went to a ball at the English club. Why we went there I hardly know, for neither of us was much of a ladies' man. Mervin was somewhat a Bohemian, and the peculiar position in which I was placed made me avoid the society of ladies, lest I should contract or engender an affection that could not be requited.

We had scarcely entered the ballroom, however, when Mervin exclaimed:

"Goodness me! Mrs. O'Flaherty, and Miss O'Flaherty too. I declare. Well, this is an unexpected



pleasure."

One of the ladies he addressed was a stout, middle-aged matron, whose countenance bespoke her nationality quite as unmistakably as did her name. Her companion was a tall, fair-haired young lady who seemed to me to have one of the most refined and beautiful faces I had ever seen.

"Why, I protest," continued Mervin, before either of the ladies could say a word in answer to his salutation, "my dear Mrs. O'Flaherty, it must be a year since we have seen each other, and you seem to have grown ten years younger."

"Tell that yarn to the mounted maranes, Misther Blarney," said Mrs. O'Flaherty, laughing, and looking quite pleased.

"Allow me to introduce my friend, Mr. Brooke," said Mervin. "Mr. Brooke, Mrs. O'Flaherty; Mr. Brooke, Miss O'Flaherty."

We bowed.

"Mr. Brooke was wishing for a partner for the next waltz, Miss O'Flaherty. I can thoroughly recommend him as a waltzer, and I am sure you will not blight his wishes," continued Mervin.

I was not wishing for anything of the sort. But I was able to dance, which he was not; and, as I knew that he was maliciously speculating on my being as unaccomplished as he was in this respect, it gave me great pleasure to ask Miss O'Flaherty if I might be her partner. She assented with an easy grace that surprised me; for I could not understand how such a refined and lady-like girl could be the daughter of such an unalloyed mass of vulgarity as Mrs. O'Flaherty was.

"I'll kape me eye on yez so that ye won't have the bother of hunting for me when the dance is over," said Mrs. O'Flaherty. "I'd be askin' Misther Marvin to lade me out himself av I was a few year younger. But we'll be afther havin' some liquid refreshment whilst yer divartin' yerselves. Would ye take yer foot off me tail, if ye plase, sir?"—this last to a gentleman who had inadvertently trod on the train of her dress. The people about us were beginning to titter.

One never knows where little accomplishments, which can be easily acquired, may turn of use. I had learned to dance, not because I intended to go to balls or parties, but because I thought it foolish to run the risk of some time or other being placed at a disadvantage through want of proficiency in so easy an art. On the present occasion I was rewarded by having a most delightful companion during a considerable portion of the evening. At first our conversation was, of course, of a more or less commonplace character. When the first waltz was over we found that Mervin had escaped from Mrs. O'Flaherty. But the worthy dame had got a companion of her own sex and age, and when I had supplied them with some of the "liquid refreshment" they were both partial to, "Polly," as she called her beautiful daughter, was free to join me in another dance. How Miss O'Flaherty could be her daughter was an enigma which completely baffled me. There was not a particle of family likeness between them; and while Mrs. O'Flaherty was the embodiment of good-natured vulgarity, Miss O'Flaherty was a clever, highly-educated young lady, whose perfectly self-possessed and polished manners showed unmistakably that she had been brought up in the society of people who were, to put it mildly, better bred than her mother.

[Pg 194]

Our conversation, as I have said, was at first about commonplace matters, such as the difference of the climate in England and the south of France in winter; the difference of English and French customs; the light literature of the day, and so on. I have heard a story of an eminent queen's counsel who had been examining the Duke of Wellington before a Parliamentary committee, and who, on being asked by a friend if he had been examining the great duke, replied, "No, it was he who was examining me."

I felt in somewhat the same predicament with Miss O'Flaherty. There was nothing of the blue-stocking or the *doctrinaire* about her. She was perfectly unpretentious, and unself-conscious. But she was so full of information, and her memory and imagination moved so quickly and naturally, that whatever subject we spoke about she seemed to lead the conversation. At length, as we were sitting in a retired part of the room, and were speaking about music, I told her of a musician I knew, who had a dog that he had to put out of the room before the music began, because it cried so much.

"Indeed," said Miss O'Flaherty, "how thoughtless. If he had left the door open the poor dog would no more have left the room than you or I would—that is," she added with a smile, "if it were *music* that made the poor animal cry."

"I confess, Miss O'Flaherty," I said, "that I do not understand you."

"What!" she said, looking at me in surprise, "you don't know why some animals, like some human beings—only some—cry when they hear music—not noise, but music?"

"No," I replied, "I have often wondered."

"And all your learning has not enabled you to answer so easy a question?" she said, in a tone of sarcasm.

"I do not pretend to much learning," I answered, "but I have never heard any explanation of the fact."

"Very likely not," she answered; "the man who put the poor animal out of the room knew, possibly, less of his art than his dog did. The dog cried for the same reason that a human being might have cried, because the music roused in its mind unsatisfied longings that tortured it by the vagueness and uncertainty with which they spoke of a state higher and better than the poor animal could understand."

[Pg 195]

"I am surprised I did not think of so natural an explanation," I said. "My friends say I am music mad, and, indeed, music is almost a mania with me. I wonder it did not occur to me why the lower animals are affected by music as we are."

"Because," she answered, "they have got the highest power of the critic, the power of spontaneously registering the effect of what they hear on their own minds, whilst we, as a rule, can do little more than judge of what we hear, not by our own original capacity of appreciation, which is for each individual the true touchstone of art, but by some preconceived, and probably badly conceived model, as if the beautiful were molded in any one form. No wonder that with such principles of criticism Haydn and Mozart had unfitted the world to understand Beethoven—melodists in *excelsis* though they were."

"Then Beethoven is your favorite composer," I ventured to remark.

"Yes," she said. "I think I may say his works are my principal recreation."

"I am afraid it is against etiquette to make such a request," I said, diffidently, "but I too am a worshiper of Beethoven. Unfortunately, I was never taught any instrument, and I do not hear his music as often as I could wish. Will you forgive me if I say that it would give me great pleasure to hear you play some of his works?"

She replied in a laughing tone, which at once brought the conversation down from the rather sentimental latitudes into which it had been straying.

"You should speak of my 'reading' of his works—that is, I believe the correct expression. I am afraid that if you heard my poor performance you would say, as a gentleman said to his daughter, on whose musical education he had been expending a great deal of money—

"When Orpheus played, he touched the rocks and trees,  
But you, my lady, only touch the keys."

However, we have *dejeuner* at half-past eleven, and if you like to join us any morning I shall be happy to let you hear my interpretation of Beethoven—such as it is."

"Next to the present time there is no time so sure as the immediate future, and if I thought that you would not be too tired after to-night, I should do myself the honor to accept your kind invitation to-morrow morning."

"I shall not stay here much longer," said Miss O'Flaherty, smiling. "And, as to my being tired, I expect to be out before eight o'clock in the morning. So, if you like to come, we—for I think I can speak for my aunt—shall be happy to see you; and after *dejeuner* you will have an opportunity of criticizing my performance, for I generally play the piano for an hour or two in the middle of the day. We are stopping at the Maison Normande, on the Promenade des Anglais."

If we had been in England there would have been something shocking in a young lady giving such an invitation to a stranger with whom she had merely danced at a public ball. But we were not in England, and Miss O'Flaherty spoke with an unconscious ease and authority that made the whole arrangement seem quite natural. If she had been her own mother she could not have chaperoned herself more effectively or gracefully.

[Pg 196]

"I shall be very punctual," I said in a serious tone, which I intended to be very respectful.

"I hope you will keep your word better with me than you have with my aunt," she replied, laughing. "You promised to bring me back as soon as the last dance was over," saying which she rose, and I had to follow her in quest of Mrs. O'Flaherty.

So then Mrs. O'Flaherty was only her aunt and not her mother. "Thank God," I said to myself. Why thank God? Why, because I was in love with her. I did not realize it quite at once. We found Mrs. O'Flaherty. They left early. I saw them into their carriage, and left the ball as soon as they had gone. It was not till I got out into the beautiful, soft, southern night that I realized the words of Mr. Chambers, when I announced my intention of marrying Miss Grey "I believe that if any words could balk you in your purpose, it would be the greatest kindness that ever was done you."

"Why did he not balk me?" I asked myself, angrily and illogically. I had met my better self in Miss O'Flaherty. She was the being for whom I had unconsciously yearned through all these years. Was I to be kept from her by a phantom?

I lay awake nearly the whole of that night, and did not get to sleep until shortly before I was called at half-past eight o'clock.

It was a few minutes after nine when I came down to the coffee-room. We had ordered an English breakfast, and Mervin was pouring out his coffee when I came into the room.

"Just in time," he said, by way of salutation, helping himself as he spoke, in a way which showed that he would not have delayed his breakfast if I had been late. "Why, I had no idea that you could dance."

"Much obliged for your kindness in saying that I could."

"Oh, yes," he answered. "Don't mention it; I thought I'd take a rise out of you. Beaten with my own weapons. Lost the adorable Polly for my pains——"

"I hope you have nothing to say against Miss O'Flaherty," I said, getting angry. "If you have it had better not be said in my presence."

"Hullo! 'pistols for two, coffee for one,'" said Mervin, laughing. "All I have to say, my dear fellow,

is that for a woman who is not a coquette, and who is one of the truest women alive, she is the greatest man-slayer I have ever known. What I could never make out is how she could belong to such a clan as the O'Flahertys of O'Flaherty Hall (as we called it), Bedford Square. But 'dull Boetia gave a Pindar birth,' and I suppose that it was on the same principle that nature permitted the late Michael O'Flaherty, of money-lending renown, to be the sire of a woman who would be an empress if rank were the reward of merit and not accident."

[Pg 197]

"So her father was a money-lender," I said, helping myself to some cutlets.

"A prince among money-lenders," rejoined Mervin, "a man whose rate per cent. rose in a very direct proportion to your necessities, and who never deserted his prey while there was a drop of blood left in its carcass. But, 'rest his sowl,' he's been dead these last three years."

"But O'Flaherty is not a Jewish name," I remarked.

"Jewish name be hanged!" said Mervin. "Does it follow that if a man is a money-lender he must also be a Jew? That's the way that one generation goes on repeating the folly of another. Because the Jews were the bankers of the world at a time when, owing to the ignorance of our thieving and bloodthirsty ancestors, banker and money-lender were synonymous, every man who is a money-lender is at once set down as a Jew. No, he was not a Jew, but an Irishman; and let me tell you that in London, at least, for every one Jew there are a dozen gentiles who are money-lenders, and that whereas the Jew is generally a fairly straight man of business, the gentile is generally an unmitigated scamp. The Jew means business. You can rely on his word; as a rule, he lends his own money, and his rate of interest depends on the security you have to offer; for there is a perfectly open market, and Jews are just as ready as gentiles to lend at bank rate when the necessary security is forthcoming. The gentile money-lender, on the other hand, is generally a man whose only idea of business is to lie like Ananias; and very often he is not a *bona-fide* money-lender at all, but a middle-man, with whom you are probably wasting your time."

"Was Mr. O'Flaherty one of this class?"

"Yes and no. He had plenty of money to lend, but he had not the courage to part with it unless he could get sixty per cent. compound interest on security that would have satisfied the Governors of the Bank of England, or unless his avarice was excited by the prospect of getting a thoroughly fat pigeon fast in his nets. He was not so bad during the last three or four years of his life, for Miss Polly, who had come home from school to live with him, and who was an heiress in her own right, kept a pretty sharp eye on him, and did a great deal to purify the moral atmosphere of O'Flaherty Hall. It was a pandemonium at one time, I can assure you."

"But how could a girl like her live in such a house?"

"She wanted him to leave London. At one time they took a house in Hastings, but the force of habit was too much for him, and in three months or so he was back in town again. He could not do without his old haunts and associates; Miss O'Flaherty came back with him. She had her own suit of apartments in the house in Bedford Square, and, I need not say, never showed herself amongst her father's guests, or clients, or hangers-on, or whatever you may choose to call them. But her presence, though unseen, exercised a great influence. Old O'Flaherty could not, of course, ever be thoroughly reformed; but, after she came to live in Bedford Square, he held his receptions in taverns, or such places, and not at his own house, and the host of nobs and snobs of all sorts who came to him as touts or tipsters or to borrow money, had mostly to seek for him abroad. I have often pitied poor Miss O'Flaherty; I believe she has sacrificed herself for a thoroughly worthless father. She lived with him, I am certain, to keep him from his evil ways. And I am sure that the reason why she refused one or two very eligible suitors was that she was too proud to marry a man who must have despised her father."

[Pg 198]

"That would be rather too romantic a reason to influence a woman in such a matter," I remarked.

"I grant you it would as far as the ordinary run of women are concerned," replied Mervin, "but Miss O'Flaherty is made of sterner stuff than most women are, and she must have known that while her father was alive his reputation would always place her at a disadvantage both with her husband's family and in society. I cannot think of anything more galling to a really clever, high-spirited woman, as she is, than to know that there are circumstances connected with her family which would be a constant source of shame to her husband."

There seemed to me to be an element of romance in the story that Mervin told me about Miss O'Flaherty which, if it were possible, increased my affection for her. My compassion was excited by the tale, and compassion has been well defined to be momentary love. As I walked along the promenade, by the shore of the Mediterranean, about an hour after breakfast, I debated with myself, in a perfect agony, the question whether I ought to call upon her. I knew that as a man of sense and honor it was my duty to her, and to myself, to leave Nice at once, for I felt certain that if I came under the influence of her presence again my passion would overcome me and I should tell her of my love. On the other hand, I felt drawn toward her by an irresistible spell.

How the matter would have ended if I had not run across Mrs. O'Flaherty, I do not know; but my accidentally meeting her left me no escape, and in a few minutes I found myself in a handsomely furnished parlor talking to Miss O'Flaherty, who looked more bewitching than ever in a light-blue morning costume. When the *dejeuner* was over, Mrs. O'Flaherty retired to have a snooze, as she called it, and presently Miss O'Flaherty sat down to the piano.

Of her performance, I can only say that she seemed to me to play as Beethoven or Mendelssohn themselves have played. The instrument seemed a living thing in her hands. It spoke out of love and hope and joy, of sorrow and affliction. It seemed like a spirit to intercede between us, and to

tell me that in spite of all human laws and ceremonies she, and she alone was my wife. I must have been mad when I told her of my love—told her my whole story, told her in words I could never recall—fierce, frantic words I am afraid they were—that without her life was worthless to me—begged her to fly with me to some far-off country where we could live for each other unknown, and where our union would be sanctified by our love, and then sank into a chair horrified at what I had done.

She had risen from the piano while I was speaking, and was standing by the mantel-piece. Her countenance was as pale as death; it was as white and, save for a strange light that shone from her eyes, as expressionless as the face of a corpse. She did not interrupt me by a word or a sign, only stood and looked me straight in the face while I spoke.

I had been sitting for nearly a minute with my face in my hands, stupefied with shame and terror, when these words rang in my astonished ears:

"You have asked me to be your mistress; what guaranty have I that you would have asked me to be your wife if you were free?"

"This guaranty," I cried, "and this atonement for what I have done. I shall leave to-night for London. If I possibly can I shall have the marriage with Miss Grey dissolved. In any case, I shall live in future on my own earnings, and not on her money. I shall start by the first ship for Australia. I shall take one hundred pounds to commence my new life with, and I shall never rest until I have repaid every farthing of the money I now loathe myself for having received in such a manner—innocent as my intentions were at first."

"And it was for love, not for money, that you married Miss Grey," she said, the tears dropping from her eyes as she spoke.

"It was the dream of a boy," I answered; "and when I have gone you will have this guaranty of the purity of my feelings for you—however much I have erred—that having dared to tell you of my love, I have exchanged wealth for poverty and exile, rather than live on the income I have derived from the woman who has made it impossible for me to ask you to be my wife."

"Sit down for a moment," she said, standing with her elbows on the mantel-piece, and her face buried in her hands. I had risen from my seat, but I did as she asked. We neither of us spoke for a minute or two. Then she said, without raising her face from her hands:

"You would have asked me to be your wife if you were not married?"

"Good God! of course I would—you know I would," I cried in wonder.

"And if I could find out a means by which I could legally be your wife, would you take me?"

I sprung from my seat and was standing by her side imploring her to tell me what she meant, and telling her that life was worthless to me without her, when suddenly she threw her arms round my neck, crying as she did so:

"My darling cousin, I am your wife. It was me whom you married in York Place. I loved you as you loved me from the first. I have been following your career all these years, wondering whether you could love me when you were a man, and in your rightful position, as I knew that you loved me when we were married."

Of what followed I cannot trust myself to speak.

It was about an hour afterward, as we were sitting by the Mediterranean, that I heard from her own lips the explanation of the enigma of our marriage.

I wish that I had space to tell the whole story in her own words, but I must summarize a considerable portion of the tale. I shall, therefore, only repeat as much as is necessary to enable the reader to understand our respective positions on the day we met in Chandos Street.

Her mother, who was the only child of a wealthy cotton-spinner, died when she was about three years old. When she was about twelve the grandfather, who had disowned his daughter for marrying Michael O'Flaherty, also died. And, as he was a widower, childless and intestate, Miss O'Flaherty, of course, became entitled to the whole of his property—amounting to nearly £250,000. My father was a first cousin of her mother. About two years before his death he got involved in some bill-transactions with Michael O'Flaherty, and the result was that Michael O'Flaherty got possession without, practically speaking, any consideration of a reversionary interest that my father had in £2,000. The reversion fell in about twelve months afterward, but, as my father had parted with it, I was left penniless at his death. This had been discovered by Miss O'Flaherty a short time before I met her in Chandos Street.

Miss O'Flaherty had been educated at a French convent; and Mervin was right in his surmises as to the reasons that induced her to live in Bedford Square, and to discard the numerous suitors to her hand and fortune. Amongst these suitors was an elderly baronet, who sought by marrying her to recoup the fortune he had squandered in betting and dissipation. In his attempt to gain Miss O'Flaherty he was seconded by his mother. And Michael was so pleased at having a baronet for a son-in-law that he, and, at his instance, his sister—not the one who was in Nice—brought all the pressure they could bear on Miss O'Flaherty, to induce her to marry a man whom she knew to be a worthless *roue*, and whom she despised as such.

I may now continue the narrative in her own words:

"When you told me your history I was horrified to think that a gentleman's son, and one who for years had been educated in the society of gentlemen, should be in such a position, and still more

horrified to think that you were my own cousin, and that you had been brought to such a state by the conduct of my father. I felt it a solemn duty to do something to atone for what you had suffered at my father's hands. But how? A young lady cannot very well make large presents of money to a young gentleman without the risk of her conduct being misconstrued; and I could not tell you who I was, and why I assisted you, without reflecting on my father's conduct in a way that I could not bring myself to do.

"Then, suddenly, the thought flashed through my mind that if we were married I could atone to you for all that you had endured, and end forever any risk of my being Lady Barton; for, to tell you the truth, I felt that I was being overcome, as one woman is not much against two women and two men, especially when they are all older than herself, and almost the only people whom she knows. But then again there was a difficulty. A woman cannot very well propose to a man; and, besides, my good sir, you were not very well fit at the time to be lord and master of myself and a household. Still, I knew that I should find some way out of the difficulty, so I made the appointment with you to meet me that night at York Place, at the house of the Mrs. O'Flaherty whom you know, and, I am afraid, have been laughing at. However, she is a very good woman, and always does exactly as I tell her, without asking any questions. Well, I considered the matter, and the result of my deliberations was, that if we were married there would be an end of the persecution I was enduring about Sir Henry Barton. Your conduct was very nice. You showed a very pretty spirit when you refused the money I offered you in Chandos Street, and, for once at least, made me thoroughly ashamed of myself. But, nevertheless, I was determined, my good sir, that, if I could manage it, you should first fit yourself to be my husband, and then declare your affection for me before I acknowledged myself to be your wife.

[Pg 201]

"Accordingly I kept my veil down when I saw you in York Place, so that you should not be able to recognize me too easily, and married you in such a way that you did not know anything about me, even the Christian name by which I am usually called; for while Catherine is my real name, Polly is only a pet name my father gave me. My intention was to give you the means to take your position in the world as a gentleman, and to leave it to yourself to use them rightly."

"But suppose that I had not used them rightly? Suppose that I had done what a good many men would have done if they were in my place—taken to racing and other pastimes of the kind?"

"Oh, I knew that that was not at all likely. But if you had I should have stopped you. I knew from Mr. Chambers how you were getting on, and as long as you were studying hard, and taking your degree, and getting called to the Bar, I let you alone. If I had found that you were getting into bad habits I should have come to look after you myself; and I should have reformed you very speedily, for I am very determined."

"But suppose," I remonstrated, "that in your absence I had fallen in love with somebody else?"

"Well, I declare, one would think you had been consulting with Mr. Chambers," she replied; "for you are raising all the objections that he raised. I did not suppose anything of the kind. You were in love with me when you married me, and then you fell in love with your books, which made you perfectly safe. You have got on exceedingly well, much better than you probably would if you had had a wife dangling about after you. But suppose you had fallen in love with a second woman, don't you think that I would have been a great fool if I could not have made you fall in love with a third woman?"

"Unquestionably. But what, may I ask, did Mr. Chambers think of the proceeding?"

"Oh, he was greatly opposed to it at first. But I told him plainly that if he did not assist me I should get somebody else who would, though of course I would be very sorry to leave him. When he saw you he thought you a very nice lad—a great improvement on Sir Henry Barton—and he has since come to the conclusion that there was a good deal of method in my madness. He is waiting now with some curiosity to hear how we have got on, for it was from him I heard that you had started for Nice."

[Pg 202]

"Then you have only come since I arrived."

"That is all. I got a letter from Mr. Chambers the evening you left London saying you were going that evening to Nice. You had been called to the Bar, and had done all that I wanted you to do, so I made Mrs. O'Flaherty accompany me, and followed you the next night. We heard about the ball from an old colonel whom she knows here, and I made him get us tickets for it, and went to it on the chance of seeing you."

"And what would you have done if I had ceased to care for you?"

"Well, that I suppose would have depended on what I thought of you. I had lived without you for five years, and if you had changed into a nasty, unamiable creature I could have done without you for the rest of my life. But then nice people don't change into nasty people any more than sapphires or diamonds change into bits of flint or granite."

"You have an answer for everything," I said, laughing.

"Yes," she replied, "that is what Mr. Chambers used to say. But talking about Mr. Chambers reminds me that the letter you got from him and Mr. Furnival was all a piece of nonsense. The £2,000 a year is secured to you in the marriage settlement, and you would not have forfeited anything if you had insisted on knowing who I was. My object was to put myself out of your mind as much as possible by making you think that you would never see me again, so that you might attend to your books, and fit yourself for the world, and let me know your real opinion of me when you were competent to form one. And now I must get back, for Mrs. O'Flaherty is returning to London this evening."

"So soon!" I cried involuntarily, in a tone of pleasurable surprise.

"Now stop that," she said. "Mrs. O'Flaherty is a very good woman indeed, and you have not got rid of her yet, for we are going to accompany her as far as Cannes, unless you prefer to stop here with Mr. Mervin."

"No, thank you," I said. "I shall go to Cannes."

We left Nice by an evening train. Mervin was at Monaco, where he usually passed his day; and as he spent most of his time at Monaco, and had several friends in Nice, I did not feel as much compunction as I might otherwise have felt in leaving a letter for him, which he would get on his return at about ten o'clock, saying that I had been taken away from Nice by urgent business, the nature of which he would learn in due course if he watched the matrimonial advertisements in the *Times*. We got out of the train at Cannes, leaving Mrs. O'Flaherty to go on to Marseilles *en route* for London.

[Pg 203]

As we drove up to the hotel I took out my purse to pay the fare.

"Why, that is a lady's purse," said Mrs. Brooke, who was sitting by my side. "Who had the audacity to give it to you?"

"A Miss Grey, who was an old sweetheart of mine," I replied.

"Then I am jealous," said Mrs. Brooke. And she always says that she is jealous of Miss Grey. However, Miss Grey is the only person who has ever given her cause for jealousy.

Three days afterward the numerous readers of the matrimonial announcements in the London daily papers were informed of a marriage which had taken place by special license at 41 York Place five years previously, between James Brooke, only son of the late Reverend Robert Brooke, and Catherine O'Flaherty, only daughter of the late Michael O'Flaherty, Esq.



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## Transcriber's Notes:

This story was originally published in *Belgravia: An Illustrated London Magazine* in 1886; it was later reprinted as filler material in the *Favorite Library* edition of *Little Golden's Daughter* by Mrs. Alex. McVeigh Miller. This text is derived from the later reprint.

Added table of contents.

Image may be clicked to view a larger version.

Normalized 2000 to 2,000 throughout the text for consistency.

Page 183, changed "mantelpiece" to "mantel-piece" for consistency.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK "FAREWELL" \*\*\*

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