

place of Haberlacey to a turbulent auditory. The subject, some recent vote in Parliament given to their great offence in favour of dowry to a Princess. He sought peace with the workers in textile fabrics of fashion by declaiming how the usages of high life—though a scion of a noble house himself—had no attractions for a man of thought. "To see columns of reports," said he severely sneering; "columns of twaddle describing ladies' clothes after some ball, or fête, or Queen's drawing-room, was humiliating. To read them, to attempt even their perusal, was disgusting. Yes, disgusting!" At which the assembly of lace, muslin, satin and silk weavers applauded, clapt hands and waved hats in token of triumph, that in the young Tregusias the town of Haberlacey had at least one representative of the right mark.

It might have been a happy union, labour represented by aristocracy. But Tregusias inverted the order of thought and action.

"What is the meaning of this political self-abasement of Tregusias?" said Lady Mary, addressing Roy Reuben. "He explains a vote given recently in the House by affirming that published reports of Queen's drawing-rooms, fêtes, balls, costumes of fashion offend him. In my offices of people's benefit societies; insurances against seasons of depressions in trade; savings investments; clothing societies; medical dispensaries; Sunday schools, day schools, schools of art, sewing seminaries; chapels and churches; cottage gardening and rural allotments; mostly all among lace and silk workers, straw-plaiters, and hosiers; and all contributory to prosperity in Haberlacey,—I find them elated and contented when looms are full, with demand for goods pressing. I find them stricken with dismay when demand fails, looms standing silent, wages vanishing. Fashion and frivolity may have aspects unfavourable to morals, but not on the side of Haberlacey."

"Permit me, your ladyship," Roy Reuben rejoined; "my vocation being to observe, and make research for the impelling causes of national prosperity, I separate fashion from frivolity. Fashion is spoken of by some as capricious and vicious; complained of by all as fluctuating. Yet, it is potent for good, and most constant of the moral forces. What are termed its caprices of style are pulsations of its vitality—the life of its constantly operating, irresistible strength. A strength stupendous, not to be contemned, but courted and utilized. I might tire, if enlarging on abstract elements, and will only now aduce from that speech of yesterday an illustration."

"You don't tire, Mr. Reuben; yours is the field in which I also work; proceed, please."

Thus encouraged, the large fat head with long lank hair and restless brain, bowed to the lady whose rank Roy Reuben respected; whose intelligence he, in a manner of secular sentiment, worshipped. And thus he spoke:

"The Queen's state ball once or twice in a season, the royal drawing-rooms four or five times in a season, the balls of the higher aristocracy three or four times a week during the London season; the occasional fêtes and frequent high-class weddings, each giving two or three columns in the leading newspapers, descriptive of persons and costumes, suggesting in Tregusias disgust, in pulpits illustrations of depravity, are in the world a power for good which I have already termed stupendous."

"They are reprinted and read, as nothing else is read, in every capital of Europe, from Lisbon to St. Petersburg; and in every provincial town. They are reprinted and read in North and South America, India, Australia. They thrill the feminine heart in the world's two hemispheres. Very soon they occupy every book of costume, and head of every needlewoman in all the nations called civilized."

"Millions of spindles and shuttles in Haberlacey whirl and whizz and clack, impatiently demanding fresh supplies of material."

"Thousands of tons of shipping are called to go afloat, to sail, to steam, to hurry, to hie them away and hurry home fibrous products, chemicals, gums, colours, from the four quarters of the world; from America, India, China, Africa, and Continental Europe. Orient and Occident come under contribution; and Earth in her secret hordes is bored and mined to bring out confluent stores to impel production in Haberlacey."

"And after these, tens of thousands of tons of more shipping are called for to carry out the manufactured products."

"And ever as the looms of Haberlacey roll out the textile fabrics demanded over the world, wherever the two or three newspaper columns of fashion reports, reprinted and reprinted, and pictorially illustrated, have thrilled the feminine heart, other tens of thousands of tons of shipping are called for week by week to carry away the products, and array the limbs and forms of beauty in garments of latest fashion."

"And week by week money and human fingers change and interchange products and prices and wages. Spinners, weavers, bleachers, artist designers, engravers, muslin printers, calenders, packers, carriers, railways, clerks, shippers, merchants at home and bankers; silk and lace mercers and milliners; and masculine clothiers, to array men in cos-

tume, associable with women well dressed,—all are impelled to diligence in life and fresh energy."

"And, the markets of the world filled with that style of goods to repletion and staleness, other state balls, drawing-rooms, fêtes, and displays of fashion induce demands for newer fabrics and styles."

"Capital is unlocked, wages diffused, money multiplied, debts paid, enterprise induced, schools opened, churches built, pulpits enlivened by better stipends, and the Tregusias of the world taught to think above vulgar fallacies."

"In all that process, ever coming, ever going, waves of the tides of life flowing and flowing, from generation to generation in obedience to natural laws of the universe, man's communion with woman is refined and idealized. And she, idealized, is enthroned in the place designed for her in creation. Physical beauty and purity of moral thought inspire the woman to enchant the man. And the man enchanted is a new being with new energies; impelled to fresh enterprise that he may still farther enhance the moral supremacy and beauty of the charmer."

"For a politico-economist, Mr. Reuben, you are somewhat fanciful. But a man may say what a woman cannot."

"My thoughts, your ladyship, are not wholly mine, though emanating from the alembic of my own brain. There is a lady in America whom I never saw, one known as the Donna Eurynia, and told of by travellers, who, unknown to herself, I presume, spreads over me a spell of wondrous, mysterious influence. When I think on science or philosophy, this unseen woman thinks back to me. An idea, while I may be writing in London, presents to me its form and power. An instant of hesitation follows. I seem to enquire for approval of this Donna Eurynia, whom I never saw, knowing not where she abides; and she, if satisfied, responds. Instantly the idea is written."

"You are not the only one, Mr. Reuben, who converses with the unseen."

"No. I believe most authors of lively imagination converse as they write with some imaginary reader, demanding if this will do, and if that is the right word or thought. I know an author who places on a seat, within his mind, a grotesque, cynical, remorseless reviewer, who has no existence but in idea; and submits to him every thought in the whole process of conception and writing. I address this American lady, the Donna Eurynia, and she promptly responds, assenting with a glow of light; or with darkness, covering the unborn thought out of my mental sight."

"Is it a certainty, Roy Reuben, you never saw this Donna Eurynia?"

"If the woman were Essel Bell, a girl I once passionately loved, and love still, who perished at sea between Newfoundland and Canada, I might think there was affinity of spirit. When a youth I fled with Essel to America, she then a child with no money in possession; but entitled, she believed, to a rich inheritance in that country, including a rock of gold in the Thousand Islands, plantations and slaves in the South. My money was nearly exhausted on reaching Liverpool. She had preceded me there and assumed the garments of a boy. A crimp got us stowed away in a ship going to New York. Famishing of hunger we showed ourselves the fourth or fifth day, and were treated worse than I now care to relate. The officers of the ship forced us ashore on the ice at Newfoundland, they unaware she was a girl. I was badly frost-bitten trying to save her all I could. We got ashore, but parted; Essel being shipped to Canada, alas! to perish by shipwreck. I was to follow her when frosted feet were healed, but came to England by mistake of getting on board the wrong ship."

"Did you make no attempt to regain her in Canada? When or how did you learn she had perished?"

"Attempt to find her, my lady? I embarked in later years when possessed of means, and travelled North America all over in search of Essel Bell, but met none who had ever heard of her."

"And now you are to travel part of it again, under our arrangement. I think we have completed all plans. You will remain in New York until I write from Canada, not as Lady Mary, but under the name given you in London. The place in Canada where I am likely to remain is Conway. Letters to Mary M. Ester, at the post-office there, will reach me."

After other items of business with Lady Mary, the literary man, highly elated that he was to travel over the States and Canada, under direction of a lady of fortune and genius so distinguished, took his departure, and by an early steamer proceeded to New York.

"Now that my churches, schools, greater and lesser benefactions, and village societies are arranged under agencies to act in my absence, I am prepared, Agnes, for the voyage. I ship myself as one of the hundred maidens under Miss Jaa Elliqueter. By that privacy I, personally unknown to Elliqueter or the girls, associate with all on terms of equality, observing their treatment, their behaviour, the additional ship provisions, if any, required for comfort and moral regulations. I shall

see how they are treated on arrival in Canada, and how disposed of. Being myself unknown, I may take service for a time in some family in Canada or the States, ascertaining from experience and companions in servitude how immigrant girl helps are treated. Helps, that is the pretty phrase in America. And this privacy seems best for discovering lost Lillymere. He is beset with enemies who might remove him, irrecoverably take him away if knowing that Lady Mary Mortimer was personally in that country."

"Will your ladyship really undergo the hazard and toil of somebody's domestic service? If you can do so, Lady Mary, I'm sure the disguise, the discipline, the humiliation would much more benefit me."

"In my riper years, Agnes, I may do what could not so well befit—not at all befit a youthful blossom of beauty and delicacy as you are. No, child. Now that we have had a long rusticated holiday, you will return to your dear parents as I promised them you should. In their great affection for the sweet flower of the family, the one rose remaining alive, they will consult your welfare, no doubt."

"Not long, not long, dear lady, will they have me alive. Would that I had gone to the grave when younger! But I must hasten and go now—to the grave—yes."

"Agnes! What are you saying?"

"Happy my baby sister! Infinite in fortunes my sister who died a babe! Not surviving like me to endure death, and death, and worse than death, in the abhorred marriage to which I am doomed."

"Agnes, dear Agnes, what is this?"

"Lady Mary, dear lady, do not leave me to the madness of despair. To despair and madness so surely awaiting me, and now so near. Save me! Save me, dear Lady Mary."

"Agnes, dear child, confide in me and disclose the true cause of this unwillingness to a union with your cousin, Adam Schoolar."

"I cannot name the true cause."

"Yes, dearest, do. Come, lay your pretty head on my bosom and tell all about it. There now, a safe, reposing, nestling place for my sweet young bird, beautiful Agnes. Tell me, dearest; is it a lingering affection for that presumptuous, radical weaver boy, Lud? You start, Agnes! Yes, I mean the parish workhouse orphan, Toby, who was a junior clerk in your father's office a time."

"No, my lady, no. Yet I had a good opinion of that youth; so had my father. So might your ladyship, had you known him. But this mere good opinion of Toby is not the cause, nor any part of the cause of my aversion for the person seeking me to join in a union of utter misery. Misery inexpressible in its very horror!"

"Dear Agnes, be explicit. Is it to Adam Schoolar's professional character your dislike is due?"

"Even that is not amiable as your ladyship disclosed to Mrs. Burly at Gretna, and as otherwise I have heard."

"But the incidents referred to at Gretna were strictly professional. He acted as agent under instruction of a client. A lawyer may have professional duties imposed on him from which he would recoil were they incidents personal to himself."

"It is not in his professional character that future misery lies."

"To his personal behaviour or reputation, then, I must attribute your dislike of him; what personal trait of character is it, Agnes, dear?"

"Not that, Lady Mary. Oh, I cannot tell. I wish I were dead!"

"Is it something real, or but imaginary?"

"Real. Ah! horridly real."

"May the true friend of a sweet young blossom not know this thing so horridly real?"

"I cannot, cannot name it, dear lady. So young, I'd be ashamed if you knew."

"Agnes, what does this mean? Is it anything you might disclose to mother and father? Do they know it?"

"Should not be willing to inform them."

"Is it anything I may have known in my experience?"

"Nothing one so good, so guarded, so true to herself as you, Lady Mary, could have known; unless, like me, by unavoidable accident."

"A riddle, truly?"

"Lady Mary, you remember Mrs. Burly giving reasons why Gretna Green marriages should continue. She said, for protection of young ladies under compulsion, or in danger of odious matches, such marriages should still be allowed. And, when naming certain evils which might impel a lady to flee from home, she said I was sad, looked pale, and seemed to be fainting?"

"You were really looking ill, dear Agnes. What was the matter?"

"This thing was the matter; she named it several times. She named the—Oh, appalling ruin awaiting my life, if I don't flee!"

"Your mystery, Agnes, seems impenetrable. Let me recall. Mrs. Burly named as odious to youthful brides, old age, avarice, ugliness, unhealthfulness, and something else, what was it? Ah, yes; something indicating ill health of body or mind; infragant breath."

"That was it, dear Mary, that last. Oh,

abhorrence! Why are not people with infragant breath locked inside of prisons?"

"Agnes, no man ever presumed, dared presume to approach so near me as to advertise the quality of his breathing."

"I knew that, Lady Mary. And this abhorrent revelation came to me—Ah! I fear it may seem unbecoming in a young lady to know what I would say."

"But if a life's happiness be involved, Agnes?"

"Life itself is involved. If compelled to marry Adam Schoolar, I'll disappear instantly, even in wedding dress. Not in frolic, as did the bride of the Mistletoe Bough, hiding in the old oak chest. I have planned it all a year and more. Yet, like the bride of young Lovell, I'll be a skeleton!"

"Agnes, you are out of your mind!"

"If the promise to marry Adam, made to my dear parents when I know not what it implied, must now be fulfilled, it shall be done—the marriage shall be. But while they are yet in the church, or at the wedding breakfast, or some time before night, the bride shall disappear. I have all appliances ready. But flight may be preferred. A cabriolet will be in waiting, and will drive fast, fast to—"

"What! a railway station?"

"Not a railway station. To the bridge—to the bridge—to the bridge of sighs! Then I walk, seeking fresh air, truly fresh air. Then in fresh air I plunge into the bridal couch—the river! But, to make sure against recovery, will have drank the phial of poison in the cabriolet. Then I float in the murky tide to the sea, a skeleton they never shall find; never shall find as they found young Lovell's bride."

"Agnes, you are not in earnest, and in your senses! What do you mean by all prepared?"

"The pistol, the dagger, the phial of poison, the plan to escape."

"Tell me, dear Agnes, the true cause of this infatuation—this mad revolt against your parents, against the affianced husband, against Heaven?"

"I knew you would deem it revolt against my parents and against Heaven; therefore did not sooner declare my settled purpose. But now it is declared and unalterable."

"The cause; tell me, sweet one, the whole cause of this aversion to your cousin."

"May I tell what a sweet one shouldn't have known? Alas! my lady, I cannot tell more."

"There can be no remedy, Agnes, unless you be explicit. There is more, I think, than what is yet hinted at."

"Your ladyship once admired the poetry in a song about one returning home who had been long absent. His heart was true, and his speech smooth. His breath was like what the Scotch call 'caller air.' And his foot had music in't—not in it, but in't, as he came up the stair."

"Yes, Agnes; but how does this apply?"

"Ah, me! I cannot explain."

"Try explain, darling."

"Adam's foot has no music in't."

"But his speech is smooth enough, is it not? And his heart must be true, else why persist unremittently to obtain your hand in marriage?"

"There is something else, Lady Mary."

"I'm sure there is something more; tell it, dear."

"It is this only—not much more than this: You've heard married ladies say of their husbands—the Countess of Enderwick—and my mother of father, that the air was refreshed by their presence, the rooms enriched by sweetness of breath. And—I cannot explain."

"The Countess, I remember, did say that of her husband; so does our chief gardener's wife say of hers; as very likely every other married woman in the world; if the husband arriving home be not drunken or eating tobacco. But I fail to perceive such remarks applying to an unmarried lady; one very young. Can they be further explained?"

"No; not explained, nor applied. Mrs. Burly applied this horrible presence of a continuous living death in a house; I cannot. I'm miserable—miserable, and must die—die soon!"

"You said: 'only this, not much more than this.' The 'not much more than this,' dear Agnes, what is it?"

"Only dreams, and dreams about some imaginary person, whose presence would be very different—would be life—his breath like caller air."

"Ah! It comes, Agnes; and his foot with music in't, eh? Does my pretty one dream of an imaginary person?"

"Your ladyship gave heed to Roy Reuben when telling how he, in the process of literary composition, conversed with a woman whom he never saw, who abides where he does not know. You said he was not the only one who conversed with the unseen."

"I meant the Unseen in Heaven; the answerer of prayer."

"My imaginary person is only a creature of dreams; and of this life; sleeping visions at first; mostly waking dreams now."

"You refer to that parish boy, young Lud? Tobias Oman, as he was called in your father's office? A while ago, Agnes, you had but a more good opinion of Toby, in like manner as your father had. Now it comes you dream