

THE PROGRESS OF THE WIND.

"Up roared the snow and icy sleet, With every cutting blast... And when the maddened, sobbing brain...

HENRIETTA TEMPLE

Lady Ina, you must know Lady Armine; she is like you; she is one of my favorites. Now then, there all of you go together.

"General Fanville, my lady." "You are very late," said Lady Bellair. "I dined at Lord Rochfort's," said the general, bowing.

"Rochfort! Oh! where are they? where are the Rochforts? they ought to be here. I must, I will see them."

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Miss Grandison. After the scene of the morning, it was not easy to deprive Miss Temple of her equanimity; after that shock, no incident connected with the Armine family could be surprising; she was even desirous of becoming acquainted with Miss Grandison, and she congratulated herself upon the opportunity which had so speedily offered itself to gratify her wishes.

Henrietta had even to listen to enquiries made after Ferdinand, and she learnt that he was slowly recovering from an almost fatal illness, that he could not endure the fatigues of society, and that he was even living at an hotel for the sake of quiet.

Between the unexpected meeting with Captain Armine in the morning and the evening assembly at Bellair House, a communication had been made by Miss Temple to Lord Montfort, which ought not to be quite unnoticed.

Henrietta was calm; but he would have been a light observer who had not detected her suppressed agitation. "Dearest Digby," she continued, "you are so generous and so kind, that I ought to feel no reluctance in speaking to you upon this subject; and yet it pains me very much."

"I can only express my sympathy with any sorrow of yours, Henrietta," said Lord Montfort. "Speak to me as you always do, with that frankness which so much delights me."

"Let your thoughts recur to the most painful incident of my life, then," said Henrietta. "If you require it," said Lord Montfort, in a serious tone.

"It is not my fault, dearest Digby, that a single circumstance connected with that unhappy event should be unknown to you. I wished originally that you should know all. I have a thousand times since regretted that your consideration for my feelings should ever have occasioned an imperfect confidence between us; and something has occurred to-day which makes me lament it bitterly."

"No, no, dearest Henrietta; you feel too keenly," said Lord Montfort. "Indeed, Digby, it is so," said Henrietta very mournfully.

"It is necessary that you should know the name of that person who once exercised an influence over my feelings which I never allowed to disguise to you."

"Is it indeed necessary?" enquired Lord Montfort. "It is for my happiness," replied Henrietta. "Then, indeed, I am anxious to learn it."

"He is in this country," said Henrietta, "he is in this town; he may be in the same room with you to-morrow; he has been in the same room with me even this day."

"Indeed!" said Lord Montfort. "He bears a name not unknown to you," said Henrietta, "a name, too, that I must teach myself to mention, and yet—"

Lord Montfort rose and took a pencil and a sheet of paper from the table, "Write it," he said in a kind tone.

with anxiety. The Armines, with all their princely possessions, are greatly embarrassed from the conduct of the last head of their house. Ferdinand himself has, I grieve to say, inherited too much of his grandfather's imprudent spirit; his affairs, I fear, are terribly involved.

"How can we see it?" asked Lord Montfort. "Become his friend, dear Digby. I always think you can do anything. Yes! my only trust is in you. Oh! my Digby, make us all happy!"

Lord Montfort rose and walked up and down the room, apparently in profound meditation. At length he said, "Rest assured, Henrietta, that to secure your happiness nothing shall ever be wanting on my part. I will see Father Glastonbury on this subject. At present, dearest, let us think of lighter things."

It was on the morning after the assembly at Bellair House that Ferdinand was roused from his welcome slumbers, for he had passed an almost sleepless night, by his servant bringing him a note, and telling him that it had been left by a lady in a carriage.

"Silly, silly Captain Armine! why did you not come to my Vauxhall last night? I wanted to present you to the fairest damsel in the world, who has a great fortune too; but that you don't care about. When are you going to be married? I am sure you are charming, but disconsolate without her knight. Your mother is an angel, and the Duchess of— is quite in love with her. Your father, too, is a worthy man. I love your family very much. Come and call upon poor old dotting bedridden H. B. who is at home every day from two to six to receive his friends."

"One o'clock," said Ferdinand. "I may as well get up and call in Brook-street, and save my mother from this threatened infliction. Heigho! Day after day, and each more miserable than the other. How will this end?"

When Ferdinand arrived in Brook-street, he went up stairs without being announced, and found in the drawing-room, besides his mother and Katherine, the duchess, Lord Montfort, and Henrietta Temple.

The young ladies were in their riding-habits. Henrietta appeared before him, the same Henrietta whom he had met, for the first time, in the pleasure at Armine. Retreat was impossible. Her grace received Ferdinand with cordiality, and reminded him of old days. Henrietta bowed, but she was sitting at some distance with Miss Grandison, looking at some work. Her occupation covered her confusion. Lord Montfort came forward with extended hand.

"I have the pleasure of meeting an old friend," said his lordship. Ferdinand just touched his lordship's finger, and bowed rather stiffly; then, turning to his mother, he gave her Lady Bellair's note. "It concerns you more than myself," he observed.

"You were not at Lady Bellair's last night, Captain Armine," said his grace. "I never go anywhere," was the answer. "He has been a great invalid," said Lady Armine.

"Where is Father Glastonbury, Ferdinand?" said Lady Armine. "He never comes near us." "He goes every day to the British Museum."

"I wish he would take me," said Katherine. "I have never been there. Have you?" she inquired turning to Henrietta. "I am ashamed to say never," replied Henrietta. "It seems to me that London is the city of which I know nothing."

"Ferdinand," said Katherine, "I wish you would go with us to the Museum some day. Miss Temple would like to go. You know Miss Temple," she added, as if she of course supposed he had not that pleasure.

Montfort was very impartial in his attentions to his fair companions, and Ferdinand continually found himself next to Henrietta, he really began to think the world was bewitched, and was almost sceptical whether he was or was not Ferdinand Armine. The identity of his companion was so complete; Henrietta Temple in her riding-habit was the very image most keenly impressed upon his memory. He looked at her and stared at her with a face of curious perplexity.

"The day was as fine as a clear sky; a warm sun, and a western breeze could render it. Tempted by so much enjoyment, their ride was long. It was late, much later than they expected, when they returned home by the green lanes of pretty Willesden, and the Park was quite empty when they emerged from the Edgware-road into Oxford-street."

"Now the best thing we can all do is to dine in St. James'-square," said Lord Montfort. "It is ten minutes past eight. We shall just be in time, and then we can send messages to Grosvenor-square and Brook-street. What say you, Armine? You will come, of course?"

"Thank you, if you would excuse me," said Lord Montfort. "No, no; why excuse you?" said Lord Montfort; "I think it shabby to desert us now, after all our adventures."

"Really you are very kind, but I never dine out." "Dine out! What a phrase! You will not meet a human being; perhaps not even my father. If you will not come, it will spoil everything."

"I cannot dine in a frock," said Ferdinand. "I shall, said Lord Montfort, "and these ladies must dine in their habits, I suspect." "Oh! certainly, certainly," said the ladies.

"Do come, Ferdinand," said Katherine. "I ask you as a favor," said Henrietta, turning to him and speaking in a low voice. "Well, said Ferdinand, with a sigh.

"That is well," said Montfort; "now let us trot through the Park, and the groom can call in Grosvenor-square and Brook-street, and gallop after us. This is amusing, is it not?"

When Ferdinand found himself dining in St. James'-square, in the very same room where he had passed so many gay hours during that boyish month of glee which preceded his first joining his regiment, and then looked opposite him and saw Henrietta Temple, it seemed to him that, by some magical process or other, his life was acting over again, and the order of the scenes and characters had, by some strange mismanagement, got confused.

"He indulged his feelings too much, perhaps," said Henrietta; "he lived, perhaps, too much alone, after so severe an illness." "Oh, no! it is not that," said Miss Grandison; "it is not exactly that. Poor Ferdinand! he is to be pitied. I fear he will never be happy again."

"Miss Grandison should hardly say that," said the duchess, "if report speaks truly." "You have influence with him; you should exert it," said Henrietta.

"I neither have, nor desire to have, influence with him," said Miss Grandison. "Dearest Miss Temple, the world is in error with respect to myself and my cousin; and yet I ought not to say to you what I have not thought proper to confess even to my aunt."

Henrietta leant over and kissed her forehead. "Say what you like, dearest Miss Grandison; you speak to a friend, who loves you, and will respect your secret."

"And as we were late for dinner, took refuge here," continued his lordship. "I observe it," said Father Glastonbury. "Miss Grandison is an admirable musician, sir."

"She is an admirable lady in every respect," said Father Glastonbury. "Perhaps you will join her in some canonette; I am so stupid as not to be able to sing. I wish I could induce Captain Armine."

"He has left off singing," said Father Glastonbury mournfully. "But Miss Temple added Father Glastonbury, bowing to that lady. "Miss Temple has left off singing too," said Lord Montfort, quietly.

"Come, Father Glastonbury, you and I have sung together. Let us try to shame these young folks." So saying her grace seated herself at the piano, and the gratified Father Glastonbury summoned all his energies to accompany her.

Lord Montfort seated himself by Ferdinand. "You have been severely ill, I am sorry to hear." "Yes; I have been rather shaken." "This spring will bring you round."

"So everyone tells me. I cannot say I feel its beneficial influence." "You should," said Lord Montfort. "At our age we ought to rally quickly."

"Yes! Time is the great physician. I cannot say I have much more faith in him than in the spring." "Well, then, there is Hope; what think you of that?" "I have no great faith," said Ferdinand, affecting to smile.

"Believe, then, in optimism," said Henrietta Temple, without taking her eyes off the cards. "Whatever it is, best." "That is not my creed, Miss Temple," said Ferdinand, and he rose and was about to retire.

"Must you go? Let us all do something to-morrow," said Lord Montfort, interchanging a glance with Henrietta. "The British Museum; Miss Grandison wishes to go to the British Museum. Pray come with us."

"You are very good, but—"

"Well! I will write you a little note in the morning and tell you our plans," said Lord Montfort. "I hope you will not desert us."

Ferdinand bowed and retired; he avoided catching the eye of Henrietta. The carriages of Miss Temple and Miss Grandison were soon announced, and, fatigued with their riding-dresses, these ladies did not long remain.

"To-day has been a day of trial," said Henrietta, as she was about to bid Lord Montfort farewell. "What do you think of affairs? I saw you speaking to Katherine. What do you think?"

"All is not right with Ferdinand," she immediately said; "There is some mystery. I have long suspected it." She listened to her recital, softened as much as I could for her sake, in silence. Yet her pale lips I never can forget. She looked like a saint in a niche. When I had finished, she whispered me to leave her for some short time, and I walked away, out of sight indeed, but so near that she might easily summon me. I stood alone until it was twilight, in a state of mournful suspense that I recall even now with anguish. At last I heard my name sounded, in a low yet distant voice, and I looked round and she was there. She had been weeping. I took her hand and pressed it, and led her to the carriage. When I approached our unhappy home, she begged me to make her excuse to the family, and for two or three days we saw her no more. At length she sent for me, and told me she had been revolving all these sad circumstances in her mind, and she felt for others more even than for herself; that she forgave Ferdinand, and pitied him, and would act towards him as a sister; that her heart was distracted with the thoughts of the unhappy young lady, whose name she would never know, but that if by her assistance I could effect their union, means should not be wanting, though their source must be concealed; that for the sake of her aunt, to whom she is indeed passionately attached, she would keep the secret, until it could no longer be maintained; and that in the meantime it was to be hoped that health might be restored to her cousin, and Providence in some way interfere in favor of this unhappy family!"

"Angelic creature!" said Lord Montfort. "So young, too; I think so beautiful. Good God! with such a heart what could Armine desire?"

"Alas!" said Father Glastonbury, and he shook his head. "You know not the love of Ferdinand Armine for Henrietta Temple. It is a wild and fearful thing: it passeth human comprehension."

Lord Montfort leant back in his chair, and covered his face with his hands. After some minutes he looked up and said in his usual placid tone, and with an unforced brow, "Will you take anything before you go, Father Glastonbury?"

Ferdinand returned to his hotel in no very good humor, revolving in his mind Miss Temple's advice about optimism. What could she mean? Was there really a conspiracy to make him marry his cousin, and was Miss Temple one of the conspirators? He could scarcely believe this, and yet it was the most probable deduction from all that had been said and done. He had lived to witness such strange occurrences, that no event ought now to astonish him. Only to think that he had been sitting quietly in a drawing-room with Henrietta Temple, and she avowedly engaged to be married to another person who was present; and that he, Ferdinand Armine, should be the selected companion of their morning ride, and be calmly invited to contribute to their daily amusement by his social presence? What next? If this were not an insult, a gross, flagrant, and unendurable outrage, he was totally at a loss to comprehend what was meant by offended pride. Optimism, indeed! He felt far more inclined to embrace the faith of the Maichee! And what a fool was he to have submitted to such a despicable, such a degrading situation! What infinite weakness not to be able to resist her influence, the influence of a woman who had betrayed him! Yes! betrayed him. He had for some period reconciled his mind to entertain the idea of Henrietta's treachery to him. Softened by time, atoned for by long suffering, extenuated by the constant sincerity of his purpose, his original imprudence, to use his own phrase in describing his misconduct, had gradually ceased to figure as a valid and sufficient cause for her behavior to him. When he recollected how he had loved this woman, what he had sacrificed for her, and what misery he had in consequence entailed upon himself and all those dear to him; when he contrasted his present perilous situation with her triumphant prosperity, and remembered that while he had devoted himself to a love which proved false, she who had deserted him, was by a caprice of fortune, absolutely rewarded for her fickleness; he was enraged, he was disgusted, he despised himself for having been her slave; he began even to hate her. Terrible moment when we first dare to view with feelings of repugnance the being that our soul idolised! It is the most awful of revelations. We start back in horror, as if in the act of profanation.

Other annoyances, however, of a less ethereal character, awaited our hero on his return to his hotel. There he found a letter from his lawyer, informing him that he could no longer parry the determination of one of Captain Armine's principal creditors to arrest him instantly for a considerable sum. Poor Ferdinand, mortified and harassed, with his heart and spirit alike broken, could scarcely refrain from a groan. However, some step must be taken. He drove Henrietta from his thoughts, and, endeavoring to rally some of his old energy, revolved in his mind what desperate expedient yet remained.

His sleep was broken by dreams of balliads, and a vague idea of Henrietta Temple triumphing in his misery; but he rose early, wrote a diplomatic note to his menacing creditor, which he felt confident must gain him time, and then, making a careful, for when a man is going to try to borrow money it is wise to look prosperous, he took his way to a quarter of the town where lived a gentleman with whose brother he had had some previous dealings at Malta, and whose acquaintance he had made in England in reference to the called Golden-square, the murky repose of which strikes so mysteriously on the senses after the glittering bustle of the adjoining Regent-street, that Captain Armine stopped before a noble, yet now dingy mansion, that in old and happier days might probably have been inhabited by his grandfather, or some of his gay friends. A brass plate on the door informed the world that here resided Messrs Morris and Levison, following the not very ambitious calling of coal merchants. But if all the pursuers of that somewhat humble trade could manage to deal in coals with the same dexterity as Messrs Morris and Levison, what very great coal merchants they would be! The ponderous portal obeyed the signal of the bell, and apparently opened without any human means; and Captain Armine, proceeding down a dark yet capacious passage, opened a door, which invited him by an inscription on ground glass that assured him he was entering the counting-house. Here several clerks, ensconced within lofty walls of the darkest and dustiest mahogany, were busily employed; yet as advanced to an aperture in this fortification and accepted the card which the visitor offered him. The clerk surveyed the ticket with a peculiar glance; and then, begging the visitor to be seated, disappeared. He was not long absent, but soon invited Ferdinand to follow him. Captain Armine was ushered up a noble staircase, and into a saloon that once was splendid. The ceiling was richly carved, and there still might be detected the remains of its once gorgeous embellishment in the faint forms of faded dattles and the traces of

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