

"I assure you, sir, that she is not at home."

Convinced that she had directed that I should not be admitted, I went home determined to write to her—but subsequently thought that I would await a note from her.

A week passed by. Mr. Harcourt, who had gone to London to the Parliament, had not returned, and no note from Agnes—no word. She was never seen out. You know my obstinate disposition, and will not wonder when you hear that I resolved to write to Mr. Harcourt, and express my astonishment at his daughter's treatment of me. This I did, and that night I went to Mr. Burton's. I must mention, that, during the week, I took refuge from my thoughts in flirting with Louisa Burton. I found her an amiable girl, very conversational, as I have said, and very musical. I dote on music, as you are all aware. As usual with me then, I drank wine that day, until I became highly exhilarated—and as usual, I was flirting with Miss Burton. She rallied me about Agnes. I declared that our acquaintance was merely commonplace. She praised Agnes' beauty. I declared hers to be superior. At last, in my nonsensical way, I roundly stated:

"I assure you, Miss Burton, that there is not a girl on the face of the earth in whom I have a greater interest than yourself."

I meant this *en badinage*, but I fear that my language must have appeared otherwise. The answer I received, almost in a whisper, was:

"Can I believe you?"

What could I say? There was a poser!

"I assure you, from my soul, it is a true expression of my feelings!"

She turned her head, which had been averted, towards me. I saw love imprinted on her countenance. I—(what man could do otherwise, full of wine, sitting on a sofa with a fine woman, avowing her love for him?)—threw my arms round her waist—her head fell upon my bosom—I imprinted one kiss on her lips. Agnes was forgotten, and I was engaged to Louisa Burton!

It would be difficult to imagine the state of my feelings when I awoke the following morning, sobered to a sense of my situation. Engaged to two at the same moment! How could I be extricated from this unfortunate predicament? I could not bring myself to give up all hopes of Agnes—and to desert Louisa, after the avowal of her devoted affection for me, would be dishonourable. In fact, I was almost distracted—nor was my mind at all quieted by the reception of a little *couleur de rose* note from Louisa, appointing an hour for our promenade. Go I must—and I did go; and my feelings were more distressed than ever, by finding that I had excited the warmest attachment in Louisa, whose artless description of the progress of her love drove daggers into me. In this state, matters remained for about five or six days, during which no tidings were heard by me of Agnes.

I was too obstinately proud to call at her father's house, and I did not dare to ask Louisa if she had seen her. My suspense was soon at an end, as, to my joy, I had scarcely risen from my bed one morning, when I walked Ned Vernon, (who had been to London.) After announcing his having just arrived, he presented me with a letter from Miss Harcourt, dated the *very morning of my visit* to her house, and couched in these words:

MY DEAREST WALTER,

I have received a letter from my Aunt Wedgewood, who is extremely ill; and she begs that I will go to Cheltenham, to pass a week with her. I shall, most likely, leave tomorrow morning; and, as my Aunt is too weakly to bear society, I intend to punish you for the pain you caused me last night, by banishing you from my sight for one week; when, if you will meet me at Cheltenham, all shall be forgiven, upon condition of your never sinning in like manner again. Do not attempt to see me today, for I am resolved to deny myself to you—although I punish myself by so doing. I send this letter to Edward, under cover for you.

Yours, Dearest Walter,

Devotedly,

AGNES.

P.S.—I will not forbid your writing to me—Edward will give you the address.

The letter dropped from my hands. Ned saw something was wrong.

"What, in the name of all that's horrible, is the matter with you, Walter?"

"Where did you get this letter, Edward, and when?"

"That is one way of answering my question. Why, I found it in my room, under cover from Agnes to me."

"The date of your note?"

"I have it here—the 6th! My stars, here's a pretty business! Why, it is dated the very day I left for London—the morning after you made such a precious kick-up at my uncle's! Oh, I see how it is—I left at day-break, and the note was sent afterwards—that's all!"

"That's all! Death and the devil! Ned, I'm ruined by this cursed mistake. What am I to do?"

I here related all to Vernon, not even disguising my engagement to Louisa. He listened very gravely; and having heard all, admitting that I had, to use his own words, "made a famous twistification of the whole affair," suggested the propriety of my leaving Bath for a few days, with notes for Agnes, (who had returned the night before,) and Louisa, giving some pretended cause for my temporary absence, and explaining the mistake to Agnes, until something could be arranged, so that the engagement might be broken off with Miss Burton, with as little pain to her feelings as possible. For Louisa, he said he entertained the greatest affection, and he had