

The handwriting which was a female one, was unknown to him; he eagerly opened it and turned to the signature: it was from Amy Travers—his mother's dear and early friend. "I cannot bring myself to believe," she wrote, "that so many letters of mine addressed to you could remain unanswered if they had reached you, and I therefore dispatch this by a trusty messenger, who will deliver it into the hands of none save yourself."

"We are at Morris House, not seven miles distant, and greatly do I desire to see you, for the child of my well-beloved Alice, and the companion of my boys is ever dear to my heart. We tarry here not much longer; come without delay, I beseech you."

Walter's present mood was a ripe one for indignation; to have his letters intercepted, as he now well understood they were, was an insult he could not brook. He turned to retrace his steps to Apswell Court, and perceived the messenger awaiting an answer.

"Did you divine 'twas I when you met me?" demanded he.

"Yes, my Lord, an' it please you, these are times when a man's eyes had need to be sharp. I am an old servant in the Travers family, and well knew I the late Baron and Baroness de Lisle—God rest their souls!—and I traced the likeness in your face, my lord, as I came near you, and I thought some good angel had sent you thus early in my way for it would have been a hard business at the Court, I reckon."

"I might as well be a prisoner, at once," said Walter, angrily, to himself; "I will let Lord Beauville see how far I can be schooled."

"Return to Lady Travers," said he aloud, "and say I will be with her anon. I thank thee, friend, for the service thou hast done me," and Walter offered all the money he had about him for the messenger's acceptance, but it was sturdily refused and he set out with all speed on his journey home, while Walter returned to Apswell Court.

It created no surprise among the grooms when Walter ordered his horse and rode out, for he was frequently accustomed to do so at that hour. Walter rode quickly, and he was glad, in the rapid motion, to lose some sense of the aching thoughts that had filled his mind. He was very much pleased at the prospects of his visit; the name of Amy Travers had been mentioned in that one memorable conversation with his mother, and the thought of seeing old friends who knew nothing of his present struggle, and would take him away from it, as it were, comforted him, and the delay of the hour of decision delighted him, as it ever does, when we want to make our will and God's will agree together.

Warm was the greeting from John Travers, while his lady clasped Walter in her arms as though he had been her own child.

"I will leave you alone," said John, smiling, "for I know you have much to say;" and he quitted the room.

There was no trace of early beauty left on the pale worn face of Lady Travers, only the sweetness or placid calm of a spirit resigned amidst privations, content amidst trials.

Neither of Walter's college companions were there. Basil was at Rome, about to receive the priest's orders, and William was at the usual residence of the family.

"But we," said Lady Travers, are, frequently obliged to change our residence to escape from the spying which is carried on. Truly, our homes are no longer our own. We are impoverished, too, with the heavy fines that are laid on us. We have had to dismiss many of our servants, and William," continued she, "hath to labor hard in looking over the estates."

"What are these fines?" inquired Walter; "I feel as if I were ignorant of all that goes on now."

"Every Sunday we do not go to church we are fined twelve marks each person, then by another act, every month twenty marks, and if it can be proved that we are absent twelve months, then it is two hundred pounds; and you can therefore well imagine it becomes necessary for us to move from place to place, that it may be impossible to prove this. Nay, you would hardly credit it, Walter, but some months since I fell grievously sick,

and was likely to die, my husband was summoned to pay the fine, and he pleaded my sickness, but they answered I was a recusant, and, according to law all sickness among them is reckoned as rebellion against the queen's majesty."

Lady Travers pronounced her last sentence with so comical a tone, that Walter could not forbear smiling, although there was no mirth in his heart.

"Well," continued she, "we bear it with tolerable cheerfulness for the present, and I, for one, would not change with the queen on her throne; but enough of myself. My dear Walter, let me hear somewhat how you have fared since you left Castle de Lisle. Ah! you will not believe me how I sorrowed for you when I heard that she was gone, the meek and holy Alice; but it was at the time of my sickness, and I could not write; indeed I thought I should follow her speedily, but so God willed it not. And what of Isabel? and how fare you with the Beauvilles? and how do you plan for the future?"

Poor Walter! Dissimulation was very foreign to his nature. The interest and affection that Lady Travers lavished on him touched him deeply; he longed to tell her all, and yet he could not. Had he resolved to sacrifice Constance, he could have thrown himself as it were, on a mother's sympathy, and told her all his grief; but the fiery struggle, the half-formed sin was not fit for her, who met sacrifices with smiles, who counted losses but gains. She saw the reserve quickly, for, indeed, Walter was confused, almost incoherent; and after a few attempts to break it down, she changed the subject, and began to talk of Basil, of Rheims, and of Father Mordaunt. No, this did not succeed. Walter inwardly writhed under it, and could scarcely retain his composure. Lady Travers felt perplexed and alarmed, and breathed a secret, wordless prayer, that the child of her loved friend might not depart from them unconsolated.

The door opened at this moment, and her husband entered, accompanied by another gentleman, whose dress was dusty and travel-stained. His riding-hat was removed as he entered, and thus displayed a head and face that once seen could never be forgotten; the face was oval, but the forehead broad and open, and the auburn hair cut short showed the temples; the chin was pointed, and the short mustache and beard were of the same color as the hair; the nose aquiline; and the general expression of the face one of extreme calmness; and the while the eagle glance of the deep-set eyes, told of the fire of genius and the ardent soul within, the lines traced on the face spoke of many an inward conflict, of hard study, of wearing thought, and of mastery over self. As Lady Travers' eyes fell on him, she uttered almost a cry of delight, and going forward, knelt for a moment to receive a blessing. Walter, who drew back into the shade, yet could not take his eyes from the stranger's face; and now that he smiled as he warmly greeted Lady Travers, there was something inexpressibly winning in the countenance which the smile lighted up so radiantly. At the same moment while conversing with Sir John and his lady, and answering some eager enquiries of the latter, his eye perceived and scanned Walter with a searching glance. At last Lady Travers turned round and exclaimed:

"Come forward, Walter; here is a pleasure for you we did not, indeed foresee. Father, this is Walter, Baron de Lisle, and, Walter, you see before you Father Campian."

(To be continued.)

"I maintain," she said raising her voice, "that the old and oft repeated assertion, 'that women talk more than men,' has no foundation in fact."

"Then why," asked the man in that case, "is our common language universally called the mother tongue?"

She—Oh, Jack! Do you know, Mr. Gibbon punctuated his tire yesterday.

He—You mean "punctured," my dear.

She—Well, anyway, he came to a full stop.

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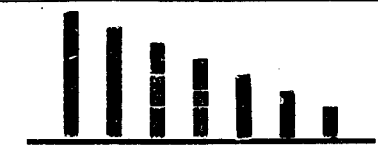
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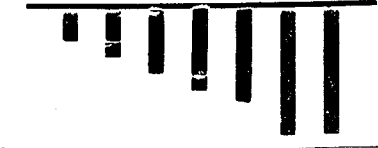
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