

## A WELCOME.

BY THE POET LAUREATE.

## I.

The son of him with whom we strove for power—  
Whose will is lord thro' all his world-domain—  
Who made the serf a man, and burst his chain—  
Has given our Prince his own Imperial Flower,  
Alexandrowna.

And welcome, Russian flower, a people's pride,  
To Britain, when her flowers begin to blow,  
From love to love, from home to home do go,  
From mother unto mother, stately bride,  
Marie Alexandrowna!

## II.

The golden news along the steppes is blown,  
And at the name the Tartar tents are stirred;  
Elburz and all the Caucasus have heard;  
And all the sultry plains of India known,  
Alexandrowna.

The voices of our universal sea  
On capes of Africa as on cliffs of Kent,  
The Maories and that Isle of Continent,  
And loyal pines of Canada murmur thee,  
Marie Alexandrowna.

## III.

Fair empires branching, both in lusty life!—  
Yet Harold's England fell to Norman swords;  
Yet thine own land has bow'd to Tartar hordes  
Since English Harold gave its throne a wife,  
Alexandrowna!

For thrones and people are as waifs that swing,  
And float or fall, in endless ebb and flow;  
But who love best have best the grace to know  
That Love by right divine is deathless king,  
Marie Alexandrowna!

## IV.

And Love has led thee to the stranger land,  
Where men are bold, and strongly say their say;—  
See, empire upon empire smiles to-day,  
As thou with thy young lover hand in hand,  
Alexandrowna!

So now thy fuller life is in the West,  
Whose hand at home was gracious to thy poor;  
Thy name was blest within the narrow door;  
Here also, Marie, shall thy name be blest,  
Marie Alexandrowna.

## V.

Shall fears and jealous hatred flame again?  
Or at thy coming, Princess, everywhere  
The blue heaven break, and some diviner air  
Breathe thro' the world and change the hearts of men,  
Alexandrowna!

But hearts that change not, love that cannot cease,  
And peace be yours, the peace of soul in soul!  
And howsoever this wild world may roll,  
Between your peoples truth and manful peace,  
Alfred—Alexandrowna.

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## TAKEN AT THE FLOOD.

## A NEW NOVEL.

By the Author of "Lady Audley's Secret," "Strangers and Pilgrims," &amp;c., &amp;c.

## CHAPTER LVIII.—(Continued.)

The telegram arrived while Lady Perriam was seated before an untasted breakfast. It brought relief and satisfaction to her mind.

Mrs. Carter, Paddington. To Lady Perriam, Perriam Place, near Monkhampton.

"Arrived in London safely. Put up at Jones's private hotel, Paddington. Met with no difficulty during journey."

This was all, but it was sufficient to lighten Lady Perriam's anxieties. The next telegram would be from Mr. Ledlamb to tell her the result of his patient's interview with the second doctor, whose opinion was to settle the fact of Mr. Perriam's lunacy.

Sylvia's next anxiety was the expected letter from Edmund Ständen. If he wrote on the first stage of his journey the letter ought to reach her by that afternoon's post. In the meanwhile she was in the dark as to his intentions. Did he intend to forsake her, after swearing that it was she alone whom he loved? Could he be so mad as to fly from love, fortune, happiness? Or was his departure only designed to soften the blow to Esther Rochdale, to make the breaking of their engagement easier for both?

This was the view which Sylvia took of his conduct, and she waited with intense impatience for the letter which was to justify her hopes.

The telegram from Mr. Ledlamb came at three o'clock in the afternoon.

"Dr. Dervish, of Bluhenden Square, has seen the patient, and confirms my opinion as to mental derangement. Certificates, and all preliminaries arranged. The patient accompanies me to the Arbour this afternoon, with Mrs. Carter."

That was all. How easily the business had been done. There was an hour still to wait for the afternoon post, which came to Perriam at four; a weary hour in which to suffer that heart-sickness of hope deferred. And Sylvia dreaded a visit from Mr. Bain ere that afternoon was over. Was he likely to give her a long respite? Would he not be impatient to have his audacious question answered?

She thought of his wooing with mingled bitterness and contempt, but not without a thrill of fear. His manner had implied some hidden power—a hold upon her which she trembled to think of. Never could she forget the agony of that hour on the sun-lit terrace.

"Would he dare to make me such an offer if he did not believe he has some power over me?" she asked herself me-

ditatively. "Yet what could his knowledge amount to? What can he know, or even suspect? And now, if Mr. Ledlamb is but faithful to me, all is safe. The grave could hardly be a better hiding place for what I want to hide."

## CHAPTER LIX.

## THE MASTER PASSION.

The afternoon wore away, and to Sylvia's supreme relief, Mr. Bain did not appear to claim her answer to his proposal. The four o'clock post brought her Edmund's promised letter, posted from Antwerp. It was a long letter, and when Sylvia first looked at it, the closely written lines swam before her eyes.

Hotel Peter Paul, Antwerp.

Dear Lady Perriam.—When I consented to that fatal meeting of the other night, I did so strong in the belief that I had steeled myself against a fascination which once had such complete power over me. I came to meet you, prepared to be your friend or counsellor, should you need friend or counsel, but resolved never again to be your lover. On that point I believed myself firm as a rock. You had done me the deepest wrong that it is possible for a woman to inflict upon the man who loves her. You had blighted the fairest years of my life. I might forgive you for all I had suffered—blot out the remembrance of those years, but I must be weak indeed, despicable indeed, if I threw myself once again beneath the foot that had trampled upon me—if I offered my love again, to be again fooled to the top of my bent, and ruthlessly thrown over in the hour when my faith was firmest.

This is what I thought and believed when I rashly braved the spell of your presence, the fatal magic of your voice. You know how miserably weak I proved in the hour of temptation. I did not know myself when I came to that meeting in Perriam churchyard. I know myself only too well now, and know that I am your slave for ever.

And now, Sylvia, what is to be my fate? I place my lot in your hands. I am a despicable, dishonoured wretch, who has broken faith with one of the best and purest of women—a woman whom to know is to honour; for whom love goes hand in hand with reverence. I have fled from the scene of my own ignominy; not daring to face those pure penetrating eyes whose truthful gaze would look into my very soul; still less able to endure the pardon which I know would be mine, though my folly and falsehood may go near to break that faithful heart. I have fled, leaving Esther Rochdale to despise me as the meanest of men.

Pronounce, Sylvia. It is for you to speak my sentence. Am I to be your husband, happy in the possession of one whose very presence has a magic which steals my senses, and brings sweet forgetfulness of all things in life save the upward glance of those divine eyes, and the warm touch of that little clinging hand? Am I to be your husband, despised most likely by the world as the man who was not too proud to marry the girl who jilted him, and even to profit by the perfidy which made her a rich woman—despised as a fortune hunter, but happy in your love? What is my future to give me, Sylvia? It is for you to decide. Remember, if you marry me, you marry a pauper, or a man who at the best can earn four or five hundred a year, by the drudgery of a bank manager. With your beauty, youth, and wealth you might do much better than this. You might mount a step higher on the ladder of fortune, marry a man whose position should be twice as great as Sir Aubrey Perriam's: circle that lovely brow with the coronet of a peeress. Consider all this, Sylvia. You have fooled me once, beguiled me with a pleasant dream from which the waking was most bitter. In common humanity, do not again deceive me. If you love me well enough to sacrifice ambition and to endure slander—for be very sure such a marriage would expose you to the malevolence of the world—I am at your feet, and ask no higher joy than to be your husband. But be very sure of yourself before you answer this letter. And if the word yes be said, let it be a yes that will stand, though all heaven and earth combined against us.

Yours till death,  
EDMUND STANDEN.

Sylvia covered the letter with passionate kisses, kisses mingled with tears.

"If I love him well enough!" she repeated, "If I love him! God help me! Could he know what I have gone through to win him once again he would not talk of it. My Edmund, my beloved, mine at last! What does all I have ever suffered count against the joy of this moment? My Edmund! He is poor, and I am rich. I can give him happiness, wealth, grandeur. Who shall dare to despise him or me. Now! now, at last I shall know the meaning of happiness. I shall know the value of wealth."

She read and re-read the letter. For the nonce the letter was Edmund. She kissed the senseless paper—cried over it till it was limp with her tears.

It was not all sweetness. One passage stung her to the quick—that sentence in which Edmund paid tribute to Esther Rochdale's noble nature—that was bitter.

"He thinks her so much better than I—there is not a word in all the letter that speaks of respect for me—confidence in me," she reflected, brooding over that praise of Esther. "But then he loves me best; he has tried to love her, and failed. He loves me in spite of himself. That is the love best worth having—the true master passion."

Lady Perriam rang for her maid.  
"Pack a couple of portmanteaus with everything necessary for a month's absence," she said, "and get yourself ready to leave by the nine o'clock train this evening. I am going away for change of air."

The woman looked astonished at the sudden announcement, but Lady Perriam was not a communicative mistress, and gave all orders with a cold imperiousness which left no room for question.

"Stop, Céline," she said as the woman was retiring. She meditated silently for a minute or two, looking downward with a troubled brow.

"Send Tringfold to me," she said.  
She had reflected that it would be wise to take her child with her—even though nurse and infant and maid would be incumbrances where she was going. Mr. Bain, outraged, cheated might attempt some act of revenge, and to leave the child in his power would be like leaving it in a lion's den. The child was her strong rock—through him she enjoyed house, income, position. She had but the vaguest idea of the power the Court of Chancery possessed to rule her life, but she thought it just possible that Mr. Bain, possessed of the child, and aided by the Court of Chancery, might be able to oust her from Perriam's

Place, separate her from her infant son, and rob her of the liberal allowance the Court had awarded for his maintenance.

She was going straight to Antwerp, and she hoped to return to Perriam as Edmund Ständen's wife.

Sir Aubrey had been dead little more than six months. Sylvia knew that to marry soon would be to have the world's contempt, but she was prepared to endure that. She was willing to be slandered, ridiculed even, rather than to give Edmund time to change his mind, to repent, and return to Esther Rochdale.

Mrs. Tringfold came presently, and she, not so well trained as Lady Perriam's own maid, did not fail to express unbounded surprise at such a sudden departure. How was she to get Sir St. John's frocks ready at a moment's notice? There were a dozen in the laundry not so much as ironed, rolled up in the starch, and it would be two days' work to iron them.

"He can go without frocks, if necessary," answered Sylvia, decisively. She had no idea of being balked by a dependent. "We can buy more frocks, and everything else to-morrow in London. The doctor who was here yesterday told me that change of air and scene were necessary for my health, and the sooner I went away the better."

"If you'd only told me yesterday evening, my lady."

"I was too much agitated by poor Mr. Perriam's departure to think of myself. I have only now made up my mind, and I do not wish to lose any time in getting away. I feel that I want change of air."

"You have been looking out of sorts, and low like, for a long time, my lady. But that's only natural, after your sad loss."

"Of course. Come, Mrs. Tringfold, don't waste any time talking. If you can't get ready to go with baby, Céline must take him. I am determined not to lose the nine o'clock train."

"Let him go without me! That dear blessed child; that's more to me than any of my own ever was, though I've brought up five, strong and healthy, too, as your ladyship knows. I wouldn't leave him for the world. It'll be a dreadful drive; but I'll get ready somehow, if I work myself into a fever."

"There need be no fever," answered Lady Perriam, calmly, though inward fever burned in her breast. "You can have plenty of help. There is a house full of servants doing nothing."

"The boxes shall be packed, my lady, and I'll take the frocks in the starch, and iron them myself when we get to our destination."

"Be ready at eight o'clock. I shall not wait for you."

Sylvia had something to do herself before her departure. She had to write a letter to Mr. Bain—a letter which should, if possible, soften the edge of his disappointment, and conciliate the man who had so much power, either as her ally or her adversary.

The composition of that letter was almost the hardest work Sylvia Perriam had ever had to do, and the task occupied some time. After three or four attempts, resulting in failure, she wrote the following:—

Dear Mr. Bain,—I have given serious and careful consideration to the proposal you did me the honour to make me the day before yesterday, and much thought has resulted in the conviction that I can only reply to that flattering proposition in the negative.

I respect your force of character, admire your capacity for business, and that mental power which, I do not doubt, would have made you great or distinguished in almost any walk of life; but I cannot give you the affection you ask for, and I will show my confidence in your generosity, and my belief in your honour, by telling you why I cannot do so.

You are, doubtless, aware that before I married Sir Aubrey I was engaged to Mr. Ständen. That engagement was broken at my father's bidding, at the hazard of breaking my heart, because he was too proud to permit my marriage with a man whose mother was so strongly averse to such an union. I yielded to my father's wishes, and married Sir Aubrey, whose goodness had inspired me with deepest gratitude, whom I respected and revered, but to whom I could not give the love which had already been given to Edmund Ständen. Sir Aubrey was too generous to claim such a love from me. He recognised the disparity of our years, and was content to receive my reverence and obedience. That old love was buried, but not dead. No thought of Edmund Ständen ever came between me and my duty to my husband. But now that I am once more free memory is re-awakened, and I know that my first lover is still master of my heart. With this knowledge I should do you the deepest wrong were I to offer encouragement to your hopes. Be assured of my confidence, my regard; remain my friend, my counsellor; retain all the power you have ever enjoyed at Perriam, be the adviser of my son's youth, the protector and manager of his wealth, and be assured through all, and under all circumstances, of my unchanging gratitude and undeviating regard.

Ever faithfully yours,  
SYLVIA PERRIAM.

P.S.—I find it necessary—rather suddenly to take decisive measures with regard to Mr. Perriam. I have taken your advice and placed him in your friend's care.

Sylvia read this letter carefully before sealing it. It seemed to her a triumph of ingenuity. If anything could appease Mr. Bain's wrath, soften the pangs of disappointed ambition, surely this letter would do it. She left it to be delivered after her departure. She trembled at the thought that even yet Shadrack Bain might make his appearance before she had started. She had her own preparations still to make—money, papers, and jewels to collect and pack safely for the journey. She had not said a word about leaving Perriam Place in the letter to Mr. Bain. It would be time enough for him to make the discovery when he came there and found her gone.

Eight o'clock came at last, an hour as impatiently longed for as it had been last night. Lady Perriam, nurse, and infant entered the chariot; a cart was loaded with portmanteaux and travelling bags. Céline took her place beside the driver of this inferior vehicle, the swift wheels rolled along the avenue and Sylvia had started on the first stage of her journey to Antwerp.

The party stopped that night at a monster hotel in Paddington, where Lady Perriam courted sleep in one of the most expensive bedrooms of the house, a desert waste of polished walnut wood and dark green damask. To-morrow night she would be tossing on the sea, or steaming swiftly up the Scheldt in the Baron Oey, or some sister boat.

The Antwerp steamer left St. Catherine's Wharf at noon next day. Lady Perriam, to whom slumber had come but by