

The Passionate Elopement

dious sighing in the boughs of larches. Yet never throughout that adventurous night had Phyllida's heart pattered at such a pace, never had she been so near to shrieking aloud. Without longer delay they turned back in the direction of the coombe, walking with quick steps as if to avoid an invisible pursuit. Half-way down the hill, Vernon stooped to gather a primrose.

"Here's a daisy," he said.

"A daisy," Phyllida cried. "Why, foolish Amor, 'tis a primrose," and whatever fiend or goblin followed in their wake fled in affright at the sound of her rippling laughter.

I think nothing shows more conclusively that Mr. Vernon was in love with Miss Courteen than his indifference to her ridicule.

"Sweetest," he said, "I'm ignorant of the best things like flowers," and forthwith began to tell Phyllida of his life in London, so that when presently they stood again upon the bridge, he was raising his voice in order to describe his first impressions of rustick Marybone, to which he added a very nice account of the view of the Hampstead Hills.

Under the influence of this narrative, the scene lost some of its grandeur. An air of grottoes, of stone embellishments, arbours, and cunning recesses shed itself over the landskip. One heard comparisons with this or that famous haunt of sight-seeing mobs. In fact, both Vernon and Phyllida, being English, felt their late raptures were unbecoming, and having excused a lapse into sensibility by the fright they had suffered, proceeded to declare that the chasm, far from being Titanick, would make a mighty fine site for an excursion of pleasure. At least Vernon clothed the opinion in words, Phyllida was too much fatigued to do more than murmur a weary assent.

They found the chariot just as they had left it and the four horses browsing upon the grass. He handed her into the vehicle, made her comfortable with what rugs and cloaks he could collect and left her to rest with the assurance he would remain close at hand. She gave his hand a tired clasp and almost immediately fell fast asleep. Vernon
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