

her words was something very different from this, and my cousins not unnaturally concluded that I either meant to marry Mrs. Wynne or that I had been trifling with her affections. Of these two alternatives the latter would, no doubt, have been the more agreeable to them; but in either case they would have felt justified in regarding me with that pity which is not akin to love, and they showed in the plainest manner that they did so regard me.

All these things being so, there was nothing for it but a second and a longer flight. My yacht was waiting for me at Portsmouth. I determined to go on board at once, and sail for Norway as soon as I could possibly get off. I did not want to do this. I am not much of a fisherman; and, besides, there is very little salmon-fishing to be obtained by the casual traveller in Norway now-a-days. Moreover, I have reached that time of life when a man likes to do the same thing year after year. It throws me out, and gives me an uneasy, sidgely feeling of having forgotten something, if I am not at Cowes for the Squadron Regatta, at Weymouth, Dartmouth, and Torquay shortly afterwards, and in Scotland by the beginning of September. But it was not a case for consulting one's inclinations. I telegraphed to two or three men to join me, and left precipitately, allowing it to be inferred that I was bound for no more distant waters than those of the Solent.

The truth of the matter was that that shameless and unscrupulous woman had taken an accurate measure of my character and had found out my weak points. She knew—at least, I suppose she did—that blandishments would have no sort of effect upon me; but doubtless she also knew that there was scarcely any foolish thing that I would not do rather than have a disturbance. Her tactics were obvious. She intended to make me compromise myself and her before witnesses, and throw herself upon my generosity, or my feebleness, whichever it ought to be called, and if I had not happened to be fully alive to this danger it is quite upon the cards that she might have succeeded. As it was, I got three friends to accompany me, and sailed for Stavanger before the end of the week.

When I had placed the tumbling waves of the North Sea between me and my dreadful old woman I breathed more freely, and my temper, which I was told had been rather short during the passage, recovered its wonted sweetness. I felt that I had been delivered from a great and imminent peril. People who sneer at panics of this kind, and say that a woman can't marry a man against his will, and so forth, simply don't know what they are talking about. I maintain that there are occasions upon which it behooves the bravest of men to run away.

We spent a very pleasant three weeks in dawdling along the west coast of Norway. It was a little late in the year, but the weather, for once in the way, was propitious, and the magnificent fjords, which are so often shrouded in rain and mist, showed themselves to us, day after day in unclouded grandeur. My friends were kind enough not to be too exacting. I could not put them in the way of getting any sport; but they said the scenery and the sunshine would do instead, and professed themselves satisfied with an occasional drive up unfrequented valleys, or a climb to the glaciers which overhang the Hardanger Fjord and its branches. One evening we had all gone ashore at Eide, and were strolling along and gazing at the sunset, when a string of carriages was seen approaching us, in the foremost of which was seated a lady, whom my companions at once pronounced to be an Englishwoman. They further remarked that she was an uncommonly well-turned-out one too. As for me, I said never a word; but my heart became as water within me. Ah me! that trim figure, that bottle-green Newmarket, that billycock hat, those neat little boots which rested in the stirrups of the carriage—had I not recognized them from afar? Oh, my prophetic soul!—my old woman!

She was grasping my hand before I knew where I was. Who would have thought of meeting me in Norway? This was really delightful! She had been so much pressed to come over by her friends, the somebodies (I don't remember their name—they must have been strange people), that at last she had consented; and now she was so glad she had come. She added, with one of those finger-squeezes which always made me feel hot and cold all over, "How horrid of you to run away like that! and never even to tell me where you were going!"

"It seems that you found out, though," said I; too much perturbed to observe the decent reticences of polite society.

She looked at me with an innocent wonder in those artistically enlarged eyes of hers. "Well, yes, I have found you," she answered; "but that is no thanks to you. I hope you are glad to be found." Now we must make some pleasant excursions together. I hear that there is a great deal to be seen in this neighborhood."

"Oh, yes: we'll make some pleasant excursions together, and we'll see the neighborhood," I echoed, grimly. "Does that schooner yacht lying alongside of us belong to your friends?"

She said it did, and I remembered having examined the vessel and having noticed that she had no auxiliary steam. A strong wind was blowing straight up the fjord too, and likely to hold—come! there was balm in Gilead after all.

Yet I was obliged to ask Mrs. Wynne to dine on board that evening. I didn't see my way to getting out of it. One of the men who were with me was already acquainted with her; she made herself exceedingly agreeable to the others; and, in short, if I had not asked her she would have asked herself, so that it didn't make much difference. I felt sure that I should pass a detestable evening, and my expectations were not disappointed. That woman's behavior was downright outrageous. Not only did she display an affectionate interest in my every proceeding; not only did she warn me, in a tone of quasi-wifely remonstrance, what I ought not to eat and drink, on account of my gout; but she would persist in talking as if our meeting had been the result of a preconcerted arrangement.

(To be continued.)

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