

MY. LAST KICK

to intercede in some way or other ! I'll be d—divorced first ! Let him believe or disbelieve just as he likes—I am certainly not going ever to broach the subject to him. If he asks me I'll tell him the truth. Besides, I have no merit in not being actually—er—guilty. Morally, I am. I knew perfectly well what I was doing when I ran away. If Austen were really great—or really in love, which is the same thing—he would take me back, guilty or not. My God, but one does not love a woman because she is virtuous or—as many men do—because she is vicious. A woman is a human being, neither a relic nor a—relish. Do I love my husband because I think he is virtuous ? Nonsense ! I'd love him if he were the most dissolute man in Europe—and Asia thrown in. I think it's a mean heart that bargains itself out. If the man I love came and said to me, ' I have just committed murder,' I'd say, ' Here is a basin of water and a clean towel.' It would not come into my head to say to him, ' Go away, I don't love you any more ! ' He would be just the same man I loved before. I am the same Phrynette I was before I ran away. Well then ? If I had small-pox now, that would be another thing ! I tell you, Médor, it's only woman who can love as unconsciously as one breathes, generously as one gives one's beauty to passers-by. And when I say woman I should have said the mother. She does not love her child because he is beautiful and good, but because he is her own. Well, I was Austen's own. What has he done with me ? Austen is careful not to leave his umbrella behind him, he looks back when he leaves a railway carriage to see that he forgets