

THE STORY CONTINUED IN SEVERAL NARRATIVES

1. THE NARRATIVE OF HESTER PINHORN, COOK IN THE SERVICE OF COUNT FOSCO

[Taken down from her own statement]

I am sorry to say that I have never learnt to read or write. I have been a hard-working woman all my life, and have kept a good character. I know that it is a sin and wickedness to say the thing which is not, and I will truly beware of doing so on this occasion. All that I know I will tell, and I humbly beg the gentleman who takes this down to put my language right as he goes on, and to make allowances for my being no scholar.

In this last summer I happened to be out of place (through no fault of my own), and I heard of a situation as plain cook, at Number Five, Forest Road, St. John's Wood. I took the place on trial. My master's name was Fosco. My mistress was an English lady. He was Count and she was Countess. There was a girl to do housemaid's work when I got there. She was not over-clean or tidy, but there was no harm in her. I and she were the only servants in the house.

Our master and mistress came after we got in; and as soon as they did come we were told, downstairs, that company was expected from the country.

The company was my mistress's niece, and the back bedroom on the first floor was got ready for her. My mistress mentioned to me that Lady Glyde (that was her name) was in poor health, and that I must be particular in my cooking accordingly. She was to come that day, as well as I can remember--but whatever you do, don't trust my memory in the matter. I am sorry to say it's no use asking me about days of the month, and such-like. Except Sundays, half my time I take no heed of them, being a hard-working woman and no scholar. All I know is Lady Glyde came, and when she did come, a fine fright she gave us all surely. I don't know how master brought her to the house, being hard at work at the time. But he did bring her in the afternoon, I think, and the housemaid opened the door to them, and showed them into the parlour. Before she had been long down in the kitchen again with me, we heard a hurry-scurry upstairs, and the parlour bell ringing like mad, and my mistress's voice calling out for help.

We both ran up, and there we saw the lady laid on the sofa, with her face ghastly white, and her hands fast clenched, and her head drawn down to one side. She had been taken with a sudden fright, my mistress said, and master he told us she was in a fit of convulsions. I ran out, knowing the neighbourhood a little better than the rest of them, to fetch the nearest doctor's help. The nearest help was at Goodricke's and Garth's, who worked together as partners, and had a good name and connection, as I have heard, all round St. John's Wood. Mr. Goodricke was in, and he came back with me directly.

It was some time before he could make himself of much use. The poor unfortunate lady fell out of one fit into another, and went on so till she was quite wearied out, and as helpless as a new-born babe. We then got her to bed. Mr. Goodricke went away to his house for medicine, and came back again in a quarter of an hour or less. Besides the medicine he brought a bit of hollow mahogany wood with him, shaped like a kind of trumpet, and after waiting a little while, he put one end over the lady's heart and the other to his ear, and listened carefully.

When he had done he says to my mistress, who was in the room, "This is a very serious case," he says, "I recommend you to write to Lady Glyde's friends directly." My mistress says to him, "Is it heart-disease?" And he says, "Yes, heart-disease of a most dangerous kind." He told her exactly what he thought was the matter, which I was not clever enough to understand. But I know this, he ended by saying that he was afraid neither his help nor any other doctor's help was likely to be of much service.

My mistress took this ill news more quietly than my master. He was a big, fat, odd sort of elderly man, who kept birds and white mice, and spoke to them as if they were so many Christian children. He seemed terribly cut up by what had happened. "Ah! poor Lady Glyde! poor dear Lady Glyde!" he says, and went stalking about, wringing his fat hands more like a play-actor than a gentleman. For one question my mistress asked the doctor about the lady's chances of getting round, he asked a good fifty at least. I declare he quite tormented us all, and when he was quiet at last, out he went into the bit of back garden, picking trumpety little nosegays, and asking me to take them upstairs and make the sick-room look pretty with them. As if THAT did any good. I think he must have been, at times, a little soft in his head. But he was not a bad master--he had a monstrous civil tongue of his own, and a jolly, easy, coaxing way with him. I liked him a deal better than my mistress. She was a hard one, if ever there was a hard one yet.

Towards night-time the lady roused up a little. She had been so wearied out, before that, by the convulsions, that she never stirred hand or foot, or spoke a word to anybody. She moved in the bed now, and stared about her at the room and us in it. She must have been a nice-looking lady when well, with light hair, and blue eyes and all that. Her rest was troubled at night--at least so I heard from my mistress, who sat up alone with her. I only went in once before going to bed to see if I could be of any use, and then she was talking to herself in a confused, rambling manner. She seemed to want sadly to speak to somebody who was absent from her somewhere. I couldn't catch the name the first time, and the second time master knocked at the door, with his regular mouthful of questions, and another of his trumpery nose-gays.

When I went in early the next morning, the lady was clean worn out again, and lay in a kind of faint sleep. Mr. Goodricke brought his partner, Mr. Garth, with him to advise. They said she must not be disturbed out of her rest on any account. They asked my mistress many questions, at the other end of the room, about what the lady's health had been in past times, and who had attended her, and whether she had ever suffered much and long together under distress of mind. I remember my mistress said "Yes" to that last question. And Mr. Goodricke looked at Mr. Garth, and shook his head; and Mr. Garth looked at Mr. Goodricke, and shook his head. They seemed to think that the distress might have something to do with the mischief at the lady's heart. She was but a frail thing to look at, poor creature! Very little strength at any time, I should say--very little strength.

Later on the same morning, when she woke, the lady took a sudden turn, and got seemingly a great deal better. I was not let in again to see her, no more was the housemaid, for the reason that she was not to be disturbed by strangers. What I heard of her being better was through my master. He was in wonderful good spirits about the change, and looked in at the kitchen window from the garden, with his great big curly-brimmed white hat on, to go out.

"Good Mrs. Cook," says he, "Lady Glyde is better. My mind is more easy than it was, and I am going out to stretch my big legs with a sunny little summer walk. Shall I order for you, shall I market for you, Mrs. Cook? What are you making there? A nice tart for dinner? Much crust, if you please--much crisp crust, my dear, that melts and crumbles delicious in the mouth." That was his way. He was past sixty, and fond of pastry. Just think of that!

The doctor came again in the forenoon, and saw for himself that Lady Glyde

had woke up better. He forbid us to talk to her, or to let her talk to us, in case she was that way disposed, saying she must be kept quiet before all things, and encouraged to sleep as much as possible. She did not seem to want to talk whenever I saw her, except overnight, when I couldn't make out what she was saying--she seemed too much worn down. Mr. Goodricke was not nearly in such good spirits about her as master. He said nothing when he came downstairs, except that he would call again at five o'clock.

About that time (which was before master came home again) the bell rang hard from the bedroom, and my mistress ran out into the landing, and called to me to go for Mr. Goodricke, and tell him the lady had fainted. I got on my bonnet and shawl, when, as good luck would have it, the doctor himself came to the house for his promised visit.

I let him in, and went upstairs along with him. "Lady Glyde was just as usual," says my mistress to him at the door; "she was awake, and looking about her in a strange, forlorn manner, when I heard her give a sort of half cry, and she fainted in a moment." The doctor went up to the bed, and stooped down over the sick lady. He looked very serious, all on a sudden, at the sight of her, and put his hand on her heart.

My mistress stared hard in Mr. Goodricke's face. "Not dead!" says she, whispering, and turning all of a tremble from head to foot.

"Yes," says the doctor, very quiet and grave. "Dead. I was afraid it would happen suddenly when I examined her heart yesterday." My mistress stepped back from the bedside while he was speaking, and trembled and trembled again. "Dead!" she whispers to herself; "dead so suddenly! dead so soon! What will the Count say?" Mr. Goodricke advised her to go downstairs, and quiet herself a little. "You have been sitting up all night," says he, "and your nerves are shaken. This person," says he, meaning me, "this person will stay in the room till I can send for the necessary assistance." My mistress did as he told her. "I must prepare the Count," she says. "I must carefully prepare the Count." And so she left us, shaking from head to foot, and went out.

"Your master is a foreigner," says Mr. Goodricke, when my mistress had left us. "Does he understand about registering the death?" "I can't rightly tell, sir," says I, "but I should think not." The doctor considered a minute, and then says he, "I don't usually do such things," says he, "but it may save the family trouble in this case if I register the death myself. I shall pass the district office in half an hour's time, and I can easily look in. Mention, if you please, that I will do so." "Yes, sir," says I, "with thanks, I'm sure, for your

kindness in thinking of it." "You don't mind staying here till I can send you the proper person?" says he. "No, sir," says I; "I'll stay with the poor lady till then. I suppose nothing more could be done, sir, than was done?" says I. "No," says he, "nothing; she must have suffered sadly before ever I saw her--the case was hopeless when I was called in." "Ah, dear me! we all come to it, sooner or later, don't we, sir?" says I. He gave no answer to that--he didn't seem to care about talking. He said, "Good-day," and went out.

I stopped by the bedside from that time till the time when Mr. Goodricke sent the person in, as he had promised. She was, by name, Jane Gould. I considered her to be a respectable-looking woman. She made no remark, except to say that she understood what was wanted of her, and that she had winded a many of them in her time.

How master bore the news, when he first heard it, is more than I can tell, not having been present. When I did see him he looked awfully overcome by it, to be sure. He sat quiet in a corner, with his fat hands hanging over his thick knees, and his head down, and his eyes looking at nothing. He seemed not so much sorry, as scared and dazed like, by what had happened. My mistress managed all that was to be done about the funeral. It must have cost a sight of money--the coffin, in particular, being most beautiful. The dead lady's husband was away, as we heard, in foreign parts. But my mistress (being her aunt) settled it with her friends in the country (Cumberland, I think) that she should be buried there, in the same grave along with her mother. Everything was done handsomely, in respect of the funeral, I say again, and master went down to attend the burying in the country himself. He looked grand in his deep mourning, with his big solemn face, and his slow walk, and his broad hatband--that he did!

In conclusion. I have to say, in answer to questions put to me--

- (1) That neither I nor my fellow-servant ever saw my master give Lady Glyde any medicine himself.
- (2) That he was never, to my knowledge and belief, left alone in the room with Lady Glyde.
- (3) That I am not able to say what caused the sudden fright, which my mistress informed me had seized the lady on her first coming into the house. The cause was never explained, either to me or to my fellow-servant.

The above statement has been read over in my presence. I have nothing to add to it, or to take away from it. I say, on my oath as a Christian woman,

this is the truth.

(Signed) HESTER PINHORN, Her + Mark.

2. THE NARRATIVE OF THE DOCTOR

To the Registrar of the Sub-District in which the undermentioned death took place.--I hereby certify that I attended Lady Glyde, aged Twenty-One last Birthday; that I last saw her on Thursday the 25th July 1850; that she died on the same day at No. 5 Forest Road, St. John's Wood, and that the cause of her death was Aneurism. Duration of disease not known.

(Signed) Alfred Goodricke.

Prof. Title. M.R.C.S. Eng., L.S.A. Address, 12 Croydon Gardens St. John's Wood.

3. THE NARRATIVE OF JANE GOULD

I was the person sent in by Mr. Goodricke to do what was right and needful by the remains of a lady who had died at the house named in the certificate which precedes this. I found the body in charge of the servant, Hester Pinhorn. I remained with it, and prepared it at the proper time for the grave. It was laid in the coffin in my presence, and I afterwards saw the coffin screwed down previous to its removal. When that had been done, and not before, I received what was due to me and left the house. I refer persons who may wish to investigate my character to Mr. Goodricke. He will bear witness that I can be trusted to tell the truth.

(Signed) JANE GOULD

4. THE NARRATIVE OF THE TOMBSTONE

Sacred to the Memory of Laura, Lady Glyde, wife of Sir Percival Glyde, Bart., of Blackwater Park, Hampshire, and daughter of the late Philip Fairlie, Esq., of Limmeridge House, in this parish. Born March 27th, 1829; married December 22nd, 1849; died July 25th, 1850.

5. THE NARRATIVE OF WALTER HARTRIGHT

Early in the summer of 1850 I and my surviving companions left the wilds and forests of Central America for home. Arrived at the coast, we took ship there for England. The vessel was wrecked in the Gulf of Mexico--I was among the few saved from the sea. It was my third escape from peril of death. Death by disease, death by the Indians, death by drowning--all three had approached me; all three had passed me by.

The survivors of the wreck were rescued by an American vessel bound for Liverpool. The ship reached her port on the thirteenth day of October 1850. We landed late in the afternoon, and I arrived in London the same night.

These pages are not the record of my wanderings and my dangers away from home. The motives which led me from my country and my friends to a new world of adventure and peril are known. From that self-imposed exile I came back, as I had hoped, prayed, believed I should come back--a changed man. In the waters of a new life I had tempered my nature afresh. In the stern school of extremity and danger my will had learnt to be strong, my heart to be resolute, my mind to rely on itself. I had gone out to fly from my own future. I came back to face it, as a man should.

To face it with that inevitable suppression of myself which I knew it would demand from me. I had parted with the worst bitterness of the past, but not with my heart's remembrance of the sorrow and the tenderness of that memorable time. I had not ceased to feel the one irreparable disappointment of my life--I had only learnt to bear it. Laura Fairlie was in all my thoughts when the ship bore me away, and I looked my last at England. Laura Fairlie was in all my thoughts when the ship brought me back, and the morning light showed the friendly shore in view.

My pen traces the old letters as my heart goes back to the old love. I write of her as Laura Fairlie still. It is hard to think of her, it is hard to speak of her, by her husband's name.

There are no more words of explanation to add on my appearance for the second time in these pages. This narrative, if I have the strength and the courage to write it, may now go on.

My first anxieties and first hopes when the morning came centred in my mother and my sister. I felt the necessity of preparing them for the joy and

surprise of my return, after an absence during which it had been impossible for them to receive any tidings of me for months past. Early in the morning I sent a letter to the Hampstead Cottage, and followed it myself in an hour's time.

When the first meeting was over, when our quiet and composure of other days began gradually to return to us, I saw something in my mother's face which told me that a secret oppression lay heavy on her heart. There was more than love--there was sorrow in the anxious eyes that looked on me so tenderly--there was pity in the kind hand that slowly and fondly strengthened its hold on mine. We had no concealments from each other. She knew how the hope of my life had been wrecked--she knew why I had left her. It was on my lips to ask as composedly as I could if any letter had come for me from Miss Halcombe, if there was any news of her sister that I might hear. But when I looked in my mother's face I lost courage to put the question even in that guarded form. I could only say, doubtingly and restrainedly--

"You have something to tell me."

My sister, who had been sitting opposite to us, rose suddenly without a word of explanation--rose and left the room.

My mother moved closer to me on the sofa and put her arms round my neck. Those fond arms trembled--the tears flowed fast over the faithful loving face.

"Walter!" she whispered, "my own darling! my heart is heavy for you. Oh, my son! my son! try to remember that I am still left!"

My head sank on her bosom. She had said all in saying those words.

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It was the morning of the third day since my return--the morning of the sixteenth of October.

I had remained with them at the cottage--I had tried hard not to embitter the happiness of my return to THEM as it was embittered to ME. I had done all man could to rise after the shock, and accept my life resignedly--to let my great sorrow come in tenderness to my heart, and not in despair. It was useless and hopeless. No tears soothed my aching eyes, no relief came to me from my sister's sympathy or my mother's love.

On that third morning I opened my heart to them. At last the words passed my lips which I had longed to speak on the day when my mother told me of her death.

"Let me go away alone for a little while," I said. "I shall bear it better when I have looked once more at the place where I first saw her--when I have knelt and prayed by the grave where they have laid her to rest."

I departed on my journey--my journey to the grave of Laura Fairlie.

It was a quiet autumn afternoon when I stopped at the solitary station, and set forth alone on foot by the well-remembered road. The waning sun was shining faintly through thin white clouds--the air was warm and still--the peacefulness of the lonely country was overshadowed and saddened by the influence of the falling year.

I reached the moor--I stood again on the brow of the hill--I looked on along the path--and there were the familiar garden trees in the distance, the clear sweeping semicircle of the drive, the high white walls of Limmeridge House. The chances and changes, the wanderings and dangers of months and months past, all shrank and shrivelled to nothing in my mind. It was like yesterday since my feet had last trodden the fragrant heathy ground. I thought I should see her coming to meet me, with her little straw hat shading her face, her simple dress fluttering in the air, and her well-filled sketch-book ready in her hand.

Oh death, thou hast thy sting! oh, grave, thou hast thy victory!

I turned aside, and there below me in the glen was the lonesome grey church, the porch where I had waited for the coming of the woman in white, the hills encircling the quiet burial-ground, the brook bubbling cold over its stony bed. There was the marble cross, fair and white, at the head of the tomb--the tomb that now rose over mother and daughter alike.

I approached the grave. I crossed once more the low stone stile, and bared my head as I touched the sacred ground. Sacred to gentleness and goodness, sacred to reverence and grief.

I stopped before the pedestal from which the cross rose. On one side of it, on the side nearest to me, the newly-cut inscription met my eyes--the hard, clear, cruel black letters which told the story of her life and death. I tried to read them. I did read as far as the name. "Sacred to the Memory of Laura--"

" The kind blue eyes dim with tears--the fair head drooping wearily--the innocent parting words which implored me to leave her--oh, for a happier last memory of her than this; the memory I took away with me, the memory I bring back with me to her grave!

A second time I tried to read the inscription. I saw at the end the date of her death, and above it----

Above it there were lines on the marble--there was a name among them which disturbed my thoughts of her. I went round to the other side of the grave, where there was nothing to read, nothing of earthly vileness to force its way between her spirit and mine.

I knelt down by the tomb. I laid my hands, I laid my head on the broad white stone, and closed my weary eyes on the earth around, on the light above. I let her come back to me. Oh, my love! my love! my heart may speak to you NOW! It is yesterday again since we parted--yesterday, since your dear hand lay in mine--yesterday, since my eyes looked their last on you. My love! my love!

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Time had flowed on, and silence had fallen like thick night over its course.

The first sound that came after the heavenly peace rustled faintly like a passing breath of air over the grass of the burial-ground. I heard it nearing me slowly, until it came changed to my ear--came like footsteps moving onward--then stopped.

I looked up.

The sunset was near at hand. The clouds had parted--the slanting light fell mellow over the hills. The last of the day was cold and clear and still in the quiet valley of the dead.

Beyond me, in the burial-ground, standing together in the cold clearness of the lower light, I saw two women. They were looking towards the tomb, looking towards me.

Two.

They came a little on, and stopped again. Their veils were down, and hid their faces from me. When they stopped, one of them raised her veil. In the

still evening light I saw the face of Marian Halcombe.

Changed, changed as if years had passed over it! The eyes large and wild, and looking at me with a strange terror in them. The face worn and wasted piteously. Pain and fear and grief written on her as with a brand.

I took one step towards her from the grave. She never moved--she never spoke. The veiled woman with her cried out faintly. I stopped. The springs of my life fell low, and the shuddering of an unutterable dread crept over me from head to foot.

The woman with the veiled face moved away from her companion, and came towards me slowly. Left by herself, standing by herself, Marian Halcombe spoke. It was the voice that I remembered--the voice not changed, like the frightened eyes and the wasted face.

"My dream! my dream!" I heard her say those words softly in the awful silence. She sank on her knees, and raised her clasped hands to heaven. "Father! strengthen him. Father! help him in his hour of need."

The woman came on, slowly and silently came on. I looked at her--at her, and at none other, from that moment.

The voice that was praying for me faltered and sank low--then rose on a sudden, and called affrightedly, called despairingly to me to come away.

But the veiled woman had possession of me, body and soul. She stopped on one side of the grave. We stood face to face with the tombstone between us. She was close to the inscription on the side of the pedestal. Her gown touched the black letters.

The voice came nearer, and rose and rose more passionately still. "Hide your face! don't look at her! Oh, for God's sake, spare him----"

The woman lifted her veil.

"Sacred to the Memory of Laura, Lady Glyde----"

Laura, Lady Glyde, was standing by the inscription, and was looking at me over the grave.

[The Second Epoch of the Story closes here.]