

Chapter XIII

'Philistia, be thou glad of me!'

Grandcourt having made up his mind to marry Miss Harleth, showed a power of adapting means to ends. During the next fortnight there was hardly a day on which by some arrangement or other he did not see her, or prove by emphatic attentions that she occupied his thoughts. His cousin, Mrs. Torrington, was now doing the honors of his house, so that Mrs. Davilow and Gwendolen could be invited to a large party at Diplow in which there were many witnesses how the host distinguished the dowerless beauty, and showed no solicitude about the heiress. The world - I mean Mr Gascoigne and all the families worth speaking of within visiting distance of Pennicote - felt an assurance on the subject which in the rector's mind converted itself into a resolution to do his duty by his niece and see that the settlements were adequate. Indeed the wonder to him and Mrs. Davilow was that the offer for which so many suitable occasions presented themselves had not been already made; and in this wonder Grandcourt himself was not without a share. When he had told his resolution to Lush he had thought that the affair would be concluded more quickly, and to his own surprise he had repeatedly promised himself in a morning that he would to-day give Gwendolen the opportunity of accepting him, and had found in the evening that the necessary formality was still unaccomplished. This remarkable fact served to heighten his determination on another day. He had never admitted to himself that Gwendolen might refuse him, but - heaven help us all! - we are often unable to act on our certainties; our objection to a contrary issue (were it possible) is so strong that it rises like a spectral illusion between us and our certainty; we are rationally sure that the blind worm can not bite us mortally, but it would be so intolerable to be bitten, and the creature has a biting look - we decline to handle it.

He had asked leave to have a beautiful horse of his brought for Gwendolen to ride. Mrs. Davilow was to accompany her in the carriage, and they were to go to Diplow to lunch, Grandcourt conducting them. It was a fine mid- harvest time, not too warm for a noonday ride of five miles to be delightful; the poppies glowed on the borders of the fields, there was enough breeze to move gently like a social spirit among the ears of uncut corn, and to wing the shadow of a cloud across the soft gray downs; here the sheaves were standing, there the horses were straining their muscles under the last load from a wide space of stubble, but everywhere the green pasture made a broader setting for the corn-fields, and the cattle took their rest under wide branches. The road lay through a bit of country where the dairy-farms looked much as they did in the days of our forefathers - where

peace and permanence seemed to find a home away from the busy change that sent the railway train flying in the distance.

But the spirit of peace and permanence did not penetrate poor Mrs. Davilow's mind so as to overcome her habit of uneasy foreboding. Gwendolen and Grandcourt cantering in front of her, and then slackening their pace to a conversational walk till the carriage came up with them again, made a gratifying sight; but it served chiefly to keep up the conflict of hopes and fears about her daughter's lot. Here was an irresistible opportunity for a lover to speak and put an end to all uncertainties, and Mrs. Davilow could only hope with trembling that Gwendolen's decision would be favorable. Certainly if Rex's love had been repugnant to her, Mr Grandcourt had the advantage of being in complete contrast with Rex; and that he had produced some quite novel impression on her seemed evident in her marked abstinence from satirical observations, nay, her total silence about his characteristics, a silence which Mrs. Davilow did not dare to break. 'Is he a man she would be happy with?' - was a question that inevitably arose in the mother's mind. 'Well, perhaps as happy as she would be with any one else - or as most other women are' - was the answer with which she tried to quiet herself; for she could not imagine Gwendolen under the influence of any feeling which would make her satisfied in what we traditionally call 'mean circumstances.'

Grandcourt's own thought was looking in the same direction: he wanted to have done with the uncertainty that belonged to his not having spoken. As to any further uncertainty - well, it was something without any reasonable basis, some quality in the air which acted as an irritant to his wishes.

Gwendolen enjoyed the riding, but her pleasure did not break forth in girlish unpremeditated chat and laughter as it did on that morning with Rex. She spoke a little, and even laughed, but with a lightness as of a far-off echo: for her too there was some peculiar quality in the air - not, she was sure, any subjugation of her will by Mr Grandcourt, and the splendid prospects he meant to offer her; for Gwendolen desired every one, that dignified gentleman himself included, to understand that she was going to do just as she liked, and that they had better not calculate on her pleasing them. If she chose to take this husband, she would have him know that she was not going to renounce her freedom, or according to her favorite formula, 'not going to do as other women did.'

Grandcourt's speeches this morning were, as usual, all of that brief sort which never fails to make a conversational figure when the speaker is held important in his circle. Stopping so soon, they give signs of a suppressed and formidable ability so say more, and have also the meritorious quality of allowing lengthiness to others.

'How do you like Criterion's paces?' he said, after they had entered the park and were slacking from a canter to a walk.

'He is delightful to ride. I should like to have a leap with him, if it would not frighten mamma. There was a good wide channel we passed five minutes ago. I should like to have a gallop back and take it.'

'Pray do. We can take it together.'

'No, thanks. Mamma is so timid - if she saw me it might make her ill.'

'Let me go and explain. Criterion would take it without fail.'

'No - indeed - you are very kind - but it would alarm her too much. I dare take any leap when she is not by; but I do it and don't tell her about it.'

'We can let the carriage pass and then set off.'

'No, no, pray don't think of it any more: I spoke quite randomly,' said Gwendolen; she began to feel a new objection to carrying out her own proposition.

'But Mrs. Davilow knows I shall take care of you.'

'Yes, but she would think of you as having to take care of my broken neck.'

There was a considerable pause before Grandcourt said, looking toward her, 'I should like to have the right always to take care of you.'

Gwendolen did not turn her eyes on him; it seemed to her a long while that she was first blushing, and then turning pale, but to Grandcourt's rate of judgment she answered soon enough, with the lightest flute-tone and a careless movement of the head, 'Oh, I am not sure that I want to be taken care of: if I chose to risk breaking my neck, I should like to be at liberty to do it.'

She checked her horse as she spoke, and turned in her saddle, looking toward the advancing carriage. Her eyes swept across Grandcourt as she made this movement, but there was no language in them to correct the carelessness of her reply. At that very moment she was aware that she was risking something - not her neck, but the possibility of finally checking Grandcourt's advances, and she did not feel contented with the possibility.

'Damn her!' thought Grandcourt, as he checked his horse. He was not a wordy thinker, and this explosive phrase stood for mixed

impressions which eloquent interpreters might have expanded into some sentences full of an irritated sense that he was being mystified, and a determination that this girl should not make a fool of him. Did she want him to throw himself at her feet and declare that he was dying for her? It was not by that gate that she could enter on the privileges he could give her. Or did she expect him to write his proposals? Equally a delusion. He would not make his offer in any way that could place him definitely in the position of being rejected. But as to her accepting him, she had done it already in accepting his marked attentions: and anything which happened to break them off would be understood to her disadvantage. She was merely coquetting, then?

However, the carriage came up, and no further *tete-a-tete* could well occur before their arrival at the house, where there was abundant company, to whom Gwendolen, clad in riding-dress, with her hat laid aside, clad also in the repute of being chosen by Mr Grandcourt, was naturally a centre of observation; and since the objectionable Mr Lush was not there to look at her, this stimulus of admiring attention heightened her spirits, and dispersed, for the time, the uneasy consciousness of divided impulses which threatened her with repentance of her own acts. Whether Grandcourt had been offended or not there was no judging: his manners were unchanged, but Gwendolen's acuteness had not gone deeper than to discern that his manners were no clue for her, and because these were unchanged she was not the less afraid of him.

She had not been at Diplow before except to dine; and since certain points of view from the windows and the garden were worth showing, Lady Flora Hollis proposed after luncheon, when some of the guests had dispersed, and the sun was sloping toward four o'clock, that the remaining party should make a little exploration. Here came frequent opportunities when Grandcourt might have retained Gwendolen apart, and have spoken to her unheard. But no! He indeed spoke to no one else, but what he said was nothing more eager or intimate than it had been in their first interview. He looked at her not less than usual; and some of her defiant spirit having come back, she looked full at him in return, not caring - rather preferring - that his eyes had no expression in them.

But at last it seemed as if he entertained some contrivance. After they had nearly made the tour of the grounds, the whole party stopped by the pool to be amused with Fetch's accomplishment of bringing a water lily to the bank like Cowper's spaniel Beau, and having been disappointed in his first attempt insisted on his trying again.

Here Grandcourt, who stood with Gwendolen outside the group, turned deliberately, and fixing his eyes on a knoll planted with American shrubs, and having a winding path up it, said languidly -

'This is a bore. Shall we go up there?'

'Oh, certainly - since we are exploring,' said Gwendolen. She was rather pleased, and yet afraid.

The path was too narrow for him to offer his arm, and they walked up in silence. When they were on the bit of platform at the summit, Grandcourt said -

'There is nothing to be seen here: the thing was not worth climbing.'

How was it that Gwendolen did not laugh? She was perfectly silent, holding up the folds of her robe like a statue, and giving a harder grasp to the handle of her whip, which she had snatched up automatically with her hat when they had first set off.

'What sort of a place do you prefer?' said Grandcourt.

'Different places are agreeable in their way. On the whole, I think, I prefer places that are open and cheerful. I am not fond of anything sombre.'

'Your place of Offendene is too sombre.'

'It is, rather.'

'You will not remain there long, I hope.'

'Oh, yes, I think so. Mamma likes to be near her sister.'

Silence for a short space.

'It is not to be supposed that *you* will always live there, though Mrs. Davilow may.'

'I don't know. We women can't go in search of adventures - to find out the North-West Passage or the source of the Nile, or to hunt tigers in the East. We must stay where we grow, or where the gardeners like to transplant us. We are brought up like the flowers, to look as pretty as we can, and be dull without complaining. That is my notion about the plants; they are often bored, and that is the reason why some of them have got poisonous. What do you think?' Gwendolen had run on rather nervously, lightly whipping the rhododendron bush in front of her.

'I quite agree. Most things are bores,' said Grandcourt, his mind having been pushed into an easy current, away from its intended track. But, after a moment's pause, he continued in his broken, refined drawl -

'But a woman can be married.'

'Some women can.'

'You, certainly, unless you are obstinately cruel.'

'I am not sure that I am not both cruel and obstinate.' Here Gwendolen suddenly turned her head and looked full at Grandcourt, whose eyes she had felt to be upon her throughout their conversation. She was wondering what the effect of looking at him would be on herself rather than on him.

He stood perfectly still, half a yard or more away from her; and it flashed through her mind what a sort of lotus-eater's stupor had begun in him and was taking possession of her. Then he said -

'Are you as uncertain about yourself as you make others about you?'

'I am quite uncertain about myself; I don't know how uncertain others may be.'

'And you wish them to understand that you don't care?' said Grandcourt, with a touch of new hardness in his tone.

'I did not say that,' Gwendolen replied, hesitatingly, and turning her eyes away whipped the rhododendron bush again. She wished she were on horseback that she might set off on a canter. It was impossible to set off running down the knoll.

'You do care, then,' said Grandcourt, not more quickly, but with a softened drawl.

'Ha! my whip!' said Gwendolen, in a little scream of distress. She had let it go - what could be more natural in a slight agitation? - and - but this seemed less natural in a gold-handled whip which had been left altogether to itself - it had gone with some force over the immediate shrubs, and had lodged itself in the branches of an azalea half-way down the knoll. She could run down now, laughing prettily, and Grandcourt was obliged to follow; but she was beforehand with him in rescuing the whip, and continued on her way to the level ground, when she paused and looked at Grandcourt with an exasperating brightness in her glance and a heightened color, as if she had carried

a triumph, and these indications were still noticeable to Mrs. Davilow when Gwendolen and Grandcourt joined the rest of the party.

'It is all coquetting,' thought Grandcourt; 'the next time I beckon she will come down.'

It seemed to him likely that this final beckoning might happen the very next day, when there was to be a picnic archery meeting in Cardell Chase, according to the plan projected on the evening of the ball.

Even in Gwendolen's mind that result was one of two likelihoods that presented themselves alternately, one of two decisions toward which she was being precipitated, as if they were two sides of a boundary-line, and she did not know on which she should fall. This subjection to a possible self, a self not to be absolutely predicted about, caused her some astonishment and terror; her favorite key of life - doing as she liked - seemed to fail her, and she could not foresee what at a given moment she might like to do. The prospect of marrying Grandcourt really seemed more attractive to her than she had believed beforehand that any marriage could be: the dignities, the luxuries, the power of doing a great deal of what she liked to do, which had now come close to her, and within her choice to secure or to lose, took hold of her nature as if it had been the strong odor of what she had only imagined and longed for before. And Grandcourt himself? He seemed as little of a flaw in his fortunes as a lover and husband could possibly be. Gwendolen wished to mount the chariot and drive the plunging horses herself, with a spouse by her side who would fold his arms and give her his countenance without looking ridiculous. Certainly, with all her perspicacity, and all the reading which seemed to her mamma dangerously instructive, her judgment was consciously a little at fault before Grandcourt. He was adorably quiet and free from absurdities - he would be a husband to suit with the best appearance a woman could make. But what else was he? He had been everywhere, and seen everything. *That* was desirable, and especially gratifying as a preamble to his supreme preference for Gwendolen Harleth. He did not appear to enjoy anything much. That was not necessary: and the less he had of particular tastes, or desires, the more freedom his wife was likely to have in following hers. Gwendolen conceived that after marriage she would most probably be able to manage him thoroughly.

How was it that he caused her unusual constraint now? - that she was less daring and playful in her talk with him than with any other admirer she had known? That absence of demonstrativeness which she was glad of, acted as a charm in more senses than one, and was slightly benumbing. Grandcourt after all was formidable - a handsome lizard of a hitherto unknown species, riot of the lively, darting kind. But Gwendolen knew hardly anything about lizards, and ignorance

gives one a large range of probabilities. This splendid specimen was probably gentle, suitable as a boudoir pet: what may not a lizard be, if you know nothing to the contrary? Her acquaintance with Grandcourt was such that no accomplishment suddenly revealed in him would have surprised her. And he was so little suggestive of drama, that it hardly occurred to her to think with any detail how his life of thirty-six years had been passed: in general, she imagined him always cold and dignified, not likely ever to have committed himself. He had hunted the tiger - had he ever been in love or made love? The one experience and the other seemed alike remote in Gwendolen's fancy from the Mr Grandcourt who had come to Diplow in order apparently to make a chief epoch in her destiny - perhaps by introducing her to that state of marriage which she had resolved to make a state of greater freedom than her girlhood. And on the whole she wished to marry him; he suited her purpose; her prevailing, deliberate intention was, to accept him.

But was she going to fulfill her deliberate intention? She began to be afraid of herself, and to find out a certain difficulty in doing as she liked. Already her assertion of independence in evading his advances had been carried farther than was necessary, and she was thinking with some anxiety what she might do on the next occasion.

Seated according to her habit with her back to the horses on their drive homeward, she was completely under the observation of her mamma, who took the excitement and changefulness in the expression of her eyes, her unwonted absence of mind and total silence, as unmistakable signs that something unprecedented had occurred between her and Grandcourt. Mrs. Davilow's uneasiness determined her to risk some speech on the subject: the Gascoignes were to dine at Offendene, and in what had occurred this morning there might be some reason for consulting the rector; not that she expected him anymore than herself to influence Gwendolen, but that her anxious mind wanted to be disburdened.

'Something has happened, dear?' she began, in a tender tone of question.

Gwendolen looked round, and seeming to be roused to the consciousness of her physical self, took off her gloves and then her hat, that the soft breeze might blow on her head. They were in a retired bit of the road, where the long afternoon shadows from the bordering trees fell across it and no observers were within sight. Her eyes continued to meet her mother's, but she did not speak.

'Mr Grandcourt has been saying something? - Tell me, dear.' The last words were uttered beseechingly.

'What am I to tell you, mamma?' was the perverse answer.

'I am sure something has agitated you. You ought to confide in me, Gwen. You ought not to leave me in doubt and anxiety.' Mrs. Davilow's eyes filled with tears.

'Mamma, dear, please don't be miserable,' said Gwendolen, with pettish remonstrance. 'It only makes me more so. I am in doubt myself.'

'About Mr Grandcourt's intentions?' said Mrs. Davilow, gathering determination from her alarms.

'No; not at all,' said Gwendolen, with some curtness, and a pretty little toss of the head as she put on her hat again.

'About whether you will accept him, then?'

'Precisely.'

'Have you given him a doubtful answer?'

'I have given him no answer at all.'

'He *has* spoken so that you could not misunderstand him?'

'As far as I would let him speak.'

'You expect him to persevere?' Mrs. Davilow put this question rather anxiously, and receiving no answer, asked another: 'You don't consider that you have discouraged him?'

'I dare say not.'

'I thought you liked him, dear,' said Mrs. Davilow, timidly.

'So I do, mamma, as liking goes. There is less to dislike about him than about most men. He is quiet and *distingue*.' Gwendolen so far spoke with a pouting sort of gravity; but suddenly she recovered some of her mischievousness, and her face broke into a smile as she added - 'Indeed he has all the qualities that would make a husband tolerable - battlement, veranda, stable, etc., no grins and no glass in his eye.'

'Do be serious with me for a moment, dear. Am I to understand that you mean to accept him?'

'Oh, pray, mamma, leave me to myself,' said Gwendolen, with a pettish distress in her voice.

And Mrs. Davilow said no more.

When they got home Gwendolen declared that she would not dine. She was tired, and would come down in the evening after she had taken some rest. The probability that her uncle would hear what had passed did not trouble her. She was convinced that whatever he might say would be on the side of her accepting Grandcourt, and she wished to accept him if she could. At this moment she would willingly have had weights hung on her own caprice.

Mr Gascoigne did hear - not Gwendolen's answers repeated verbatim, but a softened generalized account of them. The mother conveyed as vaguely as the keen rector's questions would let her the impression that Gwendolen was in some uncertainty about her own mind, but inclined on the whole to acceptance. The result was that the uncle felt himself called on to interfere; he did not conceive that he should do his duty in withholding direction from his niece in a momentous crisis of this kind. Mrs. Davilow ventured a hesitating opinion that perhaps it would be safer to say nothing - Gwendolen was so sensitive (she did not like to say willful). But the rector's was a firm mind, grasping its first judgments tenaciously and acting on them promptly, whence counter-judgments were no more for him than shadows fleeting across the solid ground to which he adjusted himself.

This match with Grandcourt presented itself to him as a sort of public affair; perhaps there were ways in which it might even strengthen the establishment. To the rector, whose father (nobody would have suspected it, and nobody was told) had risen to be a provincial corn-dealer, aristocratic heirship resembled regal heirship in excepting its possessor from the ordinary standard of moral judgments, Grandcourt, the almost certain baronet, the probable peer, was to be ranged with public personages, and was a match to be accepted on broad general grounds national and ecclesiastical. Such public personages, it is true, are often in the nature of giants which an ancient community may have felt pride and safety in possessing, though, regarded privately, these born eminences must often have been inconvenient and even noisome. But of the future husband personally Mr Gascoigne was disposed to think the best. Gossip is a sort of smoke that comes from the dirty tobacco-pipes of those who diffuse it: it proves nothing but the bad taste of the smoker. But if Grandcourt had really made any deeper or more unfortunate experiments in folly than were common in young men of high prospects, he was of an age to have finished them. All accounts can be suitably wound up when a man has not ruined himself, and the expense may be taken as an insurance against future error. This was the view of practical wisdom; with reference to higher views, repentance had a supreme moral and religious value. There was every

reason to believe that a woman of well-regulated mind would be happy with Grandcourt.

It was no surprise to Gwendolen on coming down to tea to be told that her uncle wished to see her in the dining-room. He threw aside the paper as she entered and greeted her with his usual kindness. As his wife had remarked, he always 'made much' of Gwendolen, and her importance had risen of late. 'My dear,' he said, in a fatherly way, moving a chair for her as he held her hand, 'I want to speak to you on a subject which is more momentous than any other with regard to your welfare. You will guess what I mean. But I shall speak to you with perfect directness: in such matters I consider myself bound to act as your father. You have no objection, I hope?'

'Oh dear, no, uncle. You have always been very kind to me,' said Gwendolen, frankly. This evening she was willing, if it were possible, to be a little fortified against her troublesome self, and her resistant temper was in abeyance. The rector's mode of speech always conveyed a thrill of authority, as of a word of command: it seemed to take for granted that there could be no wavering in the audience, and that every one was going to be rationally obedient.

'It is naturally a satisfaction to me that the prospect of a marriage for you - advantageous in the highest degree - has presented itself so early. I do not know exactly what has passed between you and Mr Grandcourt, but I presume there can be little doubt, from the way in which he has distinguished you, that he desires to make you his wife.'

Gwendolen did not speak immediately, and her uncle said with more emphasis -

'Have you any doubt of that yourself, my dear?'

'I suppose that is what he has been thinking of. But he may have changed his mind to-morrow,' said Gwendolen.

'Why to-morrow? Has he made advances which you have discouraged?'

'I think he meant - he began to make advances - but I did not encourage them. I turned the conversation.'

'Will you confide in me so far as to tell me your reasons?'

'I am not sure that I had any reasons, uncle.' Gwendolen laughed rather artificially.

'You are quite capable of reflecting, Gwendolen. You are aware that this is not a trivial occasion, and it concerns your establishment for life under circumstances which may not occur again. You have a duty here both to yourself and your family. I wish to understand whether you have any ground for hesitating as to your acceptance of Mr Grandcourt.'

'I suppose I hesitate without grounds.' Gwendolen spoke rather poutingly, and her uncle grew suspicious.

'Is he disagreeable to you personally?'

'No.'

'Have you heard anything of him which has affected you disagreeably?' The rector thought it impossible that Gwendolen could have heard the gossip he had heard, but in any case he must endeavor to put all things in the right light for her.

'I have heard nothing about him except that he is a great match,' said Gwendolen, with some sauciness; 'and that affects me very agreeably.'

'Then, my dear Gwendolen, I have nothing further to say than this: you hold your fortune in your own hands - a fortune such as rarely happens to a girl in your circumstances - a fortune in fact which almost takes the question out of the range of mere personal feeling, and makes your acceptance of it a duty. If Providence offers you power and position - especially when unclogged by any conditions that are repugnant to you - your course is one of responsibility, into which caprice must not enter. A man does not like to have his attachment trifled with: he may not be at once repelled - these things are matters of individual disposition. But the trifling may be carried too far. And I must point out to you that in case Mr Grandcourt were repelled without your having refused him - without your having intended ultimately to refuse him, your situation would be a humiliating and painful one. I, for my part, should regard you with severe disapprobation, as the victim of nothing else than your own coquetry and folly.'

Gwendolen became pallid as she listened to this admonitory speech. The ideas it raised had the force of sensations. Her resistant courage would not help her here, because her uncle was not urging her against her own resolve; he was pressing upon her the motives of dread which she already felt; he was making her more conscious of the risks that lay within herself. She was silent, and the rector observed that he had produced some strong effect.

'I mean this in kindness, my dear.' His tone had softened.

'I am aware of that, uncle,' said Gwendolen, rising and shaking her head back, as if to rouse herself out of painful passivity. 'I am not foolish. I know that I must be married some time - before it is too late. And I don't see how I could do better than marry Mr Grandcourt. I mean to accept him, if possible.' She felt as if she were reinforcing herself by speaking with this decisiveness to her uncle.

But the rector was a little startled by so bare a version of his own meaning from those young lips. He wished that in her mind his advice should be taken in an infusion of sentiments proper to a girl, and such as are presupposed in the advice of a clergyman, although he may not consider them always appropriate to be put forward. He wished his niece parks, carriages, a title - everything that would make this world a pleasant abode; but he wished her not to be cynical - to be, on the contrary, religiously dutiful, and have warm domestic affections.

'My dear Gwendolen,' he said, rising also, and speaking with benignant gravity, 'I trust that you will find in marriage a new fountain of duty and affection. Marriage is the only true and satisfactory sphere of a woman, and if your marriage with Mr Grandcourt should be happily decided upon, you will have, probably, an increasing power, both of rank and wealth, which may be used for the benefit of others. These considerations are something higher than romance! You are fitted by natural gifts for a position which, considering your birth and early prospects, could hardly be looked forward to as in the ordinary course of things; and I trust that, you will grace it, not only by those personal gifts, but by a good and consistent life.'

'I hope mamma will be the happier,' said Gwendolen, in a more cheerful way, lifting her hands backward to her neck and moving toward the door. She wanted to waive those higher considerations.

Mr Gascoigne felt that he had come to a satisfactory understanding with his niece, and had furthered her happy settlement in life by furthering her engagement to Grandcourt. Meanwhile there was another person to whom the contemplation of that issue had been a motive for some activity, and who believed that he, too, on this particular day had done something toward bringing about a favorable decision in *his* sense - which happened to be the reverse of the rector's.

Mr Lush's absence from Diplow during Gwendolen's visit had been due, not to any fear on his part of meeting that supercilious young lady, or of being abashed by her frank dislike, but to an engagement from which he expected important consequences. He was gone, in fact, to the Wanchester station to meet a lady, accompanied by a maid

and two children, whom he put into a fly, and afterward followed to the hotel of the Golden Keys, in that town. An impressive woman, whom many would turn to look at again in passing; her figure was slim and sufficiently tall, her face rather emaciated, so that its sculpturesque beauty was the more pronounced, her crisp hair perfectly black, and her large, anxious eyes what we call black. Her dress was soberly correct, her age, perhaps, physically more advanced than the number of years would imply, but hardly less than seven-and-thirty. An uneasy-looking woman: her glance seemed to presuppose that the people and things were going to be unfavorable to her, while she was, nevertheless, ready to meet them with resolution. The children were lovely - a dark-haired girl of six or more, a fairer boy of five. When Lush incautiously expressed some surprise at her having brought the children, she said, with a sharp-toned intonation -

‘Did you suppose I should come wandering about here by myself? Why should I not bring all four if I liked?’

‘Oh, certainly,’ said Lush, with his usual fluent *nonchalance*.

He stayed an hour or so in conference with her, and rode back to Diplow in a state of mind that was at once hopeful and busily anxious as to the execution of the little plan on which his hopefulness was based. Grandcourt's marriage to Gwendolen Harleth would not, he believed, be much of a good to either of them, and it would plainly be fraught with disagreeables to himself. But now he felt confident enough to say inwardly, ‘I will take, nay, I will lay odds that the marriage will never happen.’