

## Chapter LV

'Ritorna a tua scienza Che vuoi, quanto la cosa e piu perfetta Piu senta if bene, e cosi la doglienza.' - DANTE.

When Deronda met Gwendolen and Grandcourt on the staircase, his mind was seriously preoccupied. He had just been summoned to the second interview with his mother.

In two hours after his parting from her he knew that the Princess Halm- Eberstein had left the hotel, and so far as the purpose of his journey to Genoa was concerned, he might himself have set off on his way to Mainz, to deliver the letter from Joseph Kalonymos, and get possession of the family chest. But mixed mental conditions, which did not resolve themselves into definite reasons, hindered him from departure. Long after the farewell he was kept passive by a weight of retrospective feeling. He lived again, with the new keenness of emotive memory, through the exciting scenes which seemed past only in the sense of preparation for their actual presence in his soul. He allowed himself in his solitude to sob, with perhaps more than a woman's acuteness of compassion, over that woman's life so near to his, and yet so remote. He beheld the world changed for him by the certitude of ties that altered the poise of hopes and fears, and gave him a new sense of fellowship, as if under cover of the night he had joined the wrong band of wanderers, and found with the rise of morning that the tents of his kindred were grouped far off. He had a quivering imaginative sense of close relation to the grandfather who had been animated by strong impulses and beloved thoughts, which were now perhaps being roused from their slumber within himself. And through all this passionate meditation Mordecai and Mirah were always present, as beings who clasped hands with him in sympathetic silence.

Of such quick, responsive fibre was Deronda made, under that mantle of self-controlled reserve into which early experience had thrown so much of his young strength.

When the persistent ringing of a bell as a signal reminded him of the hour he thought of looking into *Bradshaw*, and making the brief necessary preparations for starting by the next train - thought of it, but made no movement in consequence. Wishes went to Mainz and what he was to get possession of there - to London and the beings there who made the strongest attachments of his life; but there were other wishes that clung in these moments to Genoa, and they kept him where he was by that force which urges us to linger over an interview that carries a presentiment of final farewell or of overshadowing sorrow. Deronda did not formally say, 'I will stay over to-night, because it is Friday, and I should like to go to the evening

service at the synagogue where they must all have gone; and besides, I may see the Grandcourts again.' But simply, instead of packing and ringing for his bill, he sat doing nothing at all, while his mind went to the synagogue and saw faces there probably little different from those of his grandfather's time, and heard the Spanish-Hebrew liturgy which had lasted through the seasons of wandering generations like a plant with wandering seed, that gives the far-off lands a kinship to the exile's home - while, also, his mind went toward Gwendolen, with anxious remembrance of what had been, and with a half-admitted impression that it would be hardness in him willingly to go away at once without making some effort, in spite of Grandcourt's probable dislike, to manifest the continuance of his sympathy with her since their abrupt parting.

In this state of mind he deferred departure, ate his dinner without sense of flavor, rose from it quickly to find the synagogue, and in passing the porter asked if Mr and Mrs. Grandcourt were still in the hotel, and what was the number of their apartment. The porter gave him the number, but added that they were gone out boating. That information had somehow power enough over Deronda to divide his thoughts with the memories wakened among the sparse *talithim* and keen dark faces of worshippers whose way of taking awful prayers and invocations with the easy familiarity which might be called Hebrew dyed Italian, made him reflect that his grandfather, according to the Princess's hints of his character, must have been almost as exceptional a Jew as Mordecai. But were not men of ardent zeal and far-reaching hope everywhere exceptional? the men who had the visions which, as Mordecai said, were the creators and feeders of the world - moulding and feeding the more passive life which without them would dwindle and shrivel into the narrow tenacity of insects, unshaken by thoughts beyond the reach of their antennae. Something of a mournful impatience perhaps added itself to the solicitude about Gwendolen (a solicitude that had room to grow in his present release from immediate cares) as an incitement to hasten from the synagogue and choose to take his evening walk toward the quay, always a favorite haunt with him, and just now attractive with the possibility that he might be in time to see the Grandcourts come in from their boating. In this case, he resolved that he would advance to greet them deliberately, and ignore any grounds that the husband might have for wishing him elsewhere.

The sun had set behind a bank of cloud, and only a faint yellow light was giving its farewell kisses to the waves, which were agitated by an active breeze. Deronda, sauntering slowly within sight of what took place on the strand, observed the groups there concentrating their attention on a sailing-boat which was advancing swiftly landward, being rowed by two men. Amidst the clamorous talk in various languages, Deronda held it the surer means of getting information not

to ask questions, but to elbow his way to the foreground and be an unobstructed witness of what was occurring. Telescopes were being used, and loud statements made that the boat held somebody who had been drowned. One said it was the *milord* who had gone out in a sailing boat; another maintained that the prostrate figure he discerned was *miladi*; a Frenchman who had no glass would rather say that it was *milord* who had probably taken his wife out to drown her, according to the national practice - a remark which an English skipper immediately commented on in our native idiom (as nonsense which - had undergone a mining operation), and further dismissed by the decision that the reclining figure was a woman. For Deronda, terribly excited by fluctuating fears, the strokes of the oars as he watched them were divided by swift visions of events, possible and impossible, which might have brought about this issue, or this broken-off fragment of an issue, with a worse half undisclosed - if this woman apparently snatched from the waters were really Mrs. Grandcourt.

But soon there was no longer any doubt: the boat was being pulled to land, and he saw Gwendolen half raising herself on her hands, by her own effort, under her heavy covering of tarpaulin and pea-jackets - pale as one of the sheeted dead, shivering, with wet hair streaming, a wild amazed consciousness in her eyes, as if she had waked up in a world where some judgment was impending, and the beings she saw around were coming to seize her. The first rower who jumped to land was also wet through, and ran off; the sailors, close about the boat, hindered Deronda from advancing, and he could only look on while Gwendolen gave sacred glances, and seemed to shrink with terror as she was carefully, tenderly helped out, and led on by the strong arms of those rough, bronzed men, her wet clothes clinging about her limbs, and adding to the impediment of her weakness. Suddenly her wandering eyes fell on Deronda, standing before her, and immediately, as if she had been expecting him and looking for him, she tried to stretch out her arms, which were held back by her supporters, saying, in a muffled voice -

'It is come, it is come! He is dead!'

'Hush, hush!' said Deronda, in a tone of authority; 'quiet yourself.' Then to the men who were assisting her, 'I am a connection of this lady's husband. If you will get her on to the *Italia* as quickly as possible, I will undertake everything else.'

He stayed behind to hear from the remaining boatman that her husband had gone down irrecoverably, and that his boat was left floating empty. He and his comrade had heard a cry, had come up in time to see the lady jump in after her husband, and had got her out fast enough to save her from much damage.

After this, Deronda hastened to the hotel to assure himself that the best medical help would be provided; and being satisfied on this point, he telegraphed the event to Sir Hugo, begging him to come forthwith, and also to Mr Gascoigne, whose address at the rectory made his nearest known way of getting the information to Gwendolen's mother. Certain words of Gwendolen's in the past had come back to him with the effectiveness of an inspiration: in moments of agitated confession she had spoken of her mother's presence, as a possible help, if she could have had it.