

Chapter XXXVII

'Thrice happy she that is so well assured Unto herself and settled so in heart That neither will for better be allured Ne fears to worse with any chance to start, But like a stedly ship doth strongly part The raging waves and keeps her course aright; Ne aught for tempest doth from it depart, Ne aught for fairer weather's false delight. Such self-assurance need not fear the spight Of grudging foes; ne favour seek of friends; But in the stay of her own stedfast might Neither to one herself nor other bends. Most happy she that most assured doth rest, But he most happy who such one loves best.' - SPENSER.

The doubt hinted by Mr Vincy whether it were only the general election or the end of the world that was coming on, now that George the Fourth was dead, Parliament dissolved, Wellington and Peel generally depreciated and the new King apologetic, was a feeble type of the uncertainties in provincial opinion at that time. With the glow-worm lights of country places, how could men see which were their own thoughts in the confusion of a Tory Ministry passing Liberal measures, of Tory nobles and electors being anxious to return Liberals rather than friends of the recreant Ministers, and of outcries for remedies which seemed to have a mysteriously remote bearing on private interest, and were made suspicious by the advocacy of disagreeable neighbors? Buyers of the Middlemarch newspapers found themselves in an anomalous position: during the agitation on the Catholic Question many had given up the 'Pioneer' - which had a motto from Charles James Fox and was in the van of progress - because it had taken Peel's side about the Papists, and had thus blotted its Liberalism with a toleration of Jesuitry and Baal; but they were ill-satisfied with the 'Trumpet,' which - since its blasts against Rome, and in the general flaccidity of the public mind (nobody knowing who would support whom) - had become feeble in its blowing.

It was a time, according to a noticeable article in the 'Pioneer,' when the crying needs of the country might well counteract a reluctance to public action on the part of men whose minds had from long experience acquired breadth as well as concentration, decision of judgment as well as tolerance, dispassionateness as well as energy - in fact, all those qualities which in the melancholy experience of mankind have been the least disposed to share lodgings.

Mr Hackbutt, whose fluent speech was at that time floating more widely than usual, and leaving much uncertainty as to its ultimate channel, was heard to say in Mr Hawley's office that the article in question 'emanated' from Brooke of Tipton, and that Brooke had secretly bought the 'Pioneer' some months ago.

'That means mischief, eh?' said Mr Hawley. 'He's got the freak of being a popular man now, after dangling about like a stray tortoise. So much the worse for him. I've had my eye on him for some time. He shall be prettily pumped upon. He's a damned bad landlord. What business has an old county man to come currying favor with a low set of dark-blue freemen? As to his paper, I only hope he may do the writing himself. It would be worth our paying for.'

'I understand he has got a very brilliant young fellow to edit it, who can write the highest style of leading article, quite equal to anything in the London papers. And he means to take very high ground on Reform.'

'Let Brooke reform his rent-roll. He's a cursed old screw, and the buildings all over his estate are going to rack. I suppose this young fellow is some loose fish from London.'

'His name is Ladislav. He is said to be of foreign extraction.'

'I know the sort,' said Mr Hawley; 'some emissary. He'll begin with flourishing about the Rights of Man and end with murdering a wench. That's the style.'

'You must concede that there are abuses, Hawley,' said Mr Hackbutt, foreseeing some political disagreement with his family lawyer. 'I myself should never favor immoderate views - in fact I take my stand with Huskisson - but I cannot blind myself to the consideration that the non-representation of large towns - '

'Large towns be damned!' said Mr Hawley, impatient of exposition. 'I know a little too much about Middlemarch elections. Let 'em quash every pocket borough to-morrow, and bring in every mushroom town in the kingdom - they'll only increase the expense of getting into Parliament. I go upon facts.'

Mr Hawley's disgust at the notion of the 'Pioneer' being edited by an emissary, and of Brooke becoming actively political - as if a tortoise of desultory pursuits should protrude its small head ambitiously and become rampant - was hardly equal to the annoyance felt by some members of Mr Brooke's own family. The result had oozed forth gradually, like the discovery that your neighbor has set up an unpleasant kind of manufacture which will be permanently under your nostrils without legal remedy. The 'Pioneer' had been secretly bought even before Will Ladislav's arrival, the expected opportunity having offered itself in the readiness of the proprietor to part with a valuable property which did not pay; and in the interval since Mr Brooke had written his invitation, those germinal ideas of making his mind tell upon the world at large which had been present in him from

his younger years, but had hitherto lain in some obstruction, had been sprouting under cover.

The development was much furthered by a delight in his guest which proved greater even than he had anticipated. For it seemed that Will was not only at home in all those artistic and literary subjects which Mr Brooke had gone into at one time, but that he was strikingly ready at seizing the points of the political situation, and dealing with them in that large spirit which, aided by adequate memory, lends itself to quotation and general effectiveness of treatment.

'He seems to me a kind of Shelley, you know,' Mr Brooke took an opportunity of saying, for the gratification of Mr Casaubon. 'I don't mean as to anything objectionable - laxities or atheism, or anything of that kind, you know - Ladislav's sentiments in every way I am sure are good - indeed, we were talking a great deal together last night. But he has the same sort of enthusiasm for liberty, freedom, emancipation - a fine thing under guidance - under guidance, you know. I think I shall be able to put him on the right tack; and I am the more pleased because he is a relation of yours, Casaubon.'

If the right tack implied anything more precise than the rest of Mr Brooke's speech, Mr Casaubon silently hoped that it referred to some occupation at a great distance from Lowick. He had disliked Will while he helped him, but he had begun to dislike him still more now that Will had declined his help. That is the way with us when we have any uneasy jealousy in our disposition: if our talents are chiefly of the burrowing kind, our honey-sipping cousin (whom we have grave reasons for objecting to) is likely to have a secret contempt for us, and any one who admires him passes an oblique criticism on ourselves. Having the scruples of rectitude in our souls, we are above the meanness of injuring him - rather we meet all his claims on us by active benefits; and the drawing of cheques for him, being a superiority which he must recognize, gives our bitterness a milder infusion. Now Mr Casaubon had been deprived of that superiority (as anything more than a remembrance) in a sudden, capricious manner. His antipathy to Will did not spring from the common jealousy of a winter-worn husband: it was something deeper, bred by his lifelong claims and discontents; but Dorothea, now that she was present - Dorothea, as a young wife who herself had shown an offensive capability of criticism, necessarily gave concentration to the uneasiness which had before been vague.

Will Ladislav on his side felt that his dislike was flourishing at the expense of his gratitude, and spent much inward discourse in justifying the dislike. Casaubon hated him - he knew that very well; on his first entrance he could discern a bitterness in the mouth and a venom in the glance which would almost justify declaring war in spite

of past benefits. He was much obliged to Casaubon in the past, but really the act of marrying this wife was a set-off against the obligation. It was a question whether gratitude which refers to what is done for one's self ought not to give way to indignation at what is done against another. And Casaubon had done a wrong to Dorothea in marrying her. A man was bound to know himself better than that, and if he chose to grow gray crunching bones in a cavern, he had no business to be luring a girl into his companionship. 'It is the most horrible of virgin-sacrifices,' said Will; and he painted to himself what were Dorothea's inward sorrows as if he had been writing a choric wail. But he would never lose sight of her: he would watch over her - if he gave up everything else in life he would watch over her, and she should know that she had one slave in the world, Will had - to use Sir Thomas Browne's phrase - a 'passionate prodigality' of statement both to himself and others. The simple truth was that nothing then invited him so strongly as the presence of Dorothea.

Invitations of the formal kind had been wanting, however, for Will had never been asked to go to Lowick. Mr Brooke, indeed, confident of doing everything agreeable which Casaubon, poor fellow, was too much absorbed to think of, had arranged to bring Ladislav to Lowick several times (not neglecting meanwhile to introduce him elsewhere on every opportunity as 'a young relative of Casaubon's'). And though Will had not seen Dorothea alone, their interviews had been enough to restore her former sense of young companionship with one who was cleverer than herself, yet seemed ready to be swayed by her. Poor Dorothea before her marriage had never found much room in other minds for what she cared most to say; and she had not, as we know, enjoyed her husband's superior instruction so much as she had expected. If she spoke with any keenness of interest to Mr Casaubon, he heard her with an air of patience as if she had given a quotation from the *Delectus* familiar to him from his tender years, and sometimes mentioned curtly what ancient sects or personages had held similar ideas, as if there were too much of that sort in stock already; at other times he would inform her that she was mistaken, and reassert what her remark had questioned. But Will Ladislav always seemed to see more in what she said than she herself saw. Dorothea had little vanity, but she had the ardent woman's need to rule beneficently by making the joy of another soul. Hence the mere chance of seeing Will occasionally was like a lunette opened in the wall of her prison, giving her a glimpse of the sunny air; and this pleasure began to nullify her original alarm at what her husband might think about the introduction of Will as her uncle's guest. On this subject Mr Casaubon had remained dumb.

But Will wanted to talk with Dorothea alone, and was impatient of slow circumstance. However slight the terrestrial intercourse between Dante and Beatrice or Petrarch and Laura, time changes the

proportion of things, and in later days it is preferable to have fewer sonnets and more conversation. Necessity excused stratagem, but stratagem was limited by the dread of offending Dorothea. He found out at last that he wanted to take a particular sketch at Lowick; and one morning when Mr Brooke had to drive along the Lowick road on his way to the county town, Will asked to be set down with his sketch-book and camp-stool at Lowick, and without announcing himself at the Manor settled himself to sketch in a position where he must see Dorothea if she came out to walk - and he knew that she usually walked an hour in the morning.

But the stratagem was defeated by the weather. Clouds gathered with treacherous quickness, the rain came down, and Will was obliged to take shelter in the house. He intended, on the strength of relationship, to go into the drawing-room and wait there without being announced; and seeing his old acquaintance the butler in the hall, he said, 'Don't mention that I am here, Pratt; I will wait till luncheon; I know Mr Casaubon does not like to be disturbed when he is in the library.'

'Master is out, sir; there's only Mrs Casaubon in the library. I'd better tell her you're here, sir,' said Pratt, a red-cheeked man given to lively converse with Tantripp, and often agreeing with her that it must be dull for Madam.

'Oh, very well; this confounded rain has hindered me from sketching,' said Will, feeling so happy that he affected indifference with delightful ease.

In another minute he was in the library, and Dorothea was meeting him with her sweet unconstrained smile.

'Mr Casaubon has gone to the Archdeacon's,' she said, at once. 'I don't know whether he will be at home again long before dinner. He was uncertain how long he should be. Did you want to say anything particular to him?'

'No; I came to sketch, but the rain drove me in. Else I would not have disturbed you yet. I supposed that Mr Casaubon was here, and I know he dislikes interruption at this hour.'

'I am indebted to the rain, then. I am so glad to see you.' Dorothea uttered these common words with the simple sincerity of an unhappy child, visited at school.

'I really came for the chance of seeing you alone,' said Will, mysteriously forced to be just as simple as she was. He could not stay to ask himself, why not? 'I wanted to talk about things, as we did in Rome. It always makes a difference when other people are present.'

'Yes,' said Dorothea, in her clear full tone of assent. 'Sit down.' She seated herself on a dark ottoman with the brown books behind her, looking in her plain dress of some thin woollen-white material, without a single ornament on her besides her wedding-ring, as if she were under a vow to be different from all other women; and Will sat down opposite her at two yards' distance, the light falling on his bright curls and delicate but rather petulant profile, with its defiant curves of lip and chin. Each looked at the other as if they had been two flowers which had opened then and there. Dorothea for the moment forgot her husband's mysterious irritation against Will: it seemed fresh water at her thirsty lips to speak without fear to the one person whom she had found receptive; for in looking backward through sadness she exaggerated a past solace.

'I have often thought that I should like to talk to you again,' she said, immediately. 'It seems strange to me how many things I said to you.'

'I remember them all,' said Will, with the unspeakable content in his soul of feeling that he was in the presence of a creature worthy to be perfectly loved. I think his own feelings at that moment were perfect, for we mortals have our divine moments, when love is satisfied in the completeness of the beloved object.

'I have tried to learn a great deal since we were in Rome,' said Dorothea. 'I can read Latin a little, and I am beginning to understand just a little Greek. I can help Mr Casaubon better now. I can find out references for him and save his eyes in many ways. But it is very difficult to be learned; it seems as if people were worn out on the way to great thoughts, and can never enjoy them because they are too tired.'

'If a man has a capacity for great thoughts, he is likely to overtake them before he is decrepit,' said Will, with irrepressible quickness. But through certain sensibilities Dorothea was as quick as he, and seeing her face change, he added, immediately, 'But it is quite true that the best minds have been sometimes overstrained in working out their ideas.'

'You correct me,' said Dorothea. 'I expressed myself ill. I should have said that those who have great thoughts get too much worn in working them out. I used to feel about that, even when I was a little girl; and it always seemed to me that the use I should like to make of my life would be to help some one who did great works, so that his burthen might be lighter.'

Dorothea was led on to this bit of autobiography without any sense of making a revelation. But she had never before said anything to Will which threw so strong a light on her marriage. He did not shrug his

shoulders; and for want of that muscular outlet he thought the more irritably of beautiful lips kissing holy skulls and other emptinesses ecclesiastically enshrined. Also he had to take care that his speech should not betray that thought.

‘But you may easily carry the help too far,’ he said, ‘and get overwrought yourself. Are you not too much shut up? You already look paler. It would be better for Mr Casaubon to have a secretary; he could easily get a man who would do half his work for him. It would save him more effectually, and you need only help him in lighter ways.’

‘How can you think of that?’ said Dorothea, in a tone of earnest remonstrance. ‘I should have no happiness if I did not help him in his work. What could I do? There is no good to be done in Lowick. The only thing I desire is to help him more. And he objects to a secretary: please not to mention that again.’

‘Certainly not, now I know your feeling. But I have heard both Mr Brooke and Sir James Chettam express the same wish.’

‘Yes?’ said Dorothea, ‘but they don't understand - they want me to be a great deal on horseback, and have the garden altered and new conservatories, to fill up my days. I thought you could understand that one's mind has other wants,’ she added, rather impatiently - ‘besides, Mr Casaubon cannot bear to hear of a secretary.’

‘My mistake is excusable,’ said Will. ‘In old days I used to hear Mr Casaubon speak as if he looked forward to having a secretary. Indeed he held out the prospect of that office to me. But I turned out to be - not good enough for it.’

Dorothea was trying to extract out of this an excuse for her husband's evident repulsion, as she said, with a playful smile, ‘You were not a steady worker enough.’

‘No,’ said Will, shaking his head backward somewhat after the manner of a spirited horse. And then, the old irritable demon prompting him to give another good pinch at the moth-wings of poor Mr Casaubon's glory, he went on, ‘And I have seen since that Mr Casaubon does not like any one to overlook his work and know thoroughly what he is doing. He is too doubtful - too uncertain of himself. I may not be good for much, but he dislikes me because I disagree with him.’

Will was not without his intentions to be always generous, but our tongues are little triggers which have usually been pulled before general intentions can be brought to bear. And it was too intolerable that Casaubon's dislike of him should not be fairly accounted for to

Dorothea. Yet when he had spoken he was rather uneasy as to the effect on her.

But Dorothea was strangely quiet - not immediately indignant, as she had been on a like occasion in Rome. And the cause lay deep. She was no longer struggling against the perception of facts, but adjusting herself to their clearest perception; and now when she looked steadily at her husband's failure, still more at his possible consciousness of failure, she seemed to be looking along the one track where duty became tenderness. Will's want of reticence might have been met with more severity, if he had not already been recommended to her mercy by her husband's dislike, which must seem hard to her till she saw better reason for it.

She did not answer at once, but after looking down ruminatingly she said, with some earnestness, 'Mr Casaubon must have overcome his dislike of you so far as his actions were concerned: and that is admirable.'

'Yes; he has shown a sense of justice in family matters. It was an abominable thing that my grandmother should have been disinherited because she made what they called a mesalliance, though there was nothing to be said against her husband except that he was a Polish refugee who gave lessons for his bread.'

'I wish I knew all about her!' said Dorothea. 'I wonder how she bore the change from wealth to poverty: I wonder whether she was happy with her husband! Do you know much about them?'

'No; only that my grandfather was a patriot - a bright fellow - could speak many languages - musical - got his bread by teaching all sorts of things. They both died rather early. And I never knew much of my father, beyond what my mother told me; but he inherited the musical talents. I remember his slow walk and his long thin hands; and one day remains with me when he was lying ill, and I was very hungry, and had only a little bit of bread.'

'Ah, what a different life from mine!' said Dorothea, with keen interest, clasping her hands on her lap. 'I have always had too much of everything. But tell me how it was - Mr Casaubon could not have known about you then.'

'No; but my father had made himself known to Mr Casaubon, and that was my last hungry day. My father died soon after, and my mother and I were well taken care of. Mr Casaubon always expressly recognized it as his duty to take care of us because of the harsh injustice which had been shown to his mother's sister. But now I am telling you what is not new to you.'

In his inmost soul Will was conscious of wishing to tell Dorothea what was rather new even in his own construction of things - namely, that Mr Casaubon had never done more than pay a debt towards him. Will was much too good a fellow to be easy under the sense of being ungrateful. And when gratitude has become a matter of reasoning there are many ways of escaping from its bonds.

'No,' answered Dorothea; 'Mr Casaubon has always avoided dwelling on his own honorable actions.' She did not feel that her husband's conduct was depreciated; but this notion of what justice had required in his relations with Will Ladislaw took strong hold on her mind. After a moment's pause, she added, 'He had never told me that he supported your mother. Is she still living?'

'No; she died by an accident - a fall - four years ago. It is curious that my mother, too, ran away from her family, but not for the sake of her husband. She never would tell me anything about her family, except that she forsook them to get her own living - went on the stage, in fact. She was a dark-eyed creature, with crisp ringlets, and never seemed to be getting old. You see I come of rebellious blood on both sides,' Will ended, smiling brightly at Dorothea, while she was still looking with serious intentness before her, like a child seeing a drama for the first time.

But her face, too, broke into a smile as she said, 'That is your apology, I suppose, for having yourself been rather rebellious; I mean, to Mr Casaubon's wishes. You must remember that you have not done what he thought best for you. And if he dislikes you - you were speaking of dislike a little while ago - but I should rather say, if he has shown any painful feelings towards you, you must consider how sensitive he has become from the wearing effect of study. Perhaps,' she continued, getting into a pleading tone, 'my uncle has not told you how serious Mr Casaubon's illness was. It would be very petty of us who are well and can bear things, to think much of small offences from those who carry a weight of trial.'

'You teach me better,' said Will. 'I will never grumble on that subject again.' There was a gentleness in his tone which came from the unutterable contentment of perceiving - what Dorothea was hardly conscious of - that she was travelling into the remoteness of pure pity and loyalty towards her husband. Will was ready to adore her pity and loyalty, if she would associate himself with her in manifesting them. 'I have really sometimes been a perverse fellow,' he went on, 'but I will never again, if I can help it, do or say what you would disapprove.'

'That is very good of you,' said Dorothea, with another open smile. 'I shall have a little kingdom then, where I shall give laws. But you will

soon go away, out of my rule, I imagine. You will soon be tired of staying at the Grange.'

'That is a point I wanted to mention to you - one of the reasons why I wished to speak to you alone. Mr Brooke proposes that I should stay in this neighborhood. He has bought one of the Middlemarch newspapers, and he wishes me to conduct that, and also to help him in other ways.'

'Would not that be a sacrifice of higher prospects for you?' said Dorothea. 'Perhaps; but I have always been blamed for thinking of prospects, and not settling to anything. And here is something offered to me. If you would not like me to accept it, I will give it up. Otherwise I would rather stay in this part of the country than go away. I belong to nobody anywhere else.'

'I should like you to stay very much,' said Dorothea, at once, as simply and readily as she had spoken at Rome. There was not the shadow of a reason in her mind at the moment why she should not say so.

'Then I *will* stay,' said Ladislaw, shaking his head backward, rising and going towards the window, as if to see whether the rain had ceased.

But the next moment, Dorothea, according to a habit which was getting continually stronger, began to reflect that her husband felt differently from herself, and she colored deeply under the double embarrassment of having expressed what might be in opposition to her husband's feeling, and of having to suggest this opposition to Will. His face was not turned towards her, and this made it easier to say -

'But my opinion is of little consequence on such a subject. I think you should be guided by Mr Casaubon. I spoke without thinking of anything else than my own feeling, which has nothing to do with the real question. But it now occurs to me - perhaps Mr Casaubon might see that the proposal was not wise. Can you not wait now and mention it to him?'

'I can't wait to-day,' said Will, inwardly seared by the possibility that Mr Casaubon would enter. 'The rain is quite over now. I told Mr Brooke not to call for me: I would rather walk the five miles. I shall strike across Halsell Common, and see the gleams on the wet grass. I like that.'

He approached her to shake hands quite hurriedly, longing but not daring to say, 'Don't mention the subject to Mr Casaubon.' No, he dared not, could not say it. To ask her to be less simple and direct would be like breathing on the crystal that you want to see the light

through. And there was always the other great dread - of himself becoming dimmed and forever ray-shorn in her eyes.

'I wish you could have stayed,' said Dorothea, with a touch of mournfulness, as she rose and put out her hand. She also had her thought which she did not like to express: - Will certainly ought to lose no time in consulting Mr Casaubon's wishes, but for her to urge this might seem an undue dictation.

So they only said 'Good-by,' and Will quitted the house, striking across the fields so as not to run any risk of encountering Mr Casaubon's carriage, which, however, did not appear at the gate until four o'clock. That was an unpropitious hour for coming home: it was too early to gain the moral support under ennui of dressing his person for dinner, and too late to undress his mind of the day's frivolous ceremony and affairs, so as to be prepared for a good plunge into the serious business of study. On such occasions he usually threw into an easy-chair in the library, and allowed Dorothea to read the London papers to him, closing his eyes the while. To-day, however, he declined that relief, observing that he had already had too many public details urged upon him; but he spoke more cheerfully than usual, when Dorothea asked about his fatigue, and added with that air of formal effort which never forsook him even when he spoke without his waistcoat and cravat -

'I have had the gratification of meeting my former acquaintance, Dr. Spanning, to-day, and of being praised by one who is himself a worthy recipient of praise. He spoke very handsomely of my late tractate on the Egyptian Mysteries, - using, in fact, terms which it would not become me to repeat.' In uttering the last clause, Mr Casaubon leaned over the elbow of his chair, and swayed his head up and down, apparently as a muscular outlet instead of that recapitulation which would not have been becoming.

'I am very glad you have had that pleasure,' said Dorothea, delighted to see her husband less weary than usual at this hour. 'Before you came I had been regretting that you happened to be out to-day.'

'Why so, my dear?' said Mr Casaubon, throwing himself backward again.

'Because Mr Ladislaw has been here; and he has mentioned a proposal of my uncle's which I should like to know your opinion of.' Her husband she felt was really concerned in this question. Even with her ignorance of the world she had a vague impression that the position offered to Will was out of keeping with his family connections, and certainly Mr Casaubon had a claim to be consulted. He did not speak, but merely bowed.

'Dear uncle, you know, has many projects. It appears that he has bought one of the Middlemarch newspapers, and he has asked Mr Ladislaw to stay in this neighborhood and conduct the paper for him, besides helping him in other ways.'

Dorothea looked at her husband while she spoke, but he had at first blinked and finally closed his eyes, as if to save them; while his lips became more tense. 'What is your opinion?' she added, rather timidly, after a slight pause.

'Did Mr Ladislaw come on purpose to ask my opinion?' said Mr Casaubon, opening his eyes narrowly with a knife-edged look at Dorothea. She was really uncomfortable on the point he inquired about, but she only became a little more serious, and her eyes did not swerve.

'No,' she answered immediately, 'he did not say that he came to ask your opinion. But when he mentioned the proposal, he of course expected me to tell you of it.'

Mr Casaubon was silent.

'I feared that you might feel some objection. But certainly a young man with so much talent might be very useful to my uncle - might help him to do good in a better way. And Mr Ladislaw wishes to have some fixed occupation. He has been blamed, he says, for not seeking something of that kind, and he would like to stay in this neighborhood because no one cares for him elsewhere.'

Dorothea felt that this was a consideration to soften her husband. However, he did not speak, and she presently recurred to Dr. Spanning and the Archdeacon's breakfast. But there was no longer sunshine on these subjects.

The next morning, without Dorothea's knowledge, Mr Casaubon despatched the following letter, beginning 'Dear Mr Ladislaw' (he had always before addressed him as 'Will'): -

'Mrs Casaubon informs me that a proposal has been made to you, and (according to an inference by no means stretched) has on your part been in some degree entertained, which involves your residence in this neighborhood in a capacity which I am justified in saying touches my own position in such a way as renders it not only natural and warrantable in me when that effect is viewed under the influence of legitimate feeling, but incumbent on me when the same effect is considered in the light of my responsibilities, to state at once that your acceptance of the proposal above indicated would be highly offensive to me. That I have some claim to the exercise of a veto here,

would not, I believe, be denied by any reasonable person cognizant of the relations between us: relations which, though thrown into the past by your recent procedure, are not thereby annulled in their character of determining antecedents. I will not here make reflections on any person's judgment. It is enough for me to point out to yourself that there are certain social fitnesses and proprieties which should hinder a somewhat near relative of mine from becoming any wise conspicuous in this vicinity in a status not only much beneath my own, but associated at best with the sciolism of literary or political adventurers. At any rate, the contrary issue must exclude you from further reception at my house. Yours faithfully, 'EDWARD CASAUBON.'

Meanwhile Dorothea's mind was innocently at work towards the further embitterment of her husband; dwelling, with a sympathy that grew to agitation, on what Will had told her about his parents and grandparents. Any private hours in her day were usually spent in her blue-green boudoir, and she had come to be very fond of its pallid quaintness. Nothing had been outwardly altered there; but while the summer had gradually advanced over the western fields beyond the avenue of elms, the bare room had gathered within it those memories of an inward life which fill the air as with a cloud of good or bad angels, the invisible yet active forms of our spiritual triumphs or our spiritual falls. She had been so used to struggle for and to find resolve in looking along the avenue towards the arch of western light that the vision itself had gained a communicating power. Even the pale stag seemed to have reminding glances and to mean mutely, 'Yes, we know.' And the group of delicately touched miniatures had made an audience as of beings no longer disturbed about their own earthly lot, but still humanly interested. Especially the mysterious 'Aunt Julia' about whom Dorothea had never found it easy to question her husband.

And now, since her conversation with Will, many fresh images had gathered round that Aunt Julia who was Will's grandmother; the presence of that delicate miniature, so like a living face that she knew, helping to concentrate her feelings. What a wrong, to cut off the girl from the family protection and inheritance only because she had chosen a man who was poor! Dorothea, early troubling her elders with questions about the facts around her, had wrought herself into some independent clearness as to the historical, political reasons why eldest sons had superior rights, and why land should be entailed: those reasons, impressing her with a certain awe, might be weightier than she knew, but here was a question of ties which left them unfringed. Here was a daughter whose child - even according to the ordinary aping of aristocratic institutions by people who are no more aristocratic than retired grocers, and who have no more land to 'keep together' than a lawn and a paddock - would have a prior claim. Was

inheritance a question of liking or of responsibility? All the energy of Dorothea's nature went on the side of responsibility - the fulfilment of claims founded on our own deeds, such as marriage and parentage.

It was true, she said to herself, that Mr Casaubon had a debt to the Ladislaws - that he had to pay back what the Ladislaws had been wronged of. And now she began to think of her husband's will, which had been made at the time of their marriage, leaving the bulk of his property to her, with proviso in case of her having children. That ought to be altered; and no time ought to be lost. This very question which had just arisen about Will Ladislaw's occupation, was the occasion for placing things on a new, right footing. Her husband, she felt sure, according to all his previous conduct, would be ready to take the just view, if she proposed it - she, in whose interest an unfair concentration of the property had been urged. His sense of right had surmounted and would continue to surmount anything that might be called antipathy. She suspected that her uncle's scheme was disapproved by Mr Casaubon, and this made it seem all the more opportune that a fresh understanding should be begun, so that instead of Will's starting penniless and accepting the first function that offered itself, he should find himself in possession of a rightful income which should be paid by her husband during his life, and, by an immediate alteration of the will, should be secured at his death. The vision of all this as what ought to be done seemed to Dorothea like a sudden letting in of daylight, waking her from her previous stupidity and incurious self-absorbed ignorance about her husband's relation to others. Will Ladislaw had refused Mr Casaubon's future aid on a ground that no longer appeared right to her; and Mr Casaubon had never himself seen fully what was the claim upon him. 'But he will!' said Dorothea. 'The great strength of his character lies here. And what are we doing with our money? We make no use of half of our income. My own money buys me nothing but an uneasy conscience.'

There was a peculiar fascination for Dorothea in this division of property intended for herself, and always regarded by her as excessive. She was blind, you see, to many things obvious to others - likely to tread in the wrong places, as Celia had warned her; yet her blindness to whatever did not lie in her own pure purpose carried her safely by the side of precipices where vision would have been perilous with fear.

The thoughts which had gathered vividness in the solitude of her boudoir occupied her incessantly through the day on which Mr Casaubon had sent his letter to Will. Everything seemed hindrance to her till she could find an opportunity of opening her heart to her husband. To his preoccupied mind all subjects were to be approached gently, and she had never since his illness lost from her consciousness the dread of agitating him. But when young ardor is set

brooding over the conception of a prompt deed, the deed itself seems to start forth with independent life, mastering ideal obstacles. The day passed in a sombre fashion, not unusual, though Mr Casaubon was perhaps unusually silent; but there were hours of the night which might be counted on as opportunities of conversation; for Dorothea, when aware of her husband's sleeplessness, had established a habit of rising, lighting a candle, and reading him to sleep again. And this night she was from the beginning sleepless, excited by resolves. He slept as usual for a few hours, but she had risen softly and had sat in the darkness for nearly an hour before he said -

'Dorothea, since you are up, will you light a candle?'

'Do you feel ill, dear?' was her first question, as she obeyed him.

'No, not at all; but I shall be obliged, since you are up, if you will read me a few pages of Lowth.'

'May I talk to you a little instead?' said Dorothea.

'Certainly.'

'I have been thinking about money all day - that I have always had too much, and especially the prospect of too much.'

'These, my dear Dorothea, are providential arrangements.'

'But if one has too much in consequence of others being wronged, it seems to me that the divine voice which tells us to set that wrong right must be obeyed.'

'What, my love, is the bearing of your remark?'

'That you have been too liberal in arrangements for me - I mean, with regard to property; and that makes me unhappy.'

'How so? I have none but comparatively distant connections.'

'I have been led to think about your aunt Julia, and how she was left in poverty only because she married a poor man, an act which was not disgraceful, since he was not unworthy. It was on that ground, I know, that you educated Mr Ladislaw and provided for his mother.'

Dorothea waited a few moments for some answer that would help her onward. None came, and her next words seemed the more forcible to her, falling clear upon the dark silence.

'But surely we should regard his claim as a much greater one, even to the half of that property which I know that you have destined for me. And I think he ought at once to be provided for on that understanding. It is not right that he should be in the dependence of poverty while we are rich. And if there is any objection to the proposal he mentioned, the giving him his true place and his true share would set aside any motive for his accepting it.'

'Mr Ladislaw has probably been speaking to you on this subject?' said Mr Casaubon, with a certain biting quickness not habitual to him.

'Indeed, no!' said Dorothea, earnestly. 'How can you imagine it, since he has so lately declined everything from you? I fear you think too hardly of him, dear. He only told me a little about his parents and grandparents, and almost all in answer to my questions. You are so good, so just - you have done everything you thought to be right. But it seems to me clear that more than that is right; and I must speak about it, since I am the person who would get what is called benefit by that 'more' not being done.'

There was a perceptible pause before Mr Casaubon replied, not quickly as before, but with a still more biting emphasis.

'Dorothea, my love, this is not the first occasion, but it were well that it should be the last, on which you have assumed a judgment on subjects beyond your scope. Into the question how far conduct, especially in the matter of alliances, constitutes a forfeiture of family claims, I do not now enter. Suffice it, that you are not here qualified to discriminate. What I now wish you to understand is, that I accept no revision, still less dictation within that range of affairs which I have deliberated upon as distinctly and properly mine. It is not for you to interfere between me and Mr Ladislaw, and still less to encourage communications from him to you which constitute a criticism on my procedure.'

Poor Dorothea, shrouded in the darkness, was in a tumult of conflicting emotions. Alarm at the possible effect on himself of her husband's strongly manifested anger, would have checked any expression of her own resentment, even if she had been quite free from doubt and compunction under the consciousness that there might be some justice in his last insinuation. Hearing him breathe quickly after he had spoken, she sat listening, frightened, wretched - with a dumb inward cry for help to bear this nightmare of a life in which every energy was arrested by dread. But nothing else happened, except that they both remained a long while sleepless, without speaking again.

The next day, Mr Casaubon received the following answer from Will Ladislaw: -

'DEAR MR CASAUBON, - I have given all due consideration to your letter of yesterday, but I am unable to take precisely your view of our mutual position. With the fullest acknowledgment of your generous conduct to me in the past, I must still maintain that an obligation of this kind cannot fairly fetter me as you appear to expect that it should. Granted that a benefactor's wishes may constitute a claim; there must always be a reservation as to the quality of those wishes. They may possibly clash with more imperative considerations. Or a benefactor's veto might impose such a negation on a man's life that the consequent blank might be more cruel than the benefaction was generous. I am merely using strong illustrations. In the present case I am unable to take your view of the bearing which my acceptance of occupation - not enriching certainly, but not dishonorable - will have on your own position which seems to me too substantial to be affected in that shadowy manner. And though I do not believe that any change in our relations will occur (certainly none has yet occurred) which can nullify the obligations imposed on me by the past, pardon me for not seeing that those obligations should restrain me from using the ordinary freedom of living where I choose, and maintaining myself by any lawful occupation I may choose. Regretting that there exists this difference between us as to a relation in which the conferring of benefits has been entirely on your side - I remain, yours with persistent obligation, WILL LADISLAW.'

Poor Mr Casaubon felt (and must not we, being impartial, feel with him a little?) that no man had juster cause for disgust and suspicion than he. Young Ladislaw, he was sure, meant to defy and annoy him, meant to win Dorothea's confidence and sow her mind with disrespect, and perhaps aversion, towards her husband. Some motive beneath the surface had been needed to account for Will's sudden change of in rejecting Mr Casaubon's aid and quitting his travels; and this defiant determination to fix himself in the neighborhood by taking up something so much at variance with his former choice as Mr Brooke's Middlemarch projects, revealed clearly enough that the undeclared motive had relation to Dorothea. Not for one moment did Mr Casaubon suspect Dorothea of any doubleness: he had no suspicions of her, but he had (what was little less uncomfortable) the positive knowledge that her tendency to form opinions about her husband's conduct was accompanied with a disposition to regard Will Ladislaw favorably and be influenced by what he said. His own proud reticence had prevented him from ever being undeceived in the supposition that Dorothea had originally asked her uncle to invite Will to his house.

And now, on receiving Will's letter, Mr Casaubon had to consider his duty. He would never have been easy to call his action anything else than duty; but in this case, contending motives thrust him back into negations.

Should he apply directly to Mr Brooke, and demand of that troublesome gentleman to revoke his proposal? Or should he consult Sir James Chettam, and get him to concur in remonstrance against a step which touched the whole family? In either case Mr Casaubon was aware that failure was just as probable as success. It was impossible for him to mention Dorothea's name in the matter, and without some alarming urgency Mr Brooke was as likely as not, after meeting all representations with apparent assent, to wind up by saying, 'Never fear, Casaubon! Depend upon it, young Ladislaw will do you credit. Depend upon it, I have put my finger on the right thing.' And Mr Casaubon shrank nervously from communicating on the subject with Sir James Chettam, between whom and himself there had never been any cordiality, and who would immediately think of Dorothea without any mention of her.

Poor Mr Casaubon was distrustful of everybody's feeling towards him, especially as a husband. To let any one suppose that he was jealous would be to admit their (suspected) view of his disadvantages: to let them know that he did not find marriage particularly blissful would imply his conversion to their (probably) earlier disapproval. It would be as bad as letting Carp, and Brasenose generally, know how backward he was in organizing the matter for his 'Key to all Mythologies.' All through his life Mr Casaubon had been trying not to admit even to himself the inward sores of self-doubt and jealousy. And on the most delicate of all personal subjects, the habit of proud suspicious reticence told doubly.

Thus Mr Casaubon remained proudly, bitterly silent. But he had forbidden Will to come to Lowick Manor, and he was mentally preparing other measures of frustration.