

## Chapter LXXXV

'Then went the jury out whose names were Mr Blindman, Mr No-good, Mr Malice, Mr Love-lust, Mr Live-loose, Mr Heady, Mr High-mind, Mr Enmity, Mr Liar, Mr Cruelty, Mr Hate-light, Mr Implacable, who every one gave in his private verdict against him among themselves, and afterwards unanimously concluded to bring him in guilty before the judge. And first among themselves, Mr Blindman, the foreman, said, I see clearly that this man is a heretic. Then said Mr No-good, Away with such a fellow from the earth! Ay, said Mr Malice, for I hate the very look of him. Then said Mr Love-lust, I could never endure him. Nor I, said Mr Live-loose; for he would be always condemning my way. Hang him, hang him, said Mr Heady. A sorry scrub, said Mr High-mind. My heart riseth against him, said Mr Enmity. He is a rogue, said Mr Liar. Hanging is too good for him, said Mr Cruelty. Let us despatch him out of the way said Mr Hate-light. Then said Mr Implacable, Might I have all the world given me, I could not be reconciled to him; therefore let us forthwith bring him in guilty of death.' - Pilgrim's Progress.

When immortal Bunyan makes his picture of the persecuting passions bringing in their verdict of guilty, who pities Faithful? That is a rare and blessed lot which some greatest men have not attained, to know ourselves guiltless before a condemning crowd - to be sure that what we are denounced for is solely the good in us. The pitiable lot is that of the man who could not call himself a martyr even though he were to persuade himself that the men who stoned him were but ugly passions incarnate - who knows that he is stoned, not for professing the Right, but for not being the man he professed to be.

This was the consciousness that Bulstrode was withering under while he made his preparations for departing from Middlemarch, and going to end his stricken life in that sad refuge, the indifference of new faces. The duteous merciful constancy of his wife had delivered him from one dread, but it could not hinder her presence from being still a tribunal before which he shrank from confession and desired advocacy. His equivocations with himself about the death of Raffles had sustained the conception of an Omniscience whom he prayed to, yet he had a terror upon him which would not let him expose them to judgment by a full confession to his wife: the acts which he had washed and diluted with inward argument and motive, and for which it seemed comparatively easy to win invisible pardon - what name would she call them by? That she should ever silently call his acts Murder was what he could not bear. He felt shrouded by her doubt: he got strength to face her from the sense that she could not yet feel warranted in pronouncing that worst condemnation on him. Some time, perhaps - when he was dying - he would tell her all: in the deep shadow of that time, when she held his hand in the gathering

darkness, she might listen without recoiling from his touch. Perhaps: but concealment had been the habit of his life, and the impulse to confession had no power against the dread of a deeper humiliation.

He was full of timid care for his wife, not only because he deprecated any harshness of judgment from her, but because he felt a deep distress at the sight of her suffering. She had sent her daughters away to board at a school on the coast, that this crisis might be hidden from them as far as possible. Set free by their absence from the intolerable necessity of accounting for her grief or of beholding their frightened wonder, she could live unconstrainedly with the sorrow that was every day streaking her hair with whiteness and making her eyelids languid.

'Tell me anything that you would like to have me do, Harriet,' Bulstrode had said to her; 'I mean with regard to arrangements of property. It is my intention not to sell the land I possess in this neighborhood, but to leave it to you as a safe provision. If you have any wish on such subjects, do not conceal it from me.'

A few days afterwards, when she had returned from a visit to her brother's, she began to speak to her husband on a subject which had for some time been in her mind.

'I *should* like to do something for my brother's family, Nicholas; and I think we are bound to make some amends to Rosamond and her husband. Walter says Mr Lydgate must leave the town, and his practice is almost good for nothing, and they have very little left to settle anywhere with. I would rather do without something for ourselves, to make some amends to my poor brother's family.'

Mrs Bulstrode did not wish to go nearer to the facts than in the phrase 'make some amends;' knowing that her husband must understand her. He had a particular reason, which she was not aware of, for wincing under her suggestion. He hesitated before he said -

'It is not possible to carry out your wish in the way you propose, my dear. Mr Lydgate has virtually rejected any further service from me. He has returned the thousand pounds which I lent him. Mrs Casaubon advanced him the sum for that purpose. Here is his letter.'

The letter seemed to cut Mrs Bulstrode severely. The mention of Mrs Casaubon's loan seemed a reflection of that public feeling which held it a matter of course that every one would avoid a connection with her husband. She was silent for some time; and the tears fell one after the other, her chin trembling as she wiped them away. Bulstrode, sitting opposite to her, ached at the sight of that grief-worn face, which two months before had been bright and blooming. It had aged to keep sad

company with his own withered features. Urged into some effort at comforting her, he said -

‘There is another means, Harriet, by which I might do a service to your brother's family, if you like to act in it. And it would, I think, be beneficial to you: it would be an advantageous way of managing the land which I mean to be yours.’

She looked attentive.

‘Garth once thought of undertaking the management of Stone Court in order to place your nephew Fred there. The stock was to remain as it is, and they were to pay a certain share of the profits instead of an ordinary rent. That would be a desirable beginning for the young man, in conjunction with his employment under Garth. Would it be a satisfaction to you?’

‘Yes, it would,’ said Mrs Bulstrode, with some return of energy. ‘Poor Walter is so cast down; I would try anything in my power to do him some good before I go away. We have always been brother and sister.’

‘You must make the proposal to Garth yourself, Harriet,’ said Mr Bulstrode, not liking what he had to say, but desiring the end he had in view, for other reasons besides the consolation of his wife. ‘You must state to him that the land is virtually yours, and that he need have no transactions with me. Communications can be made through Standish. I mention this, because Garth gave up being my agent. I can put into your hands a paper which he himself drew up, stating conditions; and you can propose his renewed acceptance of them. I think it is not unlikely that he will accept when you propose the thing for the sake of your nephew.’