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Lady Constantine, if narrowly observed at this time, would have seemed to be deeply troubled in conscience, and particularly after the interview above described. Ash Wednesday occurred in the calendar a few days later, and she went to morning service with a look of genuine contrition on her emotional and yearning countenance.

Besides herself the congregation consisted only of the parson, clerk, school-children, and three old people living on alms, who sat under the reading-desk; and thus, when Mr. Torkingham blazed forth the denunciatory sentences of the Communion, nearly the whole force of them seemed to descend upon her own shoulders. Looking across the empty pews she saw through the one or two clear panes of the window opposite a youthful figure in the churchyard, and the very feeling against which she had tried to pray returned again irresistibly.

When she came out and had crossed into the private walk, Swithin came forward to speak to her. This was a most unusual circumstance, and argued a matter of importance.

'I have made an amazing discovery in connexion with the variable stars,' he exclaimed. 'It will excite the whole astronomical world, and the world outside but little less. I had long suspected the true secret of

their variability; but it was by the merest chance on earth that I hit upon a proof of my guess. Your equatorial has done it, my good, kind Lady Constantine, and our fame is established for ever!

He sprang into the air, and waved his hat in his triumph.

'Oh, I am so glad--so rejoiced!' she cried. 'What is it? But don't stop to tell me. Publish it at once in some paper; nail your name to it, or somebody will seize the idea and appropriate it,--forestall you in some way. It will be Adams and Leverrier over again.'

'If I may walk with you I will explain the nature of the discovery. It accounts for the occasional green tint of Castor, and every difficulty. I said I would be the Copernicus of the stellar system, and I have begun to be. Yet who knows?'

'Now don't be so up and down! I shall not understand your explanation, and I would rather not know it. I shall reveal it if it is very grand.

Women, you know, are not safe depositaries of such valuable secrets. You may walk with me a little way, with great pleasure. Then go and write your account, so as to insure your ownership of the discovery. . . . But how you have watched!' she cried, in a sudden accession of anxiety, as she turned to look more closely at him. 'The orbits of your eyes are leaden, and your eyelids are red and heavy. Don't do it--pray don't. You will be ill, and break down.'

'I have, it is true, been up a little late this last week,' he said cheerfully. 'In fact, I couldn't tear myself away from the equatorial; it is such a wonderful possession that it keeps me there till daylight. But what does that matter, now I have made the discovery?'

'Ah, it does matter! Now, promise me--I insist--that you will not commit such imprudences again; for what should I do if my Astronomer Royal were to die?'

She laughed, but far too apprehensively to be effective as a display of levity.

They parted, and he went home to write out his paper. He promised to call as soon as his discovery was in print. Then they waited for the result.

It is impossible to describe the tremulous state of Lady Constantine during the interval. The warm interest she took in Swithin St. Cleeve--many would have said dangerously warm interest--made his hopes her hopes; and though she sometimes admitted to herself that great allowance was requisite for the overweening confidence of youth in the future, she permitted herself to be blinded to probabilities for the pleasure of sharing his dreams. It seemed not unreasonable to suppose the present hour to be the beginning of realization to her darling wish that this young man should become famous. He had worked hard, and why should he not be famous early? His very simplicity in mundane affairs

afforded a strong presumption that in things celestial he might be wise. To obtain support for this hypothesis she had only to think over the lives of many eminent astronomers.

She waited feverishly for the flourish of trumpets from afar, by which she expected the announcement of his discovery to be greeted. Knowing that immediate intelligence of the outburst would be brought to her by himself, she watched from the windows of the Great House each morning for a sight of his figure hastening down the glade.

But he did not come.

A long array of wet days passed their dreary shapes before her, and made the waiting still more tedious. On one of these occasions she ran across to the tower, at the risk of a severe cold. The door was locked.

Two days after she went again. The door was locked still. But this was only to be expected in such weather. Yet she would have gone on to his house, had there not been one reason too many against such precipitancy. As astronomer and astronomer there was no harm in their meetings; but as woman and man she feared them.

Ten days passed without a sight of him; ten blurred and dreary days, during which the whole landscape dripped like a mop; the park trees swabbed the gravel from the drive, while the sky was a zinc-coloured archi-vault of immovable cloud. It seemed as if the whole science of

astronomy had never been real, and that the heavenly bodies, with their motions, were as theoretical as the lines and circles of a bygone mathematical problem.

She could content herself no longer with fruitless visits to the column, and when the rain had a little abated she walked to the nearest hamlet, and in a conversation with the first old woman she met contrived to lead up to the subject of Swithin St. Cleeve by talking about his grandmother.

'Ah, poor old heart; 'tis a bad time for her, my lady!' exclaimed the dame.

'What?'

'Her grandson is dying; and such a gentleman through and through!'

'What! . . . Oh, it has something to do with that dreadful discovery!'

'Discovery, my lady?'

She left the old woman with an evasive answer, and with a breaking heart crept along the road. Tears brimmed into her eyes as she walked, and by the time that she was out of sight sobs burst forth tumultuously.

'I am too fond of him!' she moaned; 'but I can't help it; and I don't care if it's wrong,--I don't care!'

Without further considerations as to who beheld her doings she instinctively went straight towards Mrs. Martin's. Seeing a man coming she calmed herself sufficiently to ask him through her dropped veil how poor Mr. St. Cleeve was that day. But she only got the same reply: 'They say he is dying, my lady.'

When Swithin had parted from Lady Constantine, on the previous Ash-Wednesday, he had gone straight to the homestead and prepared his account of 'A New Astronomical Discovery.' It was written perhaps in too glowing a rhetoric for the true scientific tone of mind; but there was no doubt that his assertion met with a most startling aptness all the difficulties which had accompanied the received theories on the phenomena attending those changeable suns of marvellous systems so far away. It accounted for the nebulous mist that surrounds some of them at their weakest time; in short, took up a position of probability which has never yet been successfully assailed.

The papers were written in triplicate, and carefully sealed up with blue wax. One copy was directed to Greenwich, another to the Royal Society, another to a prominent astronomer. A brief statement of the essence of the discovery was also prepared for the leading daily paper.

He considered these documents, embodying as they did two years of his constant thought, reading, and observation, too important to be entrusted for posting to the hands of a messenger; too important to be sent to the

sub-post-office at hand. Though the day was wet, dripping wet, he went on foot with them to a chief office, five miles off, and registered them. Quite exhausted by the walk, after his long night-work, wet through, yet sustained by the sense of a great achievement, he called at a bookseller's for the astronomical periodicals to which he subscribed; then, resting for a short time at an inn, he plodded his way homewards, reading his papers as he went, and planning how to enjoy a repose on his laurels of a week or more.

On he strolled through the rain, holding the umbrella vertically over the exposed page to keep it dry while he read. Suddenly his eye was struck by an article. It was the review of a pamphlet by an American astronomer, in which the author announced a conclusive discovery with regard to variable stars.

The discovery was precisely the discovery of Swithin St. Cleeve. Another man had forestalled his fame by a period of about six weeks.

Then the youth found that the goddess Philosophy, to whom he had vowed to dedicate his whole life, would not in return support him through a single hour of despair. In truth, the impishness of circumstance was newer to him than it would have been to a philosopher of threescore-and-ten. In a wild wish for annihilation he flung himself down on a patch of heather that lay a little removed from the road, and in this humid bed remained motionless, while time passed by unheeded.

At last, from sheer misery and weariness, he fell asleep.

The March rain pelted him mercilessly, the beaded moisture from the heavily charged locks of heath penetrated him through back and sides, and clotted his hair to unsightly tags and tufts. When he awoke it was dark. He thought of his grandmother, and of her possible alarm at missing him. On attempting to rise, he found that he could hardly bend his joints, and that his clothes were as heavy as lead from saturation. His teeth chattering and his knees trembling he pursued his way home, where his appearance excited great concern. He was obliged at once to retire to bed, and the next day he was delirious from the chill.

It was about ten days after this unhappy occurrence that Lady Constantine learnt the news, as above described, and hastened along to the homestead in that state of anguish in which the heart is no longer under the control of the judgment, and self-abandonment even to error, verges on heroism.

On reaching the house in Welland Bottom the door was opened to her by old Hannah, who wore an assiduously sorrowful look; and Lady Constantine was shown into the large room,--so wide that the beams bent in the middle,--where she took her seat in one of a methodic range of chairs, beneath a portrait of the Reverend Mr. St. Cleeve, her astronomer's erratic father.

The eight unwatered dying plants, in the row of eight flower-pots, denoted that there was something wrong in the house. Mrs. Martin came downstairs fretting, her wonder at beholding Lady Constantine not altogether displacing the previous mood of grief.

'Here's a pretty kettle of fish, my lady!' she exclaimed.

Lady Constantine said, 'Hush!' and pointed inquiringly upward.

'He is not overhead, my lady,' replied Swithin's grandmother. 'His bedroom is at the back of the house.'

'How is he now?'

'He is better, just at this moment; and we are more hopeful. But he changes so.'

'May I go up? I know he would like to see me.'

Her presence having been made known to the sufferer, she was conducted upstairs to Swithin's room. The way thither was through the large chamber he had used as a study and for the manufacture of optical instruments. There lay the large pasteboard telescope, that had been just such a failure as Crusoe's large boat; there were his diagrams, maps, globes, and celestial apparatus of various sorts. The absence of

the worker, through illness or death is sufficient to touch the prosiest workshop and tools with the hues of pathos, and it was with a swelling bosom that Lady Constantine passed through this arena of his youthful activities to the little chamber where he lay.

Old Mrs. Martin sat down by the window, and Lady Constantine bent over Swithin.

'Don't speak to me!' she whispered. 'It will weaken you; it will excite you. If you do speak, it must be very softly.'

She took his hand, and one irrepressible tear fell upon it.

'Nothing will excite me now, Lady Constantine,' he said; 'not even your goodness in coming. My last excitement was when I lost the battle. . . . Do you know that my discovery has been forestalled? It is that that's killing me.'

'But you are going to recover; you are better, they say. Is it so?'

'I think I am, to-day. But who can be sure?'

'The poor boy was so upset at finding that his labour had been thrown away,' said his grandmother, 'that he lay down in the rain, and chilled his life out.'

'How could you do it?' Lady Constantine whispered. 'O, how could you think so much of renown, and so little of me? Why, for every discovery made there are ten behind that await making. To commit suicide like this, as if there were nobody in the world to care for you!'

'It was done in my haste, and I am very, very sorry for it! I beg both you and all my few friends never, never to forgive me! It would kill me with self-reproach if you were to pardon my rashness!'

At this moment the doctor was announced, and Mrs. Martin went downstairs

to receive him. Lady Constantine thought she would remain to hear his report, and for this purpose withdrew, and sat down in a nook of the adjoining work-room of Swithin, the doctor meeting her as he passed through it into the sick chamber.

He was there a torturingly long time; but at length he came out to the room she waited in, and crossed it on his way downstairs. She rose and followed him to the stairhead.

'How is he?' she anxiously asked. 'Will he get over it?'

The doctor, not knowing the depth of her interest in the patient, spoke with the blunt candour natural towards a comparatively indifferent inquirer.

'No, Lady Constantine,' he replied; 'there's a change for the worse.'

And he retired down the stairs.

Scarcely knowing what she did Lady Constantine ran back to Swithin's side, flung herself upon the bed and in a paroxysm of sorrow kissed him.