

The last train to Sandbourne left shortly after, and it bore Clare on its wheels.

LV

At eleven o'clock that night, having secured a bed at one of the hotels and telegraphed his address to his father immediately on his arrival, he walked out into the streets of Sandbourne. It was too late to call on or inquire for any one, and he reluctantly postponed his purpose till the morning. But he could not retire to rest just yet.

This fashionable watering-place, with its eastern and its western stations, its piers, its groves of pines, its promenades, and its covered gardens, was, to Angel Clare, like a fairy place suddenly created by the stroke of a wand, and allowed to get a little dusty. An outlying eastern tract of the enormous Egdon Waste was close at hand, yet on the very verge of that tawny piece of antiquity such a glittering novelty as this pleasure city had chosen to spring up. Within the space of a mile from its outskirts every irregularity of the soil was prehistoric, every channel an undisturbed British trackway; not a sod having been turned there since the days of the Caesars. Yet the exotic had grown here, suddenly as the prophet's

gourd; and had drawn hither Tess.

By the midnight lamps he went up and down the winding way of this new world in an old one, and could discern between the trees and against the stars the lofty roofs, chimneys, gazebos, and towers of the numerous fanciful residences of which the place was composed. It was a city of detached mansions; a Mediterranean lounging-place on the English Channel; and as seen now by night it seemed even more imposing than it was.

The sea was near at hand, but not intrusive; it murmured, and he thought it was the pines; the pines murmured in precisely the same tones, and he thought they were the sea.

Where could Tess possibly be, a cottage-girl, his young wife, amidst all this wealth and fashion? The more he pondered, the more was he puzzled. Were there any cows to milk here? There certainly were no fields to till. She was most probably engaged to do something in one of these large houses; and he sauntered along, looking at the chamber-windows and their lights going out one by one, and wondered which of them might be hers.

Conjecture was useless, and just after twelve o'clock he entered and went to bed. Before putting out his light he re-read Tess's impassioned letter. Sleep, however, he could not--so near her, yet so far from her--and he continually lifted the window-blind and

regarded the backs of the opposite houses, and wondered behind which of the sashes she reposed at that moment.

He might almost as well have sat up all night. In the morning he arose at seven, and shortly after went out, taking the direction of the chief post-office. At the door he met an intelligent postman coming out with letters for the morning delivery.

"Do you know the address of a Mrs Clare?" asked Angel. The postman shook his head.

Then, remembering that she would have been likely to continue the use of her maiden name, Clare said--

"Of a Miss Durbeyfield?"

"Durbeyfield?"

This also was strange to the postman addressed.

"There's visitors coming and going every day, as you know, sir," he said; "and without the name of the house 'tis impossible to find 'em."

One of his comrades hastening out at that moment, the name was repeated to him.

"I know no name of Durbeyfield; but there is the name of d'Urberville at The Herons," said the second.

"That's it!" cried Clare, pleased to think that she had reverted to the real pronunciation. "What place is The Herons?"

"A stylish lodging-house. 'Tis all lodging-houses here, bless 'ee."

Clare received directions how to find the house, and hastened thither, arriving with the milkman. The Herons, though an ordinary villa, stood in its own grounds, and was certainly the last place in which one would have expected to find lodgings, so private was its appearance. If poor Tess was a servant here, as he feared, she would go to the back-door to that milkman, and he was inclined to go thither also. However, in his doubts he turned to the front, and rang.

The hour being early, the landlady herself opened the door. Clare inquired for Teresa d'Urberville or Durbeyfield.

"Mrs d'Urberville?"

"Yes."

Tess, then, passed as a married woman, and he felt glad, even though

she had not adopted his name.

"Will you kindly tell her that a relative is anxious to see her?"

"It is rather early. What name shall I give, sir?"

"Angel."

"Mr Angel?"

"No; Angel. It is my Christian name. She'll understand."

"I'll see if she is awake."

He was shown into the front room--the dining-room--and looked out through the spring curtains at the little lawn, and the rhododendrons and other shrubs upon it. Obviously her position was by no means so bad as he had feared, and it crossed his mind that she must somehow have claimed and sold the jewels to attain it. He did not blame her for one moment. Soon his sharpened ear detected footsteps upon the stairs, at which his heart thumped so painfully that he could hardly stand firm. "Dear me! what will she think of me, so altered as I am!" he said to himself; and the door opened.

Tess appeared on the threshold--not at all as he had expected to see her--bewilderingly otherwise, indeed. Her great natural beauty

was, if not heightened, rendered more obvious by her attire. She was loosely wrapped in a cashmere dressing-gown of gray-white, embroidered in half-mourning tints, and she wore slippers of the same hue. Her neck rose out of a frill of down, and her well-remembered cable of dark-brown hair was partially coiled up in a mass at the back of her head and partly hanging on her shoulder--the evident result of haste.

He had held out his arms, but they had fallen again to his side; for she had not come forward, remaining still in the opening of the doorway. Mere yellow skeleton that he was now, he felt the contrast between them, and thought his appearance distasteful to her.

"Tess!" he said huskily, "can you forgive me for going away? Can't you--come to me? How do you get to be--like this?"

"It is too late," said she, her voice sounding hard through the room, her eyes shining unnaturally.

"I did not think rightly of you--I did not see you as you were!" he continued to plead. "I have learnt to since, dearest Tessy mine!"

"Too late, too late!" she said, waving her hand in the impatience of a person whose tortures cause every instant to seem an hour. "Don't come close to me, Angel! No--you must not. Keep away."

"But don't you love me, my dear wife, because I have been so pulled down by illness? You are not so fickle--I am come on purpose for you--my mother and father will welcome you now!"

"Yes--O, yes, yes! But I say, I say it is too late."

She seemed to feel like a fugitive in a dream, who tries to move away, but cannot. "Don't you know all--don't you know it? Yet how do you come here if you do not know?"

"I inquired here and there, and I found the way."

"I waited and waited for you," she went on, her tones suddenly resuming their old fluty pathos. "But you did not come! And I wrote to you, and you did not come! He kept on saying you would never come any more, and that I was a foolish woman. He was very kind to me, and to mother, and to all of us after father's death. He--"

"I don't understand."

"He has won me back to him."

Clare looked at her keenly, then, gathering her meaning, flagged like one plague-stricken, and his glance sank; it fell on her hands, which, once rosy, were now white and more delicate.

She continued--

"He is upstairs. I hate him now, because he told me a lie--that you would not come again; and you HAVE come! These clothes are what he's put upon me: I didn't care what he did wi' me! But--will you go away, Angel, please, and never come any more?"

They stood fixed, their baffled hearts looking out of their eyes with a joylessness pitiful to see. Both seemed to implore something to shelter them from reality.

"Ah--it is my fault!" said Clare.

But he could not get on. Speech was as inexpressive as silence. But he had a vague consciousness of one thing, though it was not clear to him till later; that his original Tess had spiritually ceased to recognize the body before him as hers--allowing it to drift, like a corpse upon the current, in a direction dissociated from its living will.

A few instants passed, and he found that Tess was gone. His face grew colder and more shrunken as he stood concentrated on the moment, and a minute or two after, he found himself in the street, walking along he did not know whither.