III. THE EVENTS OF EIGHT DAYS

1. FROM THE TWENTY-SECOND TO THE TWENTY-SEVENTH OF JULY

But things are not what they seem. A responsive love for Edward Springrove had made its appearance in Cytherea's bosom with all the fascinating attributes of a first experience, not succeeding to or displacing other emotions, as in older hearts, but taking up entirely new ground; as when gazing just after sunset at the pale blue sky we see a star come into existence where nothing was before.

His parting words, 'Don't forget me,' she repeated to herself a hundred times, and though she thought their import was probably commonplace, she could not help toying with them,--looking at them from all points, and investing them with meanings of love and faithfulness,--ostensibly entertaining such meanings only as fables wherewith to pass the time, yet in her heart admitting, for detached instants, a possibility of their deeper truth. And thus, for hours after he had left her, her reason flirted with her fancy as a kitten will sport with a dove, pleasantly and smoothly through easy attitudes, but disclosing its cruel and unyielding nature at crises.

To turn now to the more material media through which this story moves, it so happened that the very next morning brought round a circumstance

which, slight in itself, took up a relevant and important position between the past and the future of the persons herein concerned.

At breakfast time, just as Cytherea had again seen the postman pass without bringing her an answer to the advertisement, as she had fully expected he would do, Owen entered the room.

'Well,' he said, kissing her, 'you have not been alarmed, of course. Springrove told you what I had done, and you found there was no train?'

'Yes, it was all clear. But what is the lameness owing to?'

'I don't know--nothing. It has quite gone off now... Cytherea, I hope you like Springrove. Springrove's a nice fellow, you know.'

'Yes. I think he is, except that--'

'It happened just to the purpose that I should meet him there, didn't it? And when I reached the station and learnt that I could not get on by train my foot seemed better. I started off to walk home, and went about five miles along a path beside the railway. It then struck me that I might not be fit for anything to-day if I walked and aggravated the bothering foot, so I looked for a place to sleep at. There was no available village or inn, and I eventually got the keeper of a gate-house, where a lane crossed the line, to take me in.'

They proceeded with their breakfast. Owen yawned.

'You didn't get much sleep at the gate-house last night, I'm afraid, Owen,' said his sister.

'To tell the truth, I didn't. I was in such very close and narrow quarters. Those gate-houses are such small places, and the man had only his own bed to offer me. Ah, by-the-bye, Cythie, I have such an extraordinary thing to tell you in connection with this man!--by Jove, I had nearly forgotten it! But I'll go straight on. As I was saying, he had only his own bed to offer me, but I could not afford to be fastidious, and as he had a hearty manner, though a very queer one, I agreed to accept it, and he made a rough pallet for himself on the floor close beside me. Well, I could not sleep for my life, and I wished I had not stayed there, though I was so tired. For one thing, there were the luggage trains rattling by at my elbow the early part of the night. But worse than this, he talked continually in his sleep, and occasionally struck out with his limbs at something or another, knocking against the post of the bedstead and making it tremble. My condition was altogether so unsatisfactory that at last I awoke him, and asked him what he had been dreaming about for the previous hour, for I could get no sleep at all. He begged my pardon for disturbing me, but a name I had casually let fall that evening had led him to think of another stranger he had once had visit him, who had also accidentally mentioned the same name, and some very strange incidents connected with that meeting. The affair had occurred years and years ago; but what I had said had made him think

and dream about it as if it were but yesterday. What was the word? I said. "Cytherea," he said. What was the story? I asked then. He then told me that when he was a young man in London he borrowed a few pounds to add to a few he had saved up, and opened a little inn at Hammersmith. One evening, after the inn had been open about a couple of months, every idler in the neighbourhood ran off to Westminster. The Houses of Parliament were on fire.

'Not a soul remained in his parlour besides himself, and he began picking up the pipes and glasses his customers had hastily relinquished. At length a young lady about seventeen or eighteen came in. She asked if a woman was there waiting for herself--Miss Jane Taylor. He said no; asked the young lady if she would wait, and showed her into the small inner room. There was a glass-pane in the partition dividing this room from the bar to enable the landlord to see if his visitors, who sat there, wanted anything. A curious awkwardness and melancholy about the behaviour of the girl who called, caused my informant to look frequently at her through the partition. She seemed weary of her life, and sat with her face buried in her hands, evidently quite out of her element in such a house. Then a woman much older came in and greeted Miss Taylor by name. The man distinctly heard the following words pass between them:--

'"Why have you not brought him?"

'"He is ill; he is not likely to live through the night."

'At this announcement from the elderly woman, the young lady fell to the floor in a swoon, apparently overcome by the news. The landlord ran in and lifted her up. Well, do what they would they could not for a long time bring her back to consciousness, and began to be much alarmed. "Who is she?" the innkeeper said to the other woman. "I know her," the other said, with deep meaning in her tone. The elderly and young woman seemed allied, and yet strangers.

'She now showed signs of life, and it struck him (he was plainly of an inquisitive turn), that in her half-bewildered state he might get some information from her. He stooped over her, put his mouth to her ear, and said sharply, "What's your name?" "To catch a woman napping is difficult, even when she's half dead; but I did it," says the gatekeeper. When he asked her her name, she said immediately--

'"Cytherea"--and stopped suddenly.'

'My own name!' said Cytherea.

'Yes--your name. Well, the gateman thought at the time it might be equally with Jane a name she had invented for the occasion, that they might not trace her; but I think it was truth unconsciously uttered, for she added directly afterwards: "O, what have I said!" and was quite overcome again--this time with fright. Her vexation that the woman now doubted the genuineness of her other name was very much greater than

that the innkeeper did, and it is evident that to blind the woman was her main object. He also learnt from words the elderly woman casually dropped, that meetings of the same kind had been held before, and that the falseness of the soi-disant Miss Jane Taylor's name had never been suspected by this dependent or confederate till then.

'She recovered, rested there for an hour, and first sending off her companion peremptorily (which was another odd thing), she left the house, offering the landlord all the money she had to say nothing about the circumstance. He has never seen her since, according to his own account. I said to him again and again, "Did you find any more particulars afterwards?" "Not a syllable," he said. O, he should never hear any more of that! too many years had passed since it happened. "At any rate, you found out her surname?" I said. "Well, well, that's my secret," he went on. "Perhaps I should never have been in this part of the world if it hadn't been for that. I failed as a publican, you know." I imagine the situation of gateman was given him and his debts paid off as a bribe to silence; but I can't say. "Ah, yes!" he said, with a long breath. "I have never heard that name mentioned since that time till to-night, and then there instantly rose to my eyes the vision of that young lady lying in a fainting fit." He then stopped talking and fell asleep. Telling the story must have relieved him as it did the Ancient Mariner, for he did not move a muscle or make another sound for the remainder of the night. Now isn't that an odd story?'

'It is indeed,' Cytherea murmured. 'Very, very strange.'

'Why should she have said your most uncommon name?' continued Owen. 'The man was evidently truthful, for there was not motive sufficient for his invention of such a tale, and he could not have done it either.'

Cytherea looked long at her brother. 'Don't you recognize anything else in connection with the story?' she said.

'What?' he asked.

'Do you remember what poor papa once let drop--that Cytherea was the name of his first sweetheart in Bloomsbury, who so mysteriously renounced him? A sort of intuition tells me that this was the same woman.'

'O no--not likely,' said her brother sceptically.

'How not likely, Owen? There's not another woman of the name in England. In what year used papa to say the event took place?'

'Eighteen hundred and thirty-five.'

'And when were the Houses of Parliament burnt?--stop, I can tell you.' She searched their little stock of books for a list of dates, and found one in an old school history.

'The Houses of Parliament were burnt down in the evening of the sixteenth of October, eighteen hundred and thirty-four.'

'Nearly a year and a quarter before she met father,' remarked Owen.

They were silent. 'If papa had been alive, what a wonderful absorbing interest this story would have had for him,' said Cytherea by-and-by. 'And how strangely knowledge comes to us. We might have searched for a clue to her secret half the world over, and never found one. If we had really had any motive for trying to discover more of the sad history than papa told us, we should have gone to Bloomsbury; but not caring to do so, we go two hundred miles in the opposite direction, and there find information waiting to be told us. What could have been the secret, Owen?'

'Heaven knows. But our having heard a little more of her in this way (if she is the same woman) is a mere coincidence after all--a family story to tell our friends if we ever have any. But we shall never know any more of the episode now--trust our fates for that.'

Cytherea sat silently thinking.

'There was no answer this morning to your advertisement, Cytherea?' he continued.

'None.'

'I could see that by your looks when I came in.'

'Fancy not getting a single one,' she said sadly. 'Surely there must be people somewhere who want governesses?'

'Yes; but those who want them, and can afford to have them, get them mostly by friends' recommendations; whilst those who want them, and can't afford to have them, make use of their poor relations.'

'What shall I do?'

'Never mind it. Go on living with me. Don't let the difficulty trouble your mind so; you think about it all day. I can keep you, Cythie, in a plain way of living. Twenty-five shillings a week do not amount to much truly; but then many mechanics have no more, and we live quite as sparingly as journeymen mechanics... It is a meagre narrow life we are drifting into,' he added gloomily, 'but it is a degree more tolerable than the worrying sensation of all the world being ashamed of you, which we experienced at Hocbridge.'

'I couldn't go back there again,' she said.

'Nor I. O, I don't regret our course for a moment. We did quite right in dropping out of the world.' The sneering tones of the remark were almost

too laboured to be real. 'Besides,' he continued, 'something better for me is sure to turn up soon. I wish my engagement here was a permanent one instead of for only two months. It may, certainly, be for a longer time, but all is uncertain.'

'I wish I could get something to do; and I must too,' she said firmly. 'Suppose, as is very probable, you are not wanted after the beginning of October--the time Mr. Gradfield mentioned--what should we do if I were dependent on you only throughout the winter?'

They pondered on numerous schemes by which a young lady might be supposed to earn a decent livelihood--more or less convenient and feasible in imagination, but relinquished them all until advertising had been once more tried, this time taking lower ground. Cytherea was vexed at her temerity in having represented to the world that so inexperienced a being as herself was a qualified governess; and had a fancy that this presumption of hers might be one reason why no ladies applied. The new and humbler attempt appeared in the following form:--

'NURSERY GOVERNESS OR USEFUL COMPANION. A young person wishes to hear of a situation in either of the above capacities. Salary very moderate. She is a good needle-woman--Address G., 3 Cross Street, Budmouth.'

In the evening they went to post the letter, and then walked up and down the Parade for a while. Soon they met Springrove, said a few words to him, and passed on. Owen noticed that his sister's face had become crimson. Rather oddly they met Springrove again in a few minutes. This time the three walked a little way together, Edward ostensibly talking to Owen, though with a single thought to the reception of his words by the maiden at the farther side, upon whom his gaze was mostly resting, and who was attentively listening--looking fixedly upon the pavement the while. It has been said that men love with their eyes; women with their ears.

As Owen and himself were little more than acquaintances as yet, and as Springrove was wanting in the assurance of many men of his age, it now became necessary to wish his friends good-evening, or to find a reason for continuing near Cytherea by saying some nice new thing. He thought of a new thing; he proposed a pull across the bay. This was assented to. They went to the pier; stepped into one of the gaily painted boats moored alongside and sheered off. Cytherea sat in the stern steering.

They rowed that evening; the next came, and with it the necessity of rowing again. Then the next, and the next, Cytherea always sitting in the stern with the tiller ropes in her hand. The curves of her figure welded with those of the fragile boat in perfect continuation, as she girlishly yielded herself to its heaving and sinking, seeming to form with it an organic whole.

Then Owen was inclined to test his skill in paddling a canoe. Edward did not like canoes, and the issue was, that, having seen Owen on board, Springrove proposed to pull off after him with a pair of sculls; but not considering himself sufficiently accomplished to do finished rowing before a parade full of promenaders when there was a little swell on, and with the rudder unshipped in addition, he begged that Cytherea might come with him and steer as before. She stepped in, and they floated along in the wake of her brother. Thus passed the fifth evening on the water.

But the sympathetic pair were thrown into still closer companionship, and much more exclusive connection.

2. JULY THE TWENTY-NINTH

It was a sad time for Cytherea--the last day of Springrove's management at Gradfield's, and the last evening before his return from Budmouth to his father's house, previous to his departure for London.

Graye had been requested by the architect to survey a plot of land nearly twenty miles off, which, with the journey to and fro, would occupy him the whole day, and prevent his returning till late in the evening. Cytherea made a companion of her landlady to the extent of sharing meals and sitting with her during the morning of her brother's absence. Mid-day found her restless and miserable under this

arrangement. All the afternoon she sat alone, looking out of the window for she scarcely knew whom, and hoping she scarcely knew what. Half-past five o'clock came--the end of Springrove's official day. Two minutes later Springrove walked by.

She endured her solitude for another half-hour, and then could endure no longer. She had hoped--while affecting to fear--that Edward would have found some reason or other for calling, but it seemed that he had not. Hastily dressing herself she went out, when the farce of an accidental meeting was repeated. Edward came upon her in the street at the first turning, and, like the Great Duke Ferdinand in 'The Statue and the Bust'--

'He looked at her as a lover can;
She looked at him as one who awakes--
The past was a sleep, and her life began.'

'Shall we have a boat?' he said impulsively.

How blissful it all is at first. Perhaps, indeed, the only bliss in the course of love which can truly be called Eden-like is that which prevails immediately after doubt has ended and before reflection has set in--at the dawn of the emotion, when it is not recognized by name, and before the consideration of what this love is, has given birth to the consideration of what difficulties it tends to create; when on the man's part, the mistress appears to the mind's eye in picturesque, hazy, and

fresh morning lights, and soft morning shadows; when, as yet, she is known only as the wearer of one dress, which shares her own personality; as the stander in one special position, the giver of one bright particular glance, and the speaker of one tender sentence; when, on her part, she is timidly careful over what she says and does, lest she should be misconstrued or under-rated to the breadth of a shadow of a hair.

'Shall we have a boat?' he said again, more softly, seeing that to his first question she had not answered, but looked uncertainly at the ground, then almost, but not quite, in his face, blushed a series of minute blushes, left off in the midst of them, and showed the usual signs of perplexity in a matter of the emotions.

Owen had always been with her before, but there was now a force of habit in the proceeding, and with Arcadian innocence she assumed that a row on the water was, under any circumstances, a natural thing. Without another word being spoken on either side, they went down the steps. He carefully handed her in, took his seat, slid noiselessly off the sand, and away from the shore.

They thus sat facing each other in the graceful yellow cockle-shell, and his eyes frequently found a resting-place in the depths of hers. The boat was so small that at each return of the sculls, when his hands came forward to begin the pull, they approached so near to her that her vivid imagination began to thrill her with a fancy that he was going to clasp

his arms round her. The sensation grew so strong that she could not run the risk of again meeting his eyes at those critical moments, and turned aside to inspect the distant horizon; then she grew weary of looking sideways, and was driven to return to her natural position again. At this instant he again leant forward to begin, and met her glance by an ardent fixed gaze. An involuntary impulse of girlish embarrassment caused her to give a vehement pull at the tiller-rope, which brought the boat's head round till they stood directly for shore.

His eyes, which had dwelt upon her form during the whole time of her look askance, now left her; he perceived the direction in which they were going.

'Why, you have completely turned the boat, Miss Graye?' he said, looking over his shoulder. 'Look at our track on the water--a great semicircle, preceded by a series of zigzags as far as we can see.'

She looked attentively. 'Is it my fault or yours?' she inquired. 'Mine, I suppose?'

'I can't help saying that it is yours.'

She dropped the ropes decisively, feeling the slightest twinge of vexation at the answer.

'Why do you let go?'

'I do it so badly.'

'O no; you turned about for shore in a masterly way. Do you wish to return?'

'Yes, if you please.'

'Of course, then, I will at once.'

'I fear what the people will think of us--going in such absurd directions, and all through my wretched steering.'

'Never mind what the people think.' A pause. 'You surely are not so weak as to mind what the people think on such a matter as that?'

Those words might almost be called too firm and hard to be given by him to her; but never mind. For almost the first time in her life she felt the charming sensation, although on such an insignificant subject, of being compelled into an opinion by a man she loved. Owen, though less yielding physically, and more practical, would not have had the intellectual independence to answer a woman thus. She replied quietly and honestly--as honestly as when she had stated the contrary fact a minute earlier--

'I don't mind.'

'I'll unship the tiller that you may have nothing to do going back but to hold your parasol,' he continued, and arose to perform the operation, necessarily leaning closely against her, to guard against the risk of capsizing the boat as he reached his hands astern. His warm breath touched and crept round her face like a caress; but he was apparently only concerned with his task. She looked guilty of something when he seated himself. He read in her face what that something was--she had experienced a pleasure from his touch. But he flung a practical glance over his shoulder, seized the oars, and they sped in a straight line towards the shore.

Cytherea saw that he noted in her face what had passed in her heart, and that noting it, he continued as decided as before. She was inwardly distressed. She had not meant him to translate her words about returning home so literally at the first; she had not intended him to learn her secret; but more than all she was not able to endure the perception of his learning it and continuing unmoved.

There was nothing but misery to come now. They would step ashore; he would say good-night, go to London to-morrow, and the miserable She would lose him for ever. She did not quite suppose what was the fact, that a parallel thought was simultaneously passing through his mind.

They were now within ten yards, now within five; he was only now waiting for a 'smooth' to bring the boat in. Sweet, sweet Love must not be

slain thus, was the fair maid's reasoning. She was equal to the occasion--ladies are--and delivered the god--

'Do you want very much to land, Mr. Springrove?' she said, letting her young violet eyes pine at him a very, very little.

'I? Not at all,' said he, looking an astonishment at her inquiry which a slight twinkle of his eye half belied. 'But you do?'

'I think that now we have come out, and it is such a pleasant evening,' she said gently and sweetly, 'I should like a little longer row if you don't mind? I'll try to steer better than before if it makes it easier for you. I'll try very hard.'

It was the turn of his face to tell a tale now. He looked, 'We understand each other--ah, we do, darling!' turned the boat, and pulled back into the Bay once more.

'Now steer wherever you will,' he said, in a low voice. 'Never mind the directness of the course--wherever you will.'

'Shall it be Creston Shore?' she said, pointing to a stretch of beach northward from Budmouth Esplanade.

'Creston Shore certainly,' he responded, grasping the sculls. She took the strings daintily, and they wound away to the left.

For a long time nothing was audible in the boat but the regular dip of the oars, and their movement in the rowlocks. Springrove at length spoke.

'I must go away to-morrow,' he said tentatively.

'Yes,' she replied faintly.

'To endeavour to advance a little in my profession in London.'

'Yes,' she said again, with the same preoccupied softness.

'But I shan't advance.'

'Why not? Architecture is a bewitching profession. They say that an architect's work is another man's play.'

'Yes. But worldly advantage from an art doesn't depend upon mastering it. I used to think it did; but it doesn't. Those who get rich need have no skill at all as artists.'

'What need they have?'

'A certain kind of energy which men with any fondness for art possess very seldom indeed--an earnestness in making acquaintances, and a love

for using them. They give their whole attention to the art of dining out, after mastering a few rudimentary facts to serve up in conversation. Now after saying that, do I seem a man likely to make a name?'

'You seem a man likely to make a mistake.'

'What's that?'

'To give too much room to the latent feeling which is rather common in these days among the unappreciated, that because some remarkably successful men are fools, all remarkably unsuccessful men are geniuses.'

'Pretty subtle for a young lady,' he said slowly. 'From that remark I should fancy you had bought experience.'

She passed over the idea. 'Do try to succeed,' she said, with wistful thoughtfulness, leaving her eyes on him.

Springrove flushed a little at the earnestness of her words, and mused. 'Then, like Cato the Censor, I shall do what I despise, to be in the fashion,' he said at last... 'Well, when I found all this out that I was speaking of, what ever do you think I did? From having already loved verse passionately, I went on to read it continually; then I went rhyming myself. If anything on earth ruins a man for useful occupation, and for content with reasonable success in a profession or trade, it is

the habit of writing verses on emotional subjects, which had much better be left to die from want of nourishment.'

'Do you write poems now?' she said.

'None. Poetical days are getting past with me, according to the usual rule. Writing rhymes is a stage people of my sort pass through, as they pass through the stage of shaving for a beard, or thinking they are ill-used, or saying there's nothing in the world worth living for.'

'Then the difference between a common man and a recognized poet is, that one has been deluded, and cured of his delusion, and the other continues deluded all his days.'

'Well, there's just enough truth in what you say, to make the remark unbearable. However, it doesn't matter to me now that I "meditate the thankless Muse" no longer, but....' He paused, as if endeavouring to think what better thing he did.

Cytherea's mind ran on to the succeeding lines of the poem, and their startling harmony with the present situation suggested the fancy that he was 'sporting' with her, and brought an awkward contemplativeness to her face.

Springrove guessed her thoughts, and in answer to them simply said 'Yes.' Then they were silent again.

'If I had known an Amaryllis was coming here, I should not have made arrangements for leaving,' he resumed.

Such levity, superimposed on the notion of 'sport', was intolerable to Cytherea; for a woman seems never to see any but the serious side of her attachment, though the most devoted lover has all the time a vague and dim perception that he is losing his old dignity and frittering away his time.

'But will you not try again to get on in your profession? Try once more; do try once more,' she murmured. 'I am going to try again. I have advertised for something to do.'

'Of course I will,' he said, with an eager gesture and smile. 'But we must remember that the fame of Christopher Wren himself depended upon the accident of a fire in Pudding Lane. My successes seem to come very slowly. I often think, that before I am ready to live, it will be time for me to die. However, I am trying--not for fame now, but for an easy life of reasonable comfort.'

It is a melancholy truth for the middle classes, that in proportion as they develop, by the study of poetry and art, their capacity for conjugal love of the highest and purest kind, they limit the possibility of their being able to exercise it--the very act putting out of their power the attainment of means sufficient for marriage. The man who works

up a good income has had no time to learn love to its solemn extreme; the man who has learnt that has had no time to get rich.

'And if you should fail--utterly fail to get that reasonable wealth,' she said earnestly, 'don't be perturbed. The truly great stand upon no middle ledge; they are either famous or unknown.'

'Unknown,' he said, 'if their ideas have been allowed to flow with a sympathetic breadth. Famous only if they have been convergent and exclusive.'

'Yes; and I am afraid from that, that my remark was but discouragement, wearing the dress of comfort. Perhaps I was not quite right in--'

'It depends entirely upon what is meant by being truly great. But the long and the short of the matter is, that men must stick to a thing if they want to succeed in it--not giving way to over-much admiration for the flowers they see growing in other people's borders; which I am afraid has been my case.' He looked into the far distance and paused.

Adherence to a course with persistence sufficient to ensure success is possible to widely appreciative minds only when there is also found in them a power--commonplace in its nature, but rare in such combination--the power of assuming to conviction that in the outlying paths which appear so much more brilliant than their own, there are bitternesses equally great--unperceived simply on account of their

remoteness.

They were opposite Ringsworth Shore. The cliffs here were formed of strata completely contrasting with those of the further side of the Bay, whilst in and beneath the water hard boulders had taken the place of sand and shingle, between which, however, the sea glided noiselessly, without breaking the crest of a single wave, so strikingly calm was the air. The breeze had entirely died away, leaving the water of that rare glassy smoothness which is unmarked even by the small dimples of the least aerial movement. Purples and blues of divers shades were reflected from this mirror accordingly as each undulation sloped east or west. They could see the rocky bottom some twenty feet beneath them, luxuriant with weeds of various growths, and dotted with pulpy creatures reflecting a silvery and spangled radiance upwards to their eyes.

At length she looked at him to learn the effect of her words of encouragement. He had let the oars drift alongside, and the boat had come to a standstill. Everything on earth seemed taking a contemplative rest, as if waiting to hear the avowal of something from his lips. At that instant he appeared to break a resolution hitherto zealously kept. Leaving his seat amidships he came and gently edged himself down beside her upon the narrow seat at the stern.

She breathed more quickly and warmly: he took her right hand in his own right: it was not withdrawn. He put his left hand behind her neck till it came round upon her left cheek: it was not thrust away. Lightly

pressing her, he brought her face and mouth towards his own; when, at this the very brink, some unaccountable thought or spell within him suddenly made him halt--even now, and as it seemed as much to himself as to her, he timidly whispered 'May I?'

Her endeavour was to say No, so denuded of its flesh and sinews that its nature would hardly be recognized, or in other words a No from so near the affirmative frontier as to be affected with the Yes accent. It was thus a whispered No, drawn out to nearly a quarter of a minute's length, the O making itself audible as a sound like the spring coo of a pigeon on unusually friendly terms with its mate. Though conscious of her success in producing the kind of word she had wished to produce, she at the same time trembled in suspense as to how it would be taken. But the time available for doubt was so short as to admit of scarcely more than half a pulsation: pressing closer he kissed her. Then he kissed her again with a longer kiss.

It was the supremely happy moment of their experience. The 'bloom' and the 'purple light' were strong on the lineaments of both. Their hearts could hardly believe the evidence of their lips.

'I love you, and you love me, Cytherea!' he whispered.

She did not deny it; and all seemed well. The gentle sounds around them from the hills, the plains, the distant town, the adjacent shore, the water heaving at their side, the kiss, and the long kiss, were all 'many

a voice of one delight,' and in unison with each other.

But his mind flew back to the same unpleasant thought which had been connected with the resolution he had broken a minute or two earlier. 'I could be a slave at my profession to win you, Cytherea; I would work at the meanest, honest trade to be near you--much less claim you as mine; I would--anything. But I have not told you all; it is not this; you don't know what there is yet to tell. Could you forgive as you can love?' She was alarmed to see that he had become pale with the question.

'No--do not speak,' he said. 'I have kept something from you, which has now become the cause of a great uneasiness. I had no right--to love you; but I did it. Something forbade--'

'What?' she exclaimed.

'Something forbade me--till the kiss--yes, till the kiss came; and now nothing shall forbid it! We'll hope in spite of all... I must, however, speak of this love of ours to your brother. Dearest, you had better go indoors whilst I meet him at the station, and explain everything.'

Cytherea's short-lived bliss was dead and gone. O, if she had known of this sequel would she have allowed him to break down the barrier of mere acquaintanceship--never, never!

'Will you not explain to me?' she faintly urged. Doubt--indefinite,

carking doubt had taken possession of her.

'Not now. You alarm yourself unnecessarily,' he said tenderly. 'My only reason for keeping silence is that with my present knowledge I may tell an untrue story. It may be that there is nothing to tell. I am to blame for haste in alluding to any such thing. Forgive me, sweet--forgive me.' Her heart was ready to burst, and she could not answer him. He returned to his place and took to the oars.

They again made for the distant Esplanade, now, with its line of houses, lying like a dark grey band against the light western sky. The sun had set, and a star or two began to peep out. They drew nearer their destination, Edward as he pulled tracing listlessly with his eyes the red stripes upon her scarf, which grew to appear as black ones in the increasing dusk of evening. She surveyed the long line of lamps on the sea-wall of the town, now looking small and yellow, and seeming to send long tap-roots of fire quivering down deep into the sea. By-and-by they reached the landing-steps. He took her hand as before, and found it as cold as the water about them. It was not relinquished till he reached her door. His assurance had not removed the constraint of her manner: he saw that she blamed him mutely and with her eyes, like a captured sparrow. Left alone, he went and seated himself in a chair on the Esplanade.

Neither could she go indoors to her solitary room, feeling as she did in such a state of desperate heaviness. When Springrove was out of sight

she turned back, and arrived at the corner just in time to see him sit down. Then she glided pensively along the pavement behind him, forgetting herself to marble like Melancholy herself as she mused in his neighbourhood unseen. She heard, without heeding, the notes of pianos and singing voices from the fashionable houses at her back, from the open windows of which the lamp-light streamed to join that of the orange-hued full moon, newly risen over the Bay in front. Then Edward began to pace up and down, and Cytherea, fearing that he would notice her, hastened homeward, flinging him a last look as she passed out of sight. No promise from him to write: no request that she herself would do so--nothing but an indefinite expression of hope in the face of some fear unknown to her. Alas, alas!

When Owen returned he found she was not in the small sitting-room, and creeping upstairs into her bedroom with a light, he discovered her there lying asleep upon the coverlet of the bed, still with her hat and jacket on. She had flung herself down on entering, and succumbed to the unwonted oppressiveness that ever attends full-blown love. The wet traces of tears were yet visible upon her long drooping lashes.

'Love is a sowre delight, and sugred griefe,
A living death, and ever-dying life.'

'Cytherea,' he whispered, kissing her. She awoke with a start, and vented an exclamation before recovering her judgment. 'He's gone!' she said.

'He has told me all,' said Graye soothingly. 'He is going off early to-morrow morning. 'Twas a shame of him to win you away from me, and cruel of you to keep the growth of this attachment a secret.'

'We couldn't help it,' she said, and then jumping up--'Owen, has he told you all?'

'All of your love from beginning to end,' he said simply.

Edward then had not told more--as he ought to have done: yet she could not convict him. But she would struggle against his fetters. She tingled to the very soles of her feet at the very possibility that he might be deluding her.

'Owen,' she continued, with dignity, 'what is he to me? Nothing. I must dismiss such weakness as this--believe me, I will. Something far more pressing must drive it away. I have been looking my position steadily in the face, and I must get a living somehow. I mean to advertise once more.'

'Advertising is no use.'

'This one will be.' He looked surprised at the sanguine tone of her answer, till she took a piece of paper from the table and showed it him. 'See what I am going to do,' she said sadly, almost bitterly. This was

her third effort:--

'LADY'S-MAID. Inexperienced. Age eighteen.--G., 3 Cross Street, Budmouth.'

Owen--Owen the respectable--looked blank astonishment. He repeated in a nameless, varying tone, the two words--

'Lady's-maid!'

'Yes; lady's-maid. 'Tis an honest profession,' said Cytherea bravely.

'But you, Cytherea?'

'Yes, I--who am I?'

'You will never be a lady's-maid--never, I am quite sure.'

'I shall try to be, at any rate.'

'Such a disgrace--'

'Nonsense! I maintain that it is no disgrace!' she said, rather warmly. 'You know very well--'

'Well, since you will, you must,' he interrupted. 'Why do you put "inexperienced?"'

'Because I am.'

'Never mind that--scratch out "inexperienced." We are poor, Cytherea, aren't we?' he murmured, after a silence, 'and it seems that the two months will close my engagement here.'

'We can put up with being poor,' she said, 'if they only give us work to do.... Yes, we desire as a blessing what was given us as a curse, and even that is denied. However, be cheerful, Owen, and never mind!'

In justice to desponding men, it is as well to remember that the brighter endurance of women at these epochs--invaluable, sweet, angelic, as it is--owes more of its origin to a narrower vision that shuts out many of the leaden-eyed despairs in the van, than to a hopefulness intense enough to quell them.