

'He never posted his letters to her in the parish--it was remarked at the time. I was thinking if something relating to her address might not be found in the report of the inquest in the Casterbridge Chronicle of the date. Some facts about the inquest were given in the papers to a certainty.'

Her brother caught eagerly at the suggestion. 'Who has a file of the Chronicles?' he said.

'Mr. Raunham used to file them,' said Cytherea. 'He was rather friendly-disposed towards me, too.'

Owen could not, on any consideration, escape from his attendance at the church-building till Saturday evening; and thus it became necessary, unless they actually wasted time, that Cytherea herself should assist.

'I act under your orders, Owen,' she said.

## XVI. THE EVENTS OF ONE WEEK

### 1. MARCH THE SIXTH

The next morning the opening move of the game was made. Cytherea, under

cover of a thick veil, hired a conveyance and drove to within a mile or so of Carriford. It was with a renewed sense of depression that she saw again the objects which had become familiar to her eye during her sojourn under Miss Aldclyffe's roof--the outline of the hills, the meadow streams, the old park trees. She hastened by a lonely path to the rectory-house, and asked if Mr. Raunham was at home.

Now the rector, though a solitary bachelor, was as gallant and courteous to womankind as an ancient Iberian; and, moreover, he was Cytherea's friend in particular, to an extent far greater than she had ever surmised. Rarely visiting his relative, Miss Aldclyffe, except on parish matters, more rarely still being called upon by Miss Aldclyffe, Cytherea had learnt very little of him whilst she lived at Knapwater. The relationship was on the impecunious paternal side, and for this branch of her family the lady of the estate had never evinced much sympathy. In looking back upon our line of descent it is an instinct with us to feel that all our vitality was drawn from the richer party to any unequal marriage in the chain.

Since the death of the old captain, the rector's bearing in Knapwater House had been almost that of a stranger, a circumstance which he himself was the last man in the world to regret. This polite indifference was so frigid on both sides that the rector did not concern himself to preach at her, which was a great deal in a rector; and she did not take the trouble to think his sermons poor stuff, which in a cynical woman was a great deal more.

Though barely fifty years of age, his hair was as white as snow, contrasting strangely with the redness of his skin, which was as fresh and healthy as a lad's. Cytherea's bright eyes, mutely and demurely glancing up at him Sunday after Sunday, had been the means of driving away many of the saturnine humours that creep into an empty heart during the hours of a solitary life; in this case, however, to supplant them, when she left his parish, by those others of a more aching nature which accompany an over-full one. In short, he had been on the verge of feeling towards her that passion to which his dignified self-respect would not give its true name, even in the privacy of his own thought.

He received her kindly; but she was not disposed to be frank with him. He saw her wish to be reserved, and with genuine good taste and good nature made no comment whatever upon her request to be allowed to see the Chronicle for the year before the last. He placed the papers before her on his study table, with a timidity as great as her own, and then left her entirely to herself.

She turned them over till she came to the first heading connected with the subject of her search--'Disastrous Fire and Loss of Life at Carriford.'

The sight, and its calamitous bearing upon her own life, made her so dizzy that she could, for a while, hardly decipher the letters. Stifling recollection by an effort she nerved herself to her work, and carefully

read the column. The account reminded her of no other fact than was remembered already.

She turned on to the following week's report of the inquest. After a miserable perusal she could find no more pertaining to Mrs. Manston's address than this:--

'ABRAHAM BROWN, of Hoxton, London, at whose house the deceased woman had been living, deposed,' etc.

Nobody else from London had attended the inquest. She arose to depart, first sending a message of thanks to Mr. Raunham, who was out of doors gardening.

He stuck his spade into the ground, and accompanied her to the gate.

'Can I help you in anything, Cytherea?' he said, using her Christian name by an intuition that unpleasant memories might be revived if he called her Miss Graye after wishing her good-bye as Mrs. Manston at the wedding. Cytherea saw the motive and appreciated it, nevertheless replying evasively--

'I only guess and fear.'

He earnestly looked at her again.

'Promise me that if you want assistance, and you think I can give it, you will come to me.'

'I will,' she said.

The gate closed between them.

'You don't want me to help you in anything now, Cytherea?' he repeated.

If he had spoken what he felt, 'I want very much to help you, Cytherea, and have been watching Manston on your account,' she would gladly have accepted his offer. As it was, she was perplexed, and raised her eyes to his, not so fearlessly as before her trouble, but as modestly, and with still enough brightness in them to do fearful execution as she said over the gate--

'No, thank you.'

She returned to Tolchurch weary with her day's work. Owen's greeting was anxious--

'Well, Cytherea?'

She gave him the words from the report of the inquest, pencilled on a slip of paper.

'Now to find out the name of the street and number,' Owen remarked.

'Owen,' she said, 'will you forgive me for what I am going to say? I don't think I can--indeed I don't think I can--take any further steps towards disentangling the mystery. I still think it a useless task, and it does not seem any duty of mine to be revenged upon Mr. Manston in any way.' She added more gravely, 'It is beneath my dignity as a woman to labour for this; I have felt it so all day.'

'Very well,' he said, somewhat shortly; 'I shall work without you then. There's dignity in justice.' He caught sight of her pale tired face, and the dilated eye which always appeared in her with weariness. 'Darling,' he continued warmly, and kissing her, 'you shall not work so hard again--you are worn out quite. But you must let me do as I like.'

## 2. MARCH THE TENTH

On Saturday evening Graye hurried off to Casterbridge, and called at the house of the reporter to the Chronicle. The reporter was at home, and came out to Graye in the passage. Owen explained who and what he was, and asked the man if he would oblige him by turning to his notes of the inquest at Carriford in the December of the year preceding the last--just adding that a family entanglement, of which the reporter probably knew something, made him anxious to ascertain some additional details of the event, if any existed.

'Certainly,' said the other, without hesitation; 'though I am afraid I haven't much beyond what we printed at the time. Let me see--my old note-books are in my drawer at the office of the paper: if you will come with me I can refer to them there.' His wife and family were at tea inside the room, and with the timidity of decent poverty everywhere he seemed glad to get a stranger out of his domestic groove.

They crossed the street, entered the office, and went thence to an inner room. Here, after a short search, was found the book required. The precise address, not given in the condensed report that was printed, but written down by the reporter, was as follows:--

'ABRAHAM BROWN,  
LODGING-HOUSE KEEPER,  
41 CHARLES SQUARE,  
HOXTON.'

Owen copied it, and gave the reporter a small fee. 'I want to keep this inquiry private for the present,' he said hesitatingly. 'You will perhaps understand why, and oblige me.'

The reporter promised. 'News is shop with me,' he said, 'and to escape from handling it is my greatest social enjoyment.'

It was evening, and the outer room of the publishing-office was lighted up with flaring jets of gas. After making the above remark, the reporter came out from the inner apartment in Graye's company, answering an expression of obligation from Owen with the words that it was no trouble. At the moment of his speech, he closed behind him the door between the two rooms, still holding his note-book in his hand.

Before the counter of the front room stood a tall man, who was also speaking, when they emerged. He said to the youth in attendance, 'I will take my paper for this week now I am here, so that you needn't post it to me.'

The stranger then slightly turned his head, saw Owen, and recognized him. Owen passed out without recognizing the other as Manston.

Manston then looked at the reporter, who, after walking to the door with Owen, had come back again to lock up his books. Manston did not need to be told that the shabby marble-covered book which he held in his hand, opening endways and interleaved with blotting-paper, was an old reporting-book. He raised his eyes to the reporter's face, whose experience had not so schooled his features but that they betrayed a consciousness, to one half initiated as the other was, that his late proceeding had been connected with events in the life of the steward. Manston said no more, but, taking his newspaper, followed Owen from the office, and disappeared in the gloom of the street.



Edward Springrove was now in London again, and on this same evening, before leaving Casterbridge, Owen wrote a careful letter to him, stating therein all the facts that had come to his knowledge, and begging him, as he valued Cytherea, to make cautious inquiries. A tall man was standing under the lamp-post, about half-a-dozen yards above the post-office, when he dropped the letter into the box.

That same night, too, for a reason connected with the rencounter with Owen Graye, the steward entertained the idea of rushing off suddenly to London by the mail-train, which left Casterbridge at ten o'clock. But remembering that letters posted after the hour at which Owen had obtained his information--whatever that was--could not be delivered in London till Monday morning, he changed his mind and went home to Knapwater. Making a confidential explanation to his wife, arrangements were set on foot for his departure by the mail on Sunday night.

### 3. MARCH THE ELEVENTH

Starting for church the next morning several minutes earlier than was usual with him, the steward intentionally loitered along the road from the village till old Mr. Springrove overtook him. Manston spoke very civilly of the morning, and of the weather, asking how the farmer's barometer stood, and when it was probable that the wind might change. It was not in Mr. Springrove's nature--going to church as he was, too--to return anything but a civil answer to such civil questions, however his

feelings might have been biased by late events. The conversation was continued on terms of greater friendliness.

'You must be feeling settled again by this time, Mr. Springrove, after the rough turn-out you had on that terrible night in November.'

'Ay, but I don't know about feeling settled, either, Mr. Manston. The old window in the chimney-corner of the old house I shall never forget. No window in the chimney-corner where I am now, and I had been used to it for more than fifty years. Ted says 'tis a great loss to me, and he knows exactly what I feel.'

'Your son is again in a good situation, I believe?' said Manston, imitating that inquisitiveness into the private affairs of the natives which passes for high breeding in country villages.

'Yes, sir. I hope he'll keep it, or do something else and stick to it.'

'Tis to be hoped he'll be steady now.'

'He's always been that, I assure 'ee,' said the old man tartly.

'Yes--yes--I mean intellectually steady. Intellectual wild oats will thrive in a soil of the strictest morality.'

'Intellectual gingerbread! Ted's steady enough--that's all I know about

it.'

'Of course--of course. Has he respectable lodgings? My own experience has shown me that that's a great thing to a young man living alone in London.'

'Warwick Street, Charing Cross--that's where he is.'

'Well, to be sure--strange! A very dear friend of mine used to live at number fifty-two in that very same street.'

'Edward lives at number forty-nine--how very near being the same house!' said the old farmer, pleased in spite of himself.

'Very,' said Manston. 'Well, I suppose we had better step along a little quicker, Mr. Springrove; the parson's bell has just begun.'

'Number forty-nine,' he murmured.

#### 4. MARCH THE TWELFTH

Edward received Owen's letter in due time, but on account of his daily engagements he could not attend to any request till the clock had struck five in the afternoon. Rushing then from his office in Westminster, he called a hansom and proceeded to Hoxton. A few minutes later he knocked at the door of number forty-one, Charles Square, the old lodging of Mrs.

Manston.

A tall man who would have looked extremely handsome had he not been clumsily and closely wrapped up in garments that were much too elderly in style for his years, stood at the corner of the quiet square at the same instant, having, too, alighted from a cab, that had been driven along Old Street in Edward's rear. He smiled confidently when Springrove knocked.

Nobody came to the door. Springrove knocked again.

This brought out two people--one at the door he had been knocking upon, the other from the next on the right.

'Is Mr. Brown at home?' said Springrove.

'No, sir.'

'When will he be in?'

'Quite uncertain.'

'Can you tell me where I may find him?'

'No. O, here he is coming, sir. That's Mr. Brown.'

Edward looked down the pavement in the direction pointed out by the woman, and saw a man approaching. He proceeded a few steps to meet him.

Edward was impatient, and to a certain extent still a countryman, who had not, after the manner of city men, subdued the natural impulse to speak out the ruling thought without preface. He said in a quiet tone to the stranger, 'One word with you--do you remember a lady lodger of yours of the name of Mrs. Manston?'

Mr. Brown half closed his eyes at Springrove, somewhat as if he were looking into a telescope at the wrong end.

'I have never let lodgings in my life,' he said, after his survey.

'Didn't you attend an inquest a year and a half ago, at Carriford?'

'Never knew there was such a place in the world, sir; and as to lodgings, I have taken acres first and last during the last thirty years, but I have never let an inch.'

'I suppose there is some mistake,' Edward murmured, and turned away. He and Mr. Brown were now opposite the door next to the one he had knocked at. The woman who was still standing there had heard the inquiry and the result of it.

'I expect it is the other Mr. Brown, who used to live there, that you

want, sir,' she said. 'The Mr. Brown that was inquired for the other day?'

'Very likely that is the man,' said Edward, his interest reawakening.

'He couldn't make a do of lodging-letting here, and at last he went to Cornwall, where he came from, and where his brother still lived, who had often asked him to come home again. But there was little luck in the change; for after London they say he couldn't stand the rainy west winds they get there, and he died in the December following. Will you step into the passage?'

'That's unfortunate,' said Edward, going in. 'But perhaps you remember a Mrs. Manston living next door to you?'

'O yes,' said the landlady, closing the door. 'The lady who was supposed to have met with such a horrible fate, and was alive all the time. I saw her the other day.'

'Since the fire at Carriford?'

'Yes. Her husband came to ask if Mr. Brown was still living here--just as you might. He seemed anxious about it; and then one evening, a week or fortnight afterwards, when he came again to make further inquiries, she was with him. But I did not speak to her--she stood back, as if she were shy. I was interested, however, for old Mr. Brown had told me all

about her when he came back from the inquest.'

'Did you know Mrs. Manston before she called the other day?'

'No. You see she was only Mr. Brown's lodger for two or three weeks, and I didn't know she was living there till she was near upon leaving again--we don't notice next-door people much here in London. I much regretted I had not known her when I heard what had happened. It led me and Mr. Brown to talk about her a great deal afterwards. I little thought I should see her alive after all.'

'And when do you say they came here together?'

'I don't exactly remember the day--though I remember a very beautiful dream I had that same night--ah, I shall never forget it! Shoals of lodgers coming along the square with angels' wings and bright golden sovereigns in their hands wanting apartments at West End prices. They would not give any less; no, not if you--'

'Yes. Did Mrs. Manston leave anything, such as papers, when she left these lodgings originally?' said Edward, though his heart sank as he asked. He felt that he was outwitted. Manston and his wife had been there before him, clearing the ground of all traces.

'I have always said "No" hitherto,' replied the woman, 'considering I could say no more if put upon my oath, as I expected to be. But speaking

in a common everyday way now the occurrence is past, I believe a few things of some kind (though I doubt if they were papers) were left in a workbox she had, because she talked about it to Mr. Brown, and was rather angry at what occurred--you see, she had a temper by all account, and so I didn't like to remind the lady of this workbox when she came the other day with her husband.'

'And about the workbox?'

'Well, from what was casually dropped, I think Mrs. Manston had a few articles of furniture she didn't want, and when she was leaving they were put in a sale just by. Amongst her things were two workboxes very much alike. One of these she intended to sell, the other she didn't, and Mr. Brown, who collected the things together, took the wrong one to the sale.'

'What was in it?'

'O, nothing in particular, or of any value--some accounts, and her usual sewing materials I think--nothing more. She didn't take much trouble to get it back--she said the bills were worth nothing to her or anybody else, but that she should have liked to keep the box because her husband gave it her when they were first married, and if he found she had parted with it, he would be vexed.'

'Did Mrs. Manston, when she called recently with her husband, allude to



this, or inquire for it, or did Mr. Manston?'

'No--and I rather wondered at it. But she seemed to have forgotten it--indeed, she didn't make any inquiry at all, only standing behind him, listening to his; and he probably had never been told anything about it.'

'Whose sale were these articles of hers taken to?'

'Who was the auctioneer? Mr. Halway. His place is the third turning from the end of that street you see there. Anybody will tell you the shop--his name is written up.'

Edward went off to follow up his clue with a promptness which was dictated more by a dogged will to do his utmost than by a hope of doing much. When he was out of sight, the tall and cloaked man, who had watched him, came up to the woman's door, with an appearance of being in breathless haste.

'Has a gentleman been here inquiring about Mrs. Manston?'

'Yes; he's just gone.'

'Dear me! I want him.'

'He's gone to Mr. Halway's.'

'I think I can give him some information upon the subject. Does he pay pretty liberally?'

'He gave me half-a-crown.'

'That scale will do. I'm a poor man, and will see what my little contribution to his knowledge will fetch. But, by the way, perhaps you told him all I know--where she lived before coming to live here?'

'I didn't know where she lived before coming here. O no--I only said what Mr. Brown had told me. He seemed a nice, gentle young man, or I shouldn't have been so open as I was.'

'I shall now about catch him at Mr. Halway's,' said the man, and went away as hastily as he had come.

Edward in the meantime had reached the auction-room. He found some difficulty, on account of the inertness of those whose only inducement to an action is a mere wish from another, in getting the information he stood in need of, but it was at last accorded him. The auctioneer's book gave the name of Mrs. Higgins, 3 Canley Passage, as the purchaser of the lot which had included Mrs. Manston's workbox.

Thither Edward went, followed by the man. Four bell pulls, one above the other like waistcoat-buttons, appeared on the door-post. Edward seized

the first he came to.

'Who did you want?' said a thin voice from somewhere.

Edward looked above and around him; nobody was visible.

'Who did you want?' said the thin voice again.

He found now that the sound proceeded from below the grating covering the basement window. He dropped his glance through the bars, and saw a child's white face.

'Who did you want?' said the voice the third time, with precisely the same languid inflection.

'Mrs. Higgins,' said Edward.

'Third bell up,' said the face, and disappeared.

He pulled the third bell from the bottom, and was admitted by another child, the daughter of the woman he was in search of. He gave the little thing sixpence, and asked for her mamma. The child led him upstairs.

Mrs. Higgins was the wife of a carpenter who from want of employment one winter had decided to marry. Afterwards they both took to drink, and sank into desperate circumstances. A few chairs and a table were

the chief articles of furniture in the third-floor back room which they occupied. A roll of baby-linen lay on the floor; beside it a pap-clogged spoon and an overturned tin pap-cup. Against the wall a Dutch clock was fixed out of level, and ticked wildly in longs and shorts, its entrails hanging down beneath its white face and wiry hands, like the faeces of a Harpy ('foedissima ventris proluvies, uncaeque manus, et pallida semper ora'). A baby was crying against every chair-leg, the whole family of six or seven being small enough to be covered by a washing-tub. Mrs. Higgins sat helpless, clothed in a dress which had hooks and eyes in plenty, but never one opposite the other, thereby rendering the dress almost useless as a screen to the bosom. No workbox was visible anywhere.

It was a depressing picture of married life among the very poor of a city. Only for one short hour in the whole twenty-four did husband and wife taste genuine happiness. It was in the evening, when, after the sale of some necessary article of furniture, they were under the influence of a quartern of gin.

Of all the ingenious and cruel satires that from the beginning till now have been stuck like knives into womankind, surely there is not one so lacerating to them, and to us who love them, as the trite old fact, that the most wretched of men can, in the twinkling of an eye, find a wife ready to be more wretched still for the sake of his company.

Edward hastened to despatch his errand.

Mrs. Higgins had lately pawned the workbox with other useless articles of lumber, she said. Edward bought the duplicate of her, and went downstairs to the pawnbroker's.

In the back division of a musty shop, amid the heterogeneous collection of articles and odours invariably crowding such places, he produced his ticket, and with a sense of satisfaction out of all proportion to the probable worth of his acquisition, took the box and carried it off under his arm. He attempted to lift the cover as he walked, but found it locked.

It was dusk when Springrove reached his lodging. Entering his small sitting-room, the front apartment on the ground floor, he struck a light, and proceeded to learn if any scrap or mark within or upon his purchase rendered it of moment to the business in hand. Breaking open the cover with a small chisel, and lifting the tray, he glanced eagerly beneath, and found--nothing.

He next discovered that a pocket or portfolio was formed on the underside of the cover. This he unfastened, and slipping his hand within, found that it really contained some substance. First he pulled out about a dozen tangled silk and cotton threads. Under them were a short household account, a dry moss-rosebud, and an old pair of carte-de-visite photographs. One of these was a likeness of Mrs. Manston--'Eunice' being written under it in ink--the other of Manston

himself.

He sat down dispirited. This was all the fruit of his task--not a single letter, date, or address of any kind to help him--and was it likely there would be?

However, thinking he would send the fragments, such as they were, to Graye, in order to satisfy him that he had done his best so far, he scribbled a line, and put all except the silk and cotton into an envelope. Looking at his watch, he found it was then twenty minutes to seven; by affixing an extra stamp he would be enabled to despatch them by that evening's post. He hastily directed the packet, and ran with it at once to the post-office at Charing Cross.

On his return he took up the workbox again to examine it more leisurely. He then found there was also a small cavity in the tray under the pincushion, which was movable by a bit of ribbon. Lifting this he uncovered a flattened sprig of myrtle, and a small scrap of crumpled paper. The paper contained a verse or two in a man's handwriting. He recognized it as Manston's, having seen notes and bills from him at his father's house. The stanza was of a complimentary character, descriptive of the lady who was now Manston's wife.

'EUNICE.

'Whoso for hours or lengthy days  
Shall catch her aspect's changeful rays,  
Then turn away, can none recall  
Beyond a galaxy of all  
    In hazy portraiture;  
Lit by the light of azure eyes  
Like summer days by summer skies:  
Her sweet transitions seem to be  
A kind of pictured melody,  
    And not a set contour.

'AE. M.'

To shake, pull, and ransack the box till he had almost destroyed it was now his natural action. But it contained absolutely nothing more.

'Disappointed again,' he said, flinging down the box, the bit of paper, and the withered twig that had lain with it.

Yet valueless as the new acquisition was, on second thoughts he considered that it would be worth while to make good the statement in his late note to Graye--that he had sent everything the box contained except the sewing-thread. Thereupon he enclosed the verse and myrtle-twig in another envelope, with a remark that he had overlooked them in his first search, and put it on the table for the next day's post.

In his hurry and concentration upon the matter that occupied him, Springrove, on entering his lodging and obtaining a light, had not waited to pull down the blind or close the shutters. Consequently all that he had done had been visible from the street. But as on an average not one person a minute passed along the quiet pavement at this time of the evening, the discovery of the omission did not much concern his mind.

But the real state of the case was that a tall man had stood against the opposite wall and watched the whole of his proceeding. When Edward came out and went to the Charing Cross post-office, the man followed him and saw him drop the letter into the box. The stranger did not further trouble himself to follow Springrove back to his lodging again.

Manston now knew that there had been photographs of some kind in his wife's workbox, and though he had not been near enough to see them, he guessed whose they were. The least reflection told him to whom they had been sent.

He paused a minute under the portico of the post-office, looking at the two or three omnibuses stopping and starting in front of him. Then he rushed along the Strand, through Holywell Street, and on to Old Boswell Court. Kicking aside the shoeblacks who began to importune him as he passed under the colonnade, he turned up the narrow passage to the publishing-office of the Post-Office Directory. He begged to be allowed



to see the Directory of the south-west counties of England for a moment.

The shopman immediately handed down the volume from a shelf, and Manston

retired with it to the window-bench. He turned to the county, and then to the parish of Tolchurch. At the end of the historical and topographical description of the village he read:--

'Postmistress--Mrs. Hurston. Letters received at 6.30 A.M. by foot-post from Anglebury.'

Returning his thanks, he handed back the book and quitted the office, thence pursuing his way to an obscure coffee-house by the Strand, where he now partook of a light dinner. But rest seemed impossible with him. Some absorbing intention kept his body continually on the move. He paid his bill, took his bag in his hand, and went out to idle about the streets and over the river till the time should have arrived at which the night-mail left the Waterloo Station, by which train he intended to return homeward.

There exists, as it were, an outer chamber to the mind, in which, when a man is occupied centrally with the most momentous question of his life, casual and trifling thoughts are just allowed to wander softly for an interval, before being banished altogether. Thus, amid his concentration did Manston receive perceptions of the individuals about him in the lively thoroughfare of the Strand; tall men looking insignificant;

little men looking great and profound; lost women of miserable repute looking as happy as the days are long; wives, happy by assumption, looking careworn and miserable. Each and all were alike in this one respect, that they followed a solitary trail like the inwoven threads which form a banner, and all were equally unconscious of the significant whole they collectively showed forth.

At ten o'clock he turned into Lancaster Place, crossed the river, and entered the railway-station, where he took his seat in the down mail-train, which bore him, and Edward Springrove's letter to Graye, far away from London.