

XVIII. THE EVENTS OF THREE DAYS

1. MARCH THE EIGHTEENTH

Sunday morning had come, and Owen was trudging over the six miles of hill and dale that lay between Tolchurch and Carriford.

Edward Springrove's answer to the last letter, after expressing his amazement at the strange contradiction between the verses and Mrs. Morris's letter, had been to the effect that he had again visited the neighbour of the dead Mr. Brown, and had received as near a description of Mrs. Manston as it was possible to get at second-hand, and by hearsay. She was a tall woman, wide at the shoulders, and full-chested, and she had a straight and rather large nose. The colour of her eyes the informant did not know, for she had only seen the lady in the street as she went in or out. This confusing remark was added. The woman had almost recognized Mrs. Manston when she had called with her husband lately, but she had kept her veil down. Her residence, before she came to Hoxton, was quite unknown to this next-door neighbour, and Edward could get no manner of clue to it from any other source.

Owen reached the church-door a few minutes before the bells began chiming. Nobody was yet in the church, and he walked round the aisles. From Cytherea's frequent description of how and where herself and others used to sit, he knew where to look for Manston's seat; and after two or three errors of examination he took up a prayer-book in which was

written 'Eunice Manston.' The book was nearly new, and the date of the writing about a month earlier. One point was at any rate established: that the woman living with Manston was presented to the world as no other than his lawful wife.

The quiet villagers of Carriford required no pew-opener in their place of worship: natives and in-dwellers had their own seats, and strangers sat where they could. Graye took a seat in the nave, on the north side, close behind a pillar dividing it from the north aisle, which was completely allotted to Miss Aldclyffe, her farmers, and her retainers, Manston's pew being in the midst of them. Owen's position on the other side of the passage was a little in advance of Manston's seat, and so situated that by leaning forward he could look directly into the face of any person sitting there, though, if he sat upright, he was wholly hidden from such a one by the intervening pillar.

Aiming to keep his presence unknown to Manston if possible, Owen sat, without once turning his head, during the entrance of the congregation. A rustling of silk round by the north passage and into Manston's seat, told him that some woman had entered there, and as it seemed from the accompaniment of heavier footsteps, Manston was with her.

Immediately upon rising up, he looked intently in that direction, and saw a lady standing at the end of the seat nearest himself. Portions of Manston's figure appeared on the other side of her. In two glances Graye read thus many of her characteristics, and in the following order:--

She was a tall woman.

She was broad at the shoulders.

She was full-bosomed.

She was easily recognizable from the photograph but nothing could be discerned of the colour of her eyes.

With a preoccupied mind he withdrew into his nook, and heard the service continued--only conscious of the fact that in opposition to the suspicion which one odd circumstance had bred in his sister concerning this woman, all ostensible and ordinary proofs and probabilities tended to the opposite conclusion. There sat the genuine original of the portrait--could he wish for more? Cytherea wished for more. Eunice Manston's eyes were blue, and it was necessary that this woman's eyes should be blue also.

Unskilled labour wastes in beating against the bars ten times the energy exerted by the practised hand in the effective direction. Owen felt this to be the case in his own and Edward's attempts to follow up the clue afforded them. Think as he might, he could not think of a crucial test in the matter absorbing him, which should possess the indispensable attribute--a capability of being applied privately; that in the event of its proving the lady to be the rightful owner of the name she used, he

might recede without obloquy from an untenable position.

But to see Mrs. Manston's eyes from where he sat was impossible, and he could do nothing in the shape of a direct examination at present. Miss Aldclyffe had possibly recognized him, but Manston had not, and feeling that it was indispensable to keep the purport of his visit a secret from the steward, he thought it would be as well, too, to keep his presence in the village a secret from him; at any rate, till the day was over.

At the first opening of the doors, Graye left the church and wandered away into the fields to ponder on another scheme. He could not call on Farmer Springrove, as he had intended, until this matter was set at rest. Two hours intervened between the morning and afternoon services.

This time had nearly expired before Owen had struck out any method of proceeding, or could decide to run the risk of calling at the Old House and asking to see Mrs. Manston point-blank. But he had drawn near the place, and was standing still in the public path, from which a partial view of the front of the building could be obtained, when the bells began chiming for afternoon service. Whilst Graye paused, two persons came from the front door of the half-hidden dwelling whom he presently saw to be Manston and his wife. Manston was wearing his old garden-hat, and carried one of the monthly magazines under his arm. Immediately they had passed the gateway he branched off and went over the hill in a direction away from the church, evidently intending to ramble along,

and read as the humour moved him. The lady meanwhile turned in the other

direction, and went into the church path.

Owen resolved to make something of this opportunity. He hurried along towards the church, doubled round a sharp angle, and came back upon the other path, by which Mrs. Manston must arrive.

In about three minutes she appeared in sight without a veil. He discovered, as she drew nearer, a difficulty which had not struck him at first--that it is not an easy matter to particularize the colour of a stranger's eyes in a merely casual encounter on a path out of doors. That Mrs. Manston must be brought close to him, and not only so, but to look closely at him, if his purpose were to be accomplished.

He shaped a plan. It might by chance be effectual; if otherwise, it would not reveal his intention to her. When Mrs. Manston was within speaking distance, he went up to her and said--

'Will you kindly tell me which turning will take me to Casterbridge?'

'The second on the right,' said Mrs. Manston.

Owen put on a blank look: he held his hand to his ear--conveying to the lady the idea that he was deaf.

She came closer and said more distinctly--

'The second turning on the right.'

Owen flushed a little. He fancied he had beheld the revelation he was in search of. But had his eyes deceived him?

Once more he used the ruse, still drawing nearer and intimating by a glance that the trouble he gave her was very distressing to him.

'How very deaf!' she murmured. She exclaimed loudly--

'The second turning to the right.'

She had advanced her face to within a foot of his own, and in speaking mouthed very emphatically, fixing her eyes intently upon his. And now his first suspicion was indubitably confirmed. Her eyes were as black as midnight.

All this feigning was most distasteful to Graye. The riddle having been solved, he unconsciously assumed his natural look before she had withdrawn her face. She found him to be peering at her as if he would read her very soul--expressing with his eyes the notification of which, apart from emotion, the eyes are more capable than any other--inquiry.

Her face changed its expression--then its colour. The natural tint of

the lighter portions sank to an ashy gray; the pink of her cheeks grew purpler. It was the precise result which would remain after blood had left the face of one whose skin was dark, and artificially coated with pearl-powder and carmine.

She turned her head and moved away, murmuring a hasty reply to Owen's farewell remark of 'Good-day,' and with a kind of nervous twitch lifting her hand and smoothing her hair, which was of a light-brown colour.

'She wears false hair,' he thought, 'or has changed its colour artificially. Her true hair matched her eyes.'

And now, in spite of what Mr. Brown's neighbours had said about nearly recognizing Mrs. Manston on her recent visit--which might have meant anything or nothing; in spite of the photograph, and in spite of his previous incredulity; in consequence of the verse, of her silence and backwardness at the visit to Hoxton with Manston, and of her appearance and distress at the present moment, Graye had a conviction that the woman was an impostor.

What could be Manston's reason for such an astounding trick he could by no stretch of imagination divine.

He changed his direction as soon as the woman was out of sight, and plodded along the lanes homeward to Tolchurch.

One new idea was suggested to him by his desire to allay Cytherea's dread of being claimed, and by the difficulty of believing that the first Mrs. Manston lost her life as supposed, notwithstanding the inquest and verdict. Was it possible that the real Mrs. Manston, who was known to be a Philadelphian by birth, had returned by the train to London, as the porter had said, and then left the country under an assumed name, to escape that worst kind of widowhood--the misery of being wedded to a fickle, faithless, and truant husband?

In her complicated distress at the news brought by her brother, Cytherea's thoughts at length reverted to her friend, the Rector of Carriford. She told Owen of Mr. Raunham's warm-hearted behaviour towards herself, and of his strongly expressed wish to aid her.

'He is not only a good, but a sensible man. We seem to want an old head on our side.'

'And he is a magistrate,' said Owen in a tone of concurrence. He thought, too, that no harm could come of confiding in the rector, but there was a difficulty in bringing about the confidence. He wished that his sister and himself might both be present at an interview with Mr. Raunham, yet it would be unwise for them to call on him together, in the sight of all the servants and parish of Carriford.

There could be no objection to their writing him a letter.

No sooner was the thought born than it was carried out. They wrote to him at once, asking him to have the goodness to give them some advice they sadly needed, and begging that he would accept their assurance that there was a real justification for the additional request they made--that instead of their calling upon him, he would any evening of the week come to their cottage at Tolchurch.

2. MARCH THE TWENTIETH. SIX TO NINE O'CLOCK P.M.

Two evenings later, to the total disarrangement of his dinner-hour, Mr. Raunham appeared at Owen's door. His arrival was hailed with genuine gratitude. The horse was tied to the palings, and the rector ushered indoors and put into the easy-chair.

Then Graye told him the whole story, reminding him that their first suspicions had been of a totally different nature, and that in endeavouring to obtain proof of their truth they had stumbled upon marks which had surprised them into these new uncertainties, thrice as marvellous as the first, yet more prominent.

Cytherea's heart was so full of anxiety that it superinduced a manner of confidence which was a death-blow to all formality. Mr. Raunham took her hand pityingly.

'It is a serious charge,' he said, as a sort of original twig on which his thoughts might precipitate themselves.

'Assuming for a moment that such a substitution was rendered an easy matter by fortuitous events,' he continued, 'there is this consideration to be placed beside it--what earthly motive can Mr. Manston have had which would be sufficiently powerful to lead him to run such a very great risk? The most abandoned roue could not, at that particular crisis, have taken such a reckless step for the mere pleasure of a new companion.'

Owen had seen that difficulty about the motive; Cytherea had not.

'Unfortunately for us,' the rector resumed, 'no more evidence is to be obtained from the porter, Chinney. I suppose you know what became of him? He got to Liverpool and embarked, intending to work his way to America, but on the passage he fell overboard and was drowned. But there is no doubt of the truth of his confession--in fact, his conduct tends to prove it true--and no moral doubt of the fact that the real Mrs. Manston left here to go back by that morning's train. This being the case, then, why, if this woman is not she, did she take no notice of the advertisement--I mean not necessarily a friendly notice, but from the information it afforded her have rendered it impossible that she should be personified without her own connivance?'

'I think that argument is overthrown,' Graye said, 'by my earliest

assumption of her hatred of him, weariness of the chain which bound her to him, and a resolve to begin the world anew. Let's suppose she has married another man--somewhere abroad, say; she would be silent for her own sake.'

'You've hit the only genuine possibility,' said Mr. Raunham, tapping his finger upon his knee. 'That would decidedly dispose of the second difficulty. But his motive would be as mysterious as ever.'

Cytherea's pictured dreads would not allow her mind to follow their conversation. 'She's burnt,' she said. 'O yes; I fear--I fear she is!'

'I don't think we can seriously believe that now, after what has happened,' said the rector.

Still straining her thought towards the worst, 'Then, perhaps, the first Mrs. Manston was not his wife,' she returned; 'and then I should be his wife just the same, shouldn't I?'

'They were married safely enough,' said Owen. 'There is abundance of circumstantial evidence to prove that.'

'Upon the whole,' said Mr. Raunham, 'I should advise your asking in a straightforward way for legal proof from the steward that the present woman is really his original wife--a thing which, to my mind, you should have done at the outset.' He turned to Cytherea kindly, and asked her

what made her give up her husband so unceremoniously.

She could not tell the rector of her aversion to Manston, and of her unquenched love for Edward.

'Your terrified state no doubt,' he said, answering for her, in the manner of those accustomed to the pulpit. 'But into such a solemn compact as marriage, all-important considerations, both legally and morally, enter; it was your duty to have seen everything clearly proved. Doubtless Mr. Manston is prepared with proofs, but as it concerns nobody but yourself that her identity should be publicly established (and by your absenteeism you act as if you were satisfied) he has not troubled to exhibit them. Nobody else has taken the trouble to prove what does not affect them in the least--that's the way of the world always. You, who should have required all things to be made clear, ran away.'

'That was partly my doing,' said Owen.

The same explanation--her want of love for Manston--applied here too, but she shunned the revelation.

'But never mind,' added the rector, 'it was all the greater credit to your womanhood, perhaps. I say, then, get your brother to write a line to Mr. Manston, saying you wish to be satisfied that all is legally clear (in case you should want to marry again, for instance), and I have no doubt that you will be. Or, if you would rather, I'll write myself?'

'O no, sir, no,' pleaded Cytherea, beginning to blanch, and breathing quickly. 'Please don't say anything. Let me live here with Owen. I am so afraid it will turn out that I shall have to go to Knapwater and be his wife, and I don't want to go. Do conceal what we have told you. Let him continue his deception--it is much the best for me.'

Mr. Raunham at length divined that her love for Manston, if it had ever existed, had transmuted itself into a very different feeling now.

'At any rate,' he said, as he took his leave and mounted his mare, 'I will see about it. Rest content, Miss Graye, and depend upon it that I will not lead you into difficulty.'

'Conceal it,' she still pleaded.

'We'll see--but of course I must do my duty.'

'No--don't do your duty!' She looked up at him through the gloom, illuminating her own face and eyes with the candle she held.

'I will consider, then,' said Mr. Raunham, sensibly moved. He turned his horse's head, bade them a warm adieu, and left the door.

The rector of Carriford trotted homewards under the cold and clear March sky, its countless stars fluttering like bright birds. He was

unconscious of the scene. Recovering from the effect of Cytherea's voice and glance of entreaty, he laid the subject of the interview clearly before himself.

The suspicions of Cytherea and Owen were honest, and had foundation--that he must own. Was he--a clergyman, magistrate, and conscientious man--justified in yielding to Cytherea's importunities to keep silence, because she dreaded the possibility of a return to Manston? Was she wise in her request? Holding her present belief, and with no definite evidence either way, she could, for one thing, never conscientiously marry any one else. Suppose that Cytherea were Manston's wife--i.e., that the first wife was really burnt? The adultery of Manston would be proved, and, Mr. Raunham thought, cruelty sufficient to bring the case within the meaning of the statute. Suppose the new woman was, as stated, Mr. Manston's restored wife? Cytherea was perfectly safe as a single woman whose marriage had been void. And if it turned out that, though this woman was not Manston's wife, his wife was still living, as Owen had suggested, in America or elsewhere, Cytherea was safe.

The first supposition opened up the worst contingency. Was she really safe as Manston's wife? Doubtful. But, however that might be, the gentle, defenceless girl, whom it seemed nobody's business to help or defend, should be put in a track to proceed against this man. She had but one life, and the superciliousness with which all the world now regarded her should be compensated in some measure by the man whose

carelessness--to set him in the best light--had caused it.

Mr. Raunham felt more and more positively that his duty must be done. An inquiry must be made into the matter. Immediately on reaching home, he sat down and wrote a plain and friendly letter to Mr. Manston, and despatched it at once to him by hand. Then he flung himself back in his chair, and went on with his meditation. Was there anything in the suspicion? There could be nothing, surely. Nothing is done by a clever man without a motive, and what conceivable motive could Manston have for such abnormal conduct? Corinthian that he might be, who had preyed on virginity like St. George's dragon, he would never have been absurd enough to venture on such a course for the possession alone of the woman--there was no reason for it--she was inferior to Cytherea in every respect, physical and mental.

On the other hand, it seemed rather odd, when he analyzed the action, that a woman who deliberately hid herself from her husband for more than a twelvemonth should be brought back by a mere advertisement. In fact, the whole business had worked almost too smoothly and effectually for unpremeditated sequence. It was too much like the indiscriminate righting of everything at the end of an old play. And there was that curious business of the keys and watch. Her way of accounting for their being left behind by forgetfulness had always seemed to him rather forced. The only unforced explanation was that suggested by the newspaper writers--that she left them behind on purpose to blind people as to her escape, a motive which would have clashed with the possibility

of her being fished back by an advertisement, as the present woman had been. Again, there were the two charred bones. He shuffled the books and papers in his study, and walked about the room, restlessly musing on the same subject. The parlour-maid entered.

'Can young Mr. Springrove from London see you to-night, sir?'

'Young Mr. Springrove?' said the rector, surprised.

'Yes, sir.'

'Yes, of course he can see me. Tell him to come in.'

Edward came so impatiently into the room, as to show that the few short moments his announcement had occupied had been irksome to him. He stood

in the doorway with the same black bag in his hand, and the same old gray cloak on his shoulders, that he had worn fifteen months earlier when returning on the night of the fire. This appearance of his conveyed a true impression; he had become a stagnant man. But he was excited now.

'I have this moment come from London,' he said, as the door was closed behind him.

The prophetic insight, which so strangely accompanies critical experiences, prompted Mr. Raunham's reply.

'About the Grayes and Manston?'

'Yes. That woman is not Mrs. Manston.'

'Prove it.'

'I can prove that she is somebody else--that her name is Anne Seaway.'

'And are their suspicions true indeed!'

'And I can do what's more to the purpose at present.'

'Suggest Manston's motive?'

'Only suggest it, remember. But my assumption fits so perfectly with the facts that have been secretly unearthed and conveyed to me, that I can hardly conceive of another.'

There was in Edward's bearing that entire unconsciousness of himself which, natural to wild animals, only prevails in a sensitive man at moments of extreme intentness. The rector saw that he had no trivial story to communicate, whatever the story was.

'Sit down,' said Mr. Raunham. 'My mind has been on the stretch all the evening to form the slightest guess at such an object, and all to no

purpose--entirely to no purpose. Have you said anything to Owen Graye?

'Nothing--nor to anybody. I could not trust to the effect a letter might have upon yourself, either; the intricacy of the case brings me to this interview.'

Whilst Springrove had been speaking the two had sat down together. The conversation, hitherto distinct to every corner of the room, was carried on now in tones so low as to be scarcely audible to the interlocutors, and in phrases which hesitated to complete themselves. Three-quarters of an hour passed. Then Edward arose, came out of the rector's study and again flung his cloak around him. Instead of going thence homeward, he went first to the Carriford Road Station with a telegram, having despatched which he proceeded to his father's house for the first time since his arrival in the village.

3. FROM NINE TO TEN O'CLOCK P.M.

The next presentation is the interior of the Old House on the evening of the preceding section. The steward was sitting by his parlour fire, and had been reading the letter arrived from the rectory. Opposite to him sat the woman known to the village and neighbourhood as Mrs. Manston.

'Things are looking desperate with us,' he said gloomily. His gloom was not that of the hypochondriac, but the legitimate gloom which has its origin in a syllogism. As he uttered the words he handed the letter to

her.

'I almost expected some such news as this,' she replied, in a tone of much greater indifference. 'I knew suspicion lurked in the eyes of that young man who stared at me so in the church path: I could have sworn it.'

Manston did not answer for some time. His face was worn and haggard; latterly his head had not been carried so uprightly as of old. 'If they prove you to be--who you are.... Yes, if they do,' he murmured.

'They must not find that out,' she said, in a positive voice, and looking at him. 'But supposing they do, the trick does not seem to me to be so serious as to justify that wretched, miserable, horrible look of yours. It makes my flesh creep; it is perfectly deathlike.'

He did not reply, and she continued, 'If they say and prove that Eunice is indeed living--and dear, you know she is--she is sure to come back.'

This remark seemed to awaken and irritate him to speech. Again, as he had done a hundred times during their residence together, he categorized the events connected with the fire at the Three Tranters. He dwelt on every incident of that night's history, and endeavoured, with an anxiety which was extraordinary in the apparent circumstances, to prove that his wife must, by the very nature of things, have perished in the flames. She arose from her seat, crossed the hearthrug, and set herself to

soothe him; then she whispered that she was still as unbelieving as ever. 'Come, supposing she escaped--just supposing she escaped--where is she?' coaxed the lady.

'Why are you so curious continually?' said Manston.

'Because I am a woman and want to know. Now where is she?'

'In the Flying Isle of San Borandan.'

'Witty cruelty is the cruellest of any. Ah, well--if she is in England, she will come back.'

'She is not in England.'

'But she will come back?'

'No, she won't.... Come, madam,' he said, arousing himself, 'I shall not answer any more questions.'

'Ah--ah--ah--she is not dead,' the woman murmured again poutingly.

'She is, I tell you.'

'I don't think so, love.'

'She was burnt, I tell you!' he exclaimed.

'Now to please me, admit the bare possibility of her being alive--just the possibility.'

'O yes--to please you I will admit that,' he said quickly. 'Yes, I admit the possibility of her being alive, to please you.'

She looked at him in utter perplexity. The words could only have been said in jest, and yet they seemed to savour of a tone the furthest remove from jesting. There was his face plain to her eyes, but no information of any kind was to be read there.

'It is only natural that I should be curious,' she murmured pettishly, 'if I resemble her as much as you say I do.'

'You are handsomer,' he said, 'though you are about her own height and size. But don't worry yourself. You must know that you are body and soul united with me, though you are but my housekeeper.'

She bridled a little at the remark. 'Wife,' she said, 'most certainly wife, since you cannot dismiss me without losing your character and position, and incurring heavy penalties.'

'I own it--it was well said, though mistakenly--very mistakenly.'

'Don't riddle to me about mistakenly and such dark things. Now what was your motive, dearest, in running the risk of having me here?'

'Your beauty,' he said.

'She thanks you much for the compliment, but will not take it. Come, what was your motive?'

'Your wit.'

'No, no; not my wit. Wit would have made a wife of me by this time instead of what I am.'

'Your virtue.'

'Or virtue either.'

'I tell you it was your beauty--really.'

'But I cannot help seeing and hearing, and if what people say is true, I am not nearly so good-looking as Cytherea, and several years older.'

The aspect of Manston's face at these words from her was so confirmatory of her hint, that his forced reply of 'O no,' tended to develop her chagrin.

'Mere liking or love for me,' she resumed, 'would not have sprung up all of a sudden, as your pretended passion did. You had been to London several times between the time of the fire and your marriage with Cytherea--you had never visited me or thought of my existence or cared that I was out of a situation and poor. But the week after you married her and were separated from her, off you rush to make love to me--not first to me either, for you went to several places--'

'No, not several places.'

'Yes, you told me so yourself--that you went first to the only lodging in which your wife had been known as Mrs. Manston, and when you found that the lodging-house-keeper had gone away and died, and that nobody else in the street had any definite ideas as to your wife's personal appearance, and came and proposed the arrangement we carried out--that I should personate her. Your taking all this trouble shows that something more serious than love had to do with the matter.'

'Humbug--what trouble after all did I take? When I found Cytherea would not stay with me after the wedding I was much put out at being left alone again. Was that unnatural?'

'No.'

'And those favouring accidents you mention--that nobody knew my first wife--seemed an arrangement of Providence for our mutual benefit, and

merely perfected a half-formed impulse--that I should call you my first wife to escape the scandal that would have arisen if you had come here as anything else.'

'My love, that story won't do. If Mrs. Manston was burnt, Cytherea, whom you love better than me, could have been compelled to live with you as your lawful wife. If she was not burnt, why should you run the risk of her turning up again at any moment and exposing your substitution of me, and ruining your name and prospects?'

'Why--because I might have loved you well enough to run the risk (assuming her not to be burnt, which I deny).'

'No--you would have run the risk the other way. You would rather have risked her finding you with Cytherea as a second wife, than with me as a personator of herself--the first one.'

'You came easiest to hand--remember that.'

'Not so very easy either, considering the labour you took to teach me your first wife's history. All about how she was a native of Philadelphia. Then making me read up the guide-book to Philadelphia, and details of American life and manners, in case the birthplace and history of your wife, Eunice, should ever become known in this neighbourhood--unlikely as it was. Ah! and then about the handwriting of hers that I had to imitate, and the dying my hair, and rouging, to make

the transformation complete? You mean to say that that was taking less trouble than there would have been in arranging events to make Cytherea believe herself your wife, and live with you?'

'You were a needy adventuress, who would dare anything for a new pleasure and an easy life--and I was fool enough to give in to you--'

'Good heavens above!--did I ask you to insert those advertisements for your old wife, and to make me answer it as if I was she? Did I ask you to send me the letter for me to copy and send back to you when the third advertisement appeared--purporting to come from the long-lost wife, and giving a detailed history of her escape and subsequent life--all which you had invented yourself? You deluded me into loving you, and then enticed me here! Ah, and this is another thing. How did you know the real wife wouldn't answer it, and upset all your plans?'

'Because I knew she was burnt.'

'Why didn't you force Cytherea to come back, then? Now, my love, I have caught you, and you may just as well tell first as last, what was your motive in having me here as your first wife?'

'Silence!' he exclaimed.

She was silent for the space of two minutes, and then persisted in going on to mutter, 'And why was it that Miss Aldclyffe allowed her favourite

young lady, Cythie, to be overthrown and supplanted without an expostulation or any show of sympathy? Do you know I often think you exercise a secret power over Miss Aldclyffe. And she always shuns me as if I shared the power. A poor, ill-used creature like me sharing power, indeed!

'She thinks you are Mrs. Manston.'

'That wouldn't make her avoid me.'

'Yes it would,' he exclaimed impatiently. 'I wish I was dead--dead!'

He had jumped up from his seat in uttering the words, and now walked wearily to the end of the room. Coming back more decisively, he looked in her face.

'We must leave this place if Raunham suspects what I think he does,' he said. 'The request of Cytherea and her brother may simply be for a satisfactory proof, to make her feel legally free--but it may mean more.'

'What may it mean?'

'How should I know?'

'Well, well, never mind, old boy,' she said, approaching him to make up the quarrel. 'Don't be so alarmed--anybody would think that you were the

woman and I the man. Suppose they do find out what I am--we can go away from here and keep house as usual. People will say of you, "His first wife was burnt to death" (or "ran away to the Colonies," as the case may be); "He married a second, and deserted her for Anne Seaway." A very everyday case--nothing so horrible, after all.'

He made an impatient movement. 'Whichever way we do it, nobody must know that you are not my wife Eunice. And now I must think about arranging matters.'

Manston then retired to his office, and shut himself up for the remainder of the evening.

XIX. THE EVENTS OF A DAY AND NIGHT

1. MARCH THE TWENTY-FIRST. MORNING

Next morning the steward went out as usual. He shortly told his companion, Anne, that he had almost matured their scheme, and that they would enter upon the details of it when he came home at night. The fortunate fact that the rector's letter did not require an immediate answer would give him time to consider.