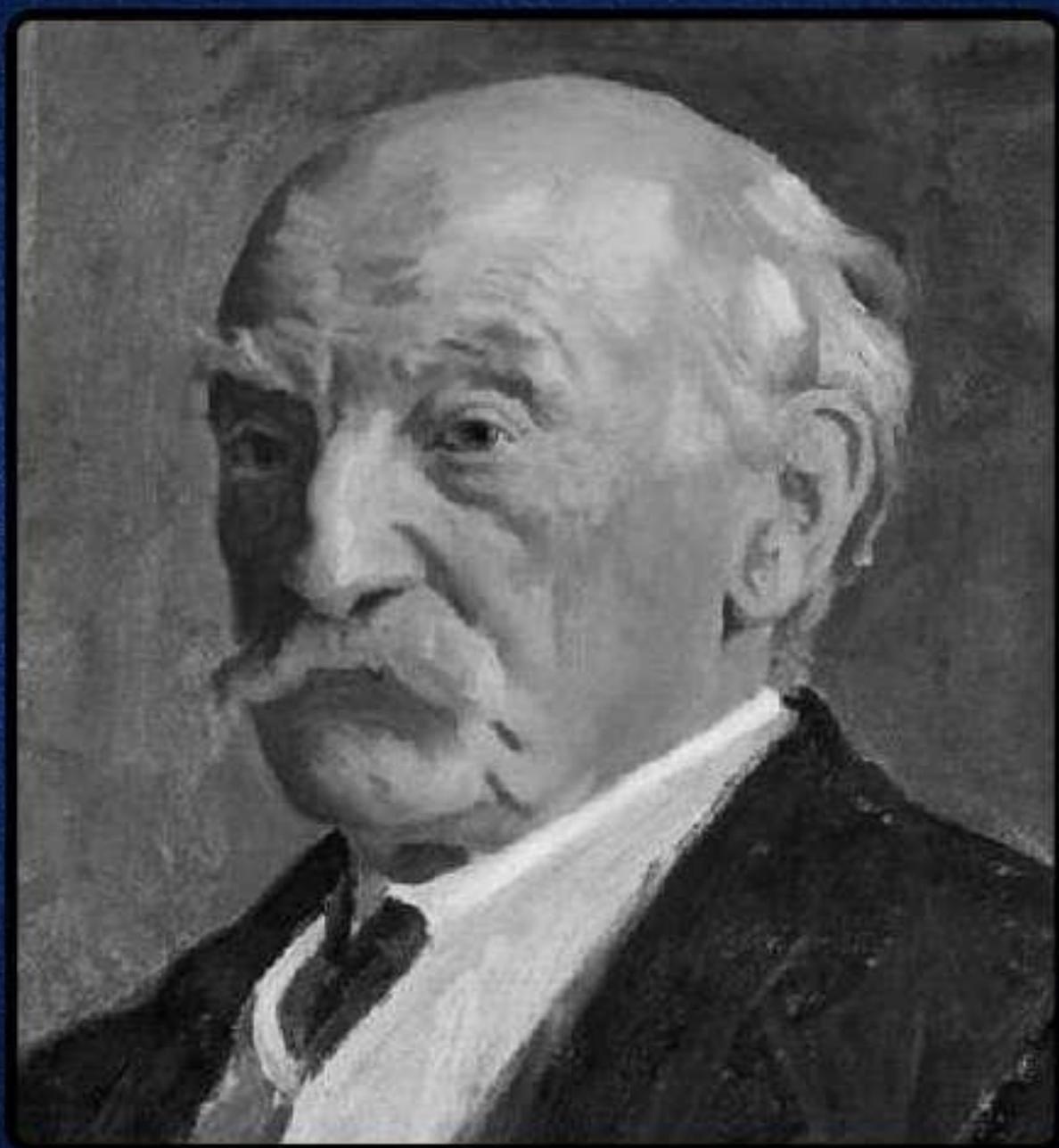


Complete Works of
THOMAS HARDY



DELPHI CLASSICS

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF THOMAS HARDY

(1840-1928)



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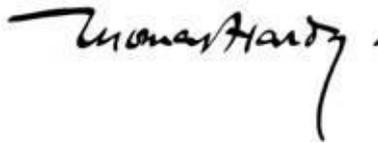
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Hardy's Wessex Map

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Hardy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'y'.

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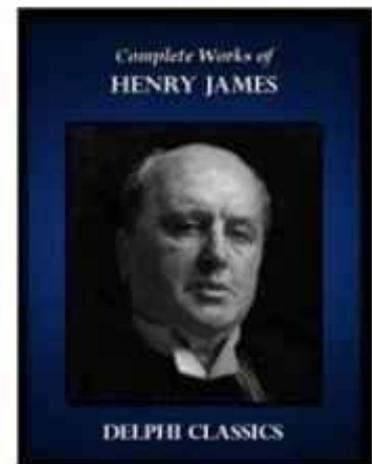
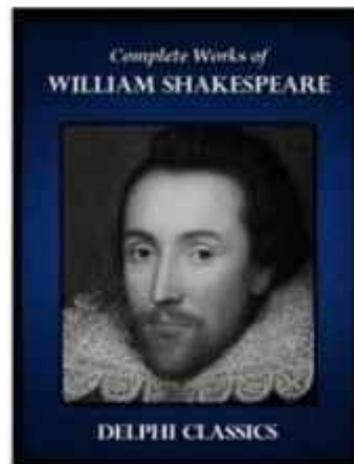
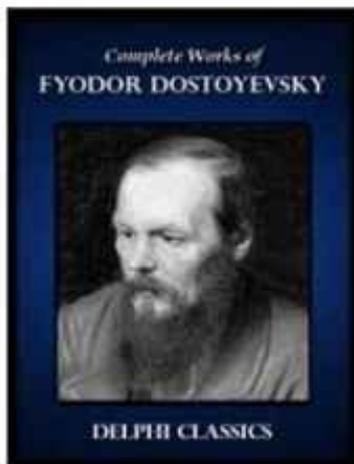
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THE COMPLETE WORKS OF
THOMAS HARDY



The Novels

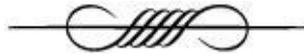


Thomas Hardy's birthplace, Higher Bockhampton, Dorset



Thomas Hardy's parents — his father Thomas was a successful stonemason and his mother Jemima was well-educated.

THE POOR MAN AND THE LADY



This was the title of Hardy's very first novel, written in 1867 and never published. After the manuscript had been rejected by several publishers, Hardy gave up his attempts to sell the novel in its original form. Nevertheless, he used some of the novel's scenes and themes in later work, particularly in the poem "The Poor Man and the Lady" and in the novella *An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress* (1878).

Sadly, the manuscript no longer exists. Hardy destroyed the last surviving fragment in his late years, after giving up an attempt of rewriting the novel.

Here is the surviving poem based on the lost novel:

AN EXPOSTULATION

The Poor Man and the Lady

Why want to go afar
Where pitfalls are,
When all we swains adore
Your feattness more and more
As heroine of our artless masquings here,
And count few Wessex' daughters half so dear?
Why paint your appealing face,
When its born grace
Is such no skill can match
With powder, puff, or patch,
Whose every touch defames your bloomfulness,
And with each stain increases our distress?
Yea, is it not enough
That (rare or rough
Your lines here) all uphold you,
And as with wings enfold you,
But you must needs desert the kine-cropt vale
Wherein your foredames gaily filled the pail?

Here is the novella influenced by Hardy's first novel:



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Hardy in 1856, aged 16

CHAPTER I.

*When I would pray and think, I think and pray
To several subjects: heaven hath my empty words;
Whilst my invention, hearing not my tongue,
Anchors on Isabel.*

The congregation in Tollamore church were singing the evening hymn, the people gently swaying backwards and forwards like trees in a soft breeze. The heads of the village children, who sat in the gallery, were inclined to one side as they uttered their shrill notes, their eyes listlessly tracing some crack in the old walls, or following the movement of a distant bough or bird, with features rapt almost to painfulness.

In front of the children stood a thoughtful young man, who, was plainly enough the schoolmaster, and his gaze was fixed on a remote part of the aisle beneath him. When the singing was over, and he had sat down for the sermon, his eyes still remained in the same place. There was some excuse for their direction, for it was in a straight line forwards; but their fixity was only to be explained by some object before them. This was a square pew, containing one solitary sitter. But that sitter was a young lady, and a very sweet lady was she.

Afternoon service in Tollamore parish was later than in many others in that neighbourhood; and as the darkness deepened during the progress of the sermon, the rector's pulpit candles shone to the remotest nooks of the building, till at length they became the sole lights of the congregation. The lady was the single person besides the preacher whose face was turned westwards, the pew that she occupied being the only one in the church in which the seat ran all round. She reclined in her corner, her bonnet and dark dress growing by degrees invisible, and at last only her upturned face could be discerned, a solitary white spot against the black surface of the wainscot. Over her head rose a vast marble monument, erected to the memory of her ancestors, male and female; for she was one of high standing in that parish. The design consisted of a winged skull and two cherubim, supporting a pair of tall Corinthian columns, between which spread a broad slab, containing the roll of ancient names, lineages, and deeds, and surmounted by a pediment, with the crest of the family at its apex.

As the youthful schoolmaster gazed, and all these details became dimmer, her face was modified in his fancy, till it seemed almost to resemble the carved marble skull immediately above her head. This thought was unpleasant enough to arouse him from his half-dreamy state, and he entered on rational considerations of what a vast gulf lay between that lady and himself, what a troublesome world it was to live in where such divisions could exist, and how painful was the evil when a man of his unequalled history was possessed of a keen susceptibility.

Now a close observer, who should have happened to be near the large pew, might have noticed before the light got low that the interested gaze of the young man had been returned from time to time by the young lady, although he, towards whom her glances were directed, did not perceive the fact. It would have been guessed, that something in the past was common to both, notwithstanding the difference in social standing. What that was may be related in a few words.

One day in the previous week there had been some excitement in the parish on account of the introduction upon the farm of a steam threshing-machine for the first time, the date of these events being some thirty years ago. The machine had been hired by a farmer who was a relative of the schoolmaster's, and when it was set going all the people round about came to see it work. It was fixed

in a corner of a field near the main road, and in the afternoon a passing carriage stopped outside the hedge. The steps were let down, and Miss Geraldine Allenville, the young woman whom we have seen sitting in the church pew, came through the gate of the field towards the engine. At that hour most of the villagers had been to the spot, had gratified their curiosity, and afterwards gone home again; so that there were only now left standing beside the engine the engine-man, the farmer, and the young schoolmaster, who had come like the rest. The labourers were at the other part of the machine, and the cornstack some distance off.

The girl looked with interest at the whizzing wheels, asked questions of the old farmer, and remained in conversation with him for some time, the schoolmaster standing a few paces distant, and looking more or less towards her. Suddenly the expression of his face changed to one of horror; he was by her side in a moment, and, seizing hold of her, he swung her round by the arm to a distance of several feet.

In speaking to the farmer she had inadvertently stepped backwards, and had drawn so near to the band which ran from the engine to the drum of the thresher that in another moment her dress must have been caught, and she would have been whirled round the wheel as a mangled carcass. As soon as the meaning of the young man's act was understood by her she turned deadly pale and nearly fainted. When she was well enough to walk, the two men led her to the carriage, which had been standing outside the hedge all the time.

"You have saved me from a ghastly death!" the agitated girl murmured to the schoolmaster. "Oh! I can never forget it!" and then she sank into the carriage and was driven away.

On account of this the schoolmaster had been invited to Tollamore House to explain the incident to the squire, the young lady's only living parent. Mr. Allenville thanked her preserver, inquired the history of his late father, a painter of good family, but unfortunate and improvident; and finally told his visitor that, if he were fond of study, the library of the house was at his service. Geraldine herself had spoken very impulsively to the young man — almost, indeed, with imprudent warmth — and her tender interest in her during the church service was the result of the sympathy she had shown.

And thus did an emotion, which became this man's sole motive power through many following years, first arise and establish itself. Only once more did she lift her eyes to where he sat, and it was when they all stood up before leaving. This time he noticed the glance. Her look of recognition led his feelings onward yet another stage. Admiration grew to be attachment; he even wished that he might own her, not exactly as a wife, but as a being superior to himself in the sense in which a servant may be said to own a master. He would have cared to possess her in order to exhibit her glories to the world, and he scarcely even thought of her ever loving him.

There were two other stages in his course of love, but they were not reached till some time after the day. The first was a change from this proud desire to a longing to cherish. The last stage, later still, was when her very defects became rallying-points for defence, when every one of his senses became special pleaders for her; and that not through blindness, but from a tender inability to do aught else than defend her against all the world.

CHAPTER II.

*She was active, stirring, all fire —
Could not rest, could not tire —
Never in all the world such an one!
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.*

Five mornings later the same young man was looking out of the window of Tollamore village school in a fixed and absent manner. The weather was exceptionally mild, though scarcely to the degree which would have justified his airy situation at such a month of the year. A hazy light spread through the air, the landscape on which his eyes were resting being enlivened and lit up by the spirit of an unseen sun rather than by its direct rays. Every sound could be heard for miles. There was a general crowing of cocks, bleating of sheep, and cawing of rooks, which proceeded from all points of the compass, rising and falling as the origin of each sound was near or far away. There were also audible the voices of people in the village, interspersed with hearty laughs, the bell of a distant flock of sheep, a robin close at hand, vehicles in the neighbouring roads and lanes. One of these latter noises grew gradually more distinct, and proved itself to be rapidly nearing the school. The listener blushed as he heard it.

“Suppose it should be!” he said to himself.

He had said the same thing at every such noise that he had heard during the foregoing week, and had been mistaken in his hope. But this time a certain carriage did appear in answer to his expectation. It came from the window hastily; and in a minute a footman knocked and opened the school door.

“Miss Allenville wishes to speak to you, Mr. Mayne.”

The schoolmaster went to the porch — he was a very young man to be called a schoolmaster — his heart beating with excitement.

“Good morning,” she said, with a confident yet girlish smile. “My father expects me to inquire into the school arrangements, and I wish to do so on my own account as well. May I come in?”

She entered as she spoke, telling the coachman to drive to the village on some errand, and call for her in half an hour.

Mayne could have wished that she had not been so thoroughly free from all apparent consciousness of the event of the previous week, of the fact that he was considerably more of a man than the smaller persons by whom the apartment was mainly filled, and that he was as nearly as possible at her own level in age, as wide in sympathies, and possibly more inflammable in heart. But he soon found that the sort of fear to entrust her voice with the subject of that link between them was what restrained her. When he had explained a few details of routine she moved away from him round the school.

He turned and looked at her as she stood among the children. To his eyes her beauty was indescribable. Before he had met her he had scarcely believed that any woman in the world could be so lovely. The clear, deep eyes, full of all tender expressions; the fresh, subtly-curved cheek, changing its tones of red with the fluctuation of each thought; the ripe tint of her delicate mouth, and the indefinable line where lip met lip; the noble bend of her neck, the wavy lengths of her dark brown hair, the soft motions of her bosom when she breathed, the light fall of her little feet, the elegant contrivances of her attire, all struck him as something he had dreamed of and was not actually seeing. Geraldine Allenville was, in truth, very beautiful; she was a girl such as his eyes had never elsewhere

beheld; and her presence here before his face kept up a sharp struggle of sweet and bitter within him.

He had thought at first that the flush on her face was caused by the fresh air of the morning; but, it quickly changed to a lesser hue, it occurred to Mayne that it might after all have arisen from shyness at meeting him after her narrow escape. Be that as it might, their conversation, which at first consisted of bald sentences, divided by wide intervals of time, became more frequent, and at last continuous. He was painfully soon convinced that her tongue would never have run so easily as it did had it not been that she thought him a person on whom she could vent her ideas without reflection or punctiliousness — a thought, perhaps, expressed to herself by such words as, “I will say what I like to him, for he is only our schoolmaster.”

“And you have chosen to keep a school,” she went on, with a shade of mischievousness in her tone, looking at him as if she thought that, had she been a man capable of saving people’s lives, she would have done something much better than teaching. She was so young as to habitually think thus of other persons’ courses.

“No,” he said simply; “I don’t choose to keep a school in the sense you mean, choosing it from a host of pursuits, all equally possible.”

“How came you here, then?”

“I fear more by chance than by aim.”

“Then you are not very ambitious?”

“I have my ambitions, such as they are.”

“I thought so. Everybody has nowadays. But it is a better thing not to be too ambitious, I think.”

“If we value ease of mind, and take an economist’s view of our term of life, it may be a better thing.”

Having been tempted, by his unexpectedly cultivated manner of speaking, to say more than she had meant to say, she found it embarrassing either to break off or to say more, and in her doubt she stooped to kiss a little girl.

“Although I spoke lightly of ambition,” she observed, without turning to him, “and said that ease of mind and happiness was worth most, I could defend ambition very well, and in the only pleasant way.”

“And that way?”

“On the broad ground of the loveliness of any dream about future triumphs. In looking back there is a pleasure in contemplating a time when some attractive thing of the future appeared possible, even though it never came to pass.”

Mayne was puzzled to hear her talk in this tone of maturity. That such questions of success and failure should have occupied his own mind seemed natural, for they had been forced upon him by the difficulties he had encountered in his pursuit of a career. He was not just then aware how very unpractical the knowledge of this sage lady of seventeen really was; that it was merely caught up by her in her intercommunication with people of culture and experience, who talked before her of their theories and beliefs till she insensibly acquired their tongue.

The carriage was heard coming up the road. Mayne gave her the list of the children, their ages, and other particulars which she had called for, and she turned to go out. Not a word had been said about the incident by the threshing-machine, though each one could see that it was constantly in the other’s thoughts. The roll of the wheels may or may not have reminded her of her position in relation to him. She said, bowing, and in a somewhat more distant tone: “We shall all be glad to learn that our schoolmaster is so — nice; such a philosopher.” But, rather surprised at her own cruelty in uttering the latter words, she added one of the sweetest laughs that ever came from lips, and said, in gentlest tones: “Good morning; I shall always remember what you did for me. Oh! it makes me sick to think of the moment. I came on purpose to thank you again, but I could not say it till now!”

Mayne’s heart, which had felt the rebuff, came round to her with a rush; he could have almost

forgiven her for physically wounding him if she had asked him in such a tone not to notice it. He watched her out of sight, thinking in rather a melancholy mood how time would absorb all her beauty as the growing distance between them absorbed her form. He then went in, and endeavoured to recall every word that he had said to her, troubling and racking his mind to the utmost of his ability about his imagined faults of manner. He remembered that he had used the indicative mood instead of the proper subjective in a certain phrase. He had given her to understand that an old idea he had made use of was his own, and so on through other particulars, each of which was an item of misery.

The place and the manner of her sitting were defined by the position of her chair, and by the books, maps, and prints scattered round it. Her "I shall always remember," he repeated to himself, a hundred times; and though he knew the plain import of the words, he could not help toying with them, looking at them from all points, and investing them with extraordinary meanings.

CHAPTER III.

But what is this? I turn about.

And find a trouble in thine eye.

Egbert Mayne, though at present filling the office of village schoolmaster, had been intended for a less narrow path. His position at this time was entirely owing to the death of his father in embarrassed circumstances two years before. Mr. Mayne had been a landscape and animal painter, and had settled in the village in early manhood, where he set about improving his prospects by marrying a small farmer's daughter. The son had been sent away from home at an early age to a good school, and had returned at seventeen to enter upon some professional life or other. But his father's health was at that time declining, and when the painter died, a year and a half later, nothing had been done for Egbert. He was now living with his maternal grandfather, Richard Broadford, the farmer, who was a tenant of Squire Allenville's. Egbert's ideas did not incline to painting, but he had ambitious notions of adopting a literary profession, or entering the Church, or doing something congenial to his taste whenever he could set about it. But first it was necessary to read, mark, learn, and look around him; and, a master being temporarily required for the school until such time as it should be placed under government inspection, he stepped in and made use of the occupation as a stop-gap for a while.

He lived in his grandfather's farmhouse, walking backwards and forwards to the school every day in order that the old man, who would otherwise be living quite alone, might have the benefit of his society during the long winter evenings. Egbert was much attached to his grandfather, and so, indeed were all who knew him. The old farmer's amiable disposition and kindness of heart, while they had hindered him from enriching himself one shilling during the course of a long and laborious life, had also kept him clear of every arrow of antagonism. The house in which he lived was the same that he had been born in, and was almost a part of himself. It had been built by his father's father; but on the dropping of the lives for which it was held, some twenty years earlier, it had lapsed to the Squire.

Richard Broadford was not, however, dispossessed: after his father's death the family had continued as before in the house and farm, but as yearly tenants. It was much to Broadford's delight, for his part, at the thought of parting from those old sticks and stones of his ancestors, before it had been known the tenure could be continued, was real and great.

On the evening of the day on which Miss Allenville called at the school Egbert returned to the farmhouse as usual. He found his grandfather sitting with his hands on his knees, and showing by his countenance that something had happened to disturb him greatly. Egbert looked at him inquiringly and with some misgiving.

"I have got to go at last, Egbert," he said, in a tone intended to be stoical, but far from it. "He is my enemy after all."

"Who?" said Mayne.

"The squire. He's going to take seventy acres of neighbour Greenman's farm to enlarge the park, and Greenman's acreage is to be made up to him, and more, by throwing my farm in with his. Yes, that's what the squire is going to have done. . . . Well, I thought to have died here; but 'tisn't to be."

He looked as helpless as a child, for age had weakened him. Egbert endeavoured to cheer him a little, and vexed as the young man was, he thought there might yet be some means of tiding over the difficulty. "Mr. Allenville wants seventy acres more in his park, does he?" he echoed mechanically. "Why can't it be taken entirely out of Greenman's farm? His is big enough, Heaven knows; and your hundred acres might be left you in peace."

“Well mayest say so! Oh, it is because he is tired .of seeing old-fashioned farming like mine. - He likes the young generation’s system best, I suppose.”

“If I had only known this this afternoon!” Egbert said.

“You could have done nothing.”

“Perhaps not.” Egbert was, however, thinking that he would have mentioned the matter to his visitor, and told her such circumstances as would have enlisted her sympathies in the case.

“I thought it would come to this,” said old Richard vehemently. “The present Squire Allenville has never been any real friend to me. It was only through his wife that I have stayed here so long. If she hadn’t been for her, we should have gone the very year that my poor father died, and the house fell into hand. I wish we had now. You see, now she’s dead, there’s nobody to counteract him in his schemes; and so I am to be swept away.”

They talked on thus, and by bedtime the old man was in better spirits. But the subject did not cease to occupy Egbert’s mind, and that anxiously. Were the house and farm which his grandfather had occupied so long to be taken away, Egbert knew it would affect his life to a degree out of all proportion to the seriousness of the event. The transplanting of old people is like the transplanting of old trees; a twelvemonth usually sees them wither and die away.

The next day proved that his anticipations were likely to be correct, his grandfather being so disturbed that he could scarcely eat or drink. The remainder of the week passed in just the same way. Nothing now occupied Egbert’s mind but a longing to see Miss Allenville. To see her would be bliss, to ask her if anything could be done by which his grandfather might retain the farm and premises would be nothing but duty. His hope of good results from the course was based on the knowledge that Miss Allenville, cold and hard as he was, had some considerable affection for or pride in his daughter, and that thus she might influence him.

It was not likely that she would call at the school for a week or two at least, and Mayne therefore tried to meet with her elsewhere. One morning early he was returning from the remote hamlet of Hawksgate, on the further side of the parish, and the nearest way to the school was across the park. He read as he walked, as was customary with him, though at present his thoughts wandered incessantly. The path took him through a shrubbery running close up to a remote wing of the mansion. Nobody seemed to be stirring in that quarter, till, turning an angle, he saw Geraldine’s own graceful figure close at hand, robed in fur, and standing at ease outside an open French casement.

She was startled by his sudden appearance, but her face soon betrayed a sympathetic remembrance of him. Egbert scarcely knew whether to stop or to walk on, when, casting her eyes upon his book, she said, “Don’t let me interrupt your reading.”

“I am glad to have — ” he stammered, and for the moment could get no farther. His nervousness encouraged her to continue. “What are you reading?” she said.

The book was, as may possibly be supposed by those who know the mood inspired by hopeless attachments, “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage,” a poem which at that date had never been surpassed for congeniality to the minds of young persons in the full fever of virulent love. He was rather reluctant to let her know this but as the inquiry afforded him an opening for conversation he held out the book, and her eye glanced over the page.

“Oh, thank you,” she said hastily, “I ought not to have asked that — only I am interested always in books. Is your grand father quite well, Mr. Mayne? I saw him yesterday, and thought he seemed to be not in such good health as usual.”

“His mind is disturbed,” said Egbert.

“Indeed, why is that?”

“It is on account of his having to leave the farm. He is old, and was born in that house.”

“Ah, yes, I have heard something of that,” she said with a slightly regretful look. “Mr. Allenville

has decided to enlarge the park. Born in the house, was he?"

~~"Yes. His father built it. May I ask your opinion on the point, Miss Allenville? Don't you think~~
would be possible to enlarge the park without taking my grandfather's farm? Greenman has already
five hundred acres."

She was perplexed how to reply, and evading the question said; "Your grandfather much wishes to
stay?"

"He does, intensely — more than you can believe or think. But he will not ask to be let remain.
dread the effect of leaving upon him. If it were possible to contrive that he should not be turned out
should be grateful indeed."

"I — I will do all I can that things may remain as they are," she said with a deepened colour. "In
fact, I am almost certain that he will not have to go, since it is so painful to him," she added in the
sanguine tones of a child. "My father could not have known that his mind was so bent on staying."

Here the conversation ended, and Egbert went on with a lightened heart. Whether his pleasure arose
entirely from having done his grandfather a good turn or from the mere sensation of having been near
her, he himself could hardly have determined.

CHAPTER IV.

*Oh, for my sake, do you with fortune chide
The guilty goddess of my harmful deed,
That did not better for my life provide.*

Now commenced a period during which Egbert Mayne's emotions burnt in a more unreasoning and wilder worship than at any other time in his life. The great condition of idealization in love was present here, that of an association in which, through difference in rank, the petty human elements that enter so largely into life are kept entirely out of sight, and there is hardly awakened in the man's mind a thought that they appertain to her at all.

He deviated frequently from his daily track to the spot where the last meeting had been, till, on the fourth morning after, he saw her there again; but she let him pass that time with a bare recognition. Two days later the carriage drove down the lane to the village as he was walking away. When they met she told the coachman to stop.

"I am glad to tell you that your grandfather may be perfectly easy about the house and farm," she said; as if she took unfeigned pleasure in saying it. "The question of altering the park is postponed indefinitely. I have resisted it: I could do no less for one who did so much for me."

"Thank you very warmly," said Egbert so earnestly that she blushed crimson as the carriage rolled away.

The spring drew on, and he saw and spoke with her several times. In truth he walked abroad much more than had been usual with him formerly, searching in all directions for her form. Had she not been unreflecting and impressionable — had not her life dragged on as uneventfully as that of one in gaol, through her residing in a great house with no companion but an undemonstrative father; and above all, had not Egbert been a singularly engaging young man of that distracting order of beauty which, grows upon the feminine gazer with every glance, this tender waylaying would have made little difference to anybody. But such was not the case. In return for Egbert's presence of mind at the threshing she had done him a kindness, and the pleasure that she took in the act shed an added interest upon the object of it. Thus, on both sides it had happened that a deed of solicitude casually performed gave each doer a sense of proprietorship in its recipient, and a wish still further to establish their position by other deeds of the same sort.

To still further kindle Geraldine's indiscreet interest in him, Egbert's devotion became perceptible ere long even to her inexperienced eyes; and it was like a new world to the young girl. At first she was almost frightened at the novelty of the thing. Then the fascination of the discovery caused her ready receptive heart to palpitate in an ungovernable manner whenever he came near her. She was not quite in love herself, but she was so moved by the circumstance of her deliverer being in love, that she could think of nothing else. His appearing at odd places startled her; and yet she rather liked that kind of startling. Too often her eyes rested on his face; too often her thoughts surrounded his figure and dwelt on his conversation.

One day when they met on a bridge, they did not part till after a long and interesting conversation on books, in which many opinions of Mayne's (crude and unformed enough, it must be owned) that happened to take her fancy, set her glowing with ardour to unfold her own.

After any such meeting as this, Egbert would go home and think for hours of her little remarks and movements. The day and minute of every accidental rencounter became registered in his mind with the indelibility of ink. Years afterwards he could recall at a moment's notice that he saw her at eleven

o'clock on the third of April, a Sunday; at four on Tuesday, the twelfth; at a quarter to six on Thursday, the twenty-eighth; that on the ninth it rained at a quarter past two, when she was walking up the avenue; that on the seventeenth the grass was rather too wet for a lady's feet; and other calendrical and meteorological facts of no value whatever either to science or history.

On a Tuesday evening, when they had had several conversations out of doors, and when a passionate liking for his society was creeping over the reckless though pure girl, slowly, insidiously, and surely, like ripeness over fruit, she further committed herself by coming alone to the school. A heavy rain had threatened to fall all the afternoon, and just as she entered it began. School hours were at that moment over, but he waited a few moments before dismissing the children, to see if the storm would clear up. After looking round at the classes, and making sundry inquiries of the little ones in the usual manner of ladies who patronize a school, she came up to him.

"I listened outside before I came in. It was a great pleasure to hear the voices — three classes reading at three paces." She continued with a laugh: "There was a rough treble voice bowling easily along, an ambling sweet voice earnest about fishes in the sea, and a shrill voice spelling out letter by letter. Then there was a shuffling of feet — then you sang. It seemed quite a little poem."

"Yes," Egbert said. "But perhaps, like many poems, it was hard prose to the originators."

She remained thinking, and Mayne looked out at the weather. Judging from the sky and wind that there was no likelihood of a change that night, he proceeded to let the children go. Miss Allenville assisted in wrapping up as many of them as possible in the old coats and other apparel which Egbert kept by him for the purpose. But she touched both clothes and children rather gingerly, and as if she did not much like the contact.

Egbert's sentiments towards her that evening were vehement and curious. Much as he loved her, his liking for the peasantry about him — his mother's ancestry — caused him sometimes a twinge of self-reproach for thinking of her so exclusively, and nearly forgetting all his old acquaintance, neighbours, and his grandfather's familiar friends, with their rough but honest ways. To further complicate his feelings to-night there was the sight, on the one hand, of the young lady with her warm rich dress and glowing future, and on the other of the weak little boys and girls — some only five years old, and not more than twelve, going off in their different directions in the pelting rain, some for a walk of more than two miles, with the certainty of being drenched to the skin, and with no change of clothes when they reached their home. He watched the rain-spots thickening upon the faded frocks, worn-out tippets, yellow straw hats and bonnets, and coarse pinafores of his unprotected little flock as they walked down the path, and was thereby reminded of the hopelessness of his attachment, by perceiving how much more nearly akin was his lot to theirs than to hers.

Miss Allenville, too, was looking at the children, and unfortunately she chanced to say, as the toddlers off, "Poor little wretches!"

A sort of despairing irritation at her remoteness from his plane, as implied by her pitying the children so unmercifully, impelled him to remark, "Say poor little children, madam." She was silent — awkwardly silent.

"I suppose I must walk home," she said, when about half a minute had passed. "Nobody knows where I am, and the carriage may not find me for hours."

"I'll go for the carriage," said Egbert readily.

But he did not move. While she had been speaking, there had grown up in him a conviction that these opportunities of seeing her would soon necessarily cease. She would get older, and would perceive the incorrectness of being on intimate terms with him merely because he had snatched her from danger. He would have to engage in a more active career, and go away. Such ideas brought on an irresistible climax to an intense and long felt desire. He had just reached that point in the action of passion upon mind at which it masters judgment.

It was almost dark in the room, by reason of the heavy clouds and the nearness of the night. But the fire had just flamed up brightly in the grate, and it threw her face and form into ruddy relief against the grey wall behind.

Suddenly rushing towards her, he seized her hand before she comprehended his intention, kissed her tenderly, and clasped her in his arms. Her soft body yielded like wool under his embrace. As suddenly releasing her he turned, and went back to the other end of the room.

Egbert's feeling as he retired was that he had committed a crime. The madness of the action was apparent to him almost before it was completed. There seemed not a single thing left for him to do but to go into lifelong banishment for such sacrilege. He faced round and regarded her. Her features were not visible enough to judge of their expression. All that he could discern through the dimness and his own agitation was that for some time she remained quite motionless. Her state was probably one of suspension as with Ulysses before Melanthus, she may have

entertained a breast

That in the strife of all extremes did rest.

In one, two, or five minutes — neither of them ever knew exactly how long — apparently without the motion of a limb, she glided noiselessly to the door and vanished.

Egbert leant himself against the wall, almost distracted. He could see absolutely no limit to the harm that he had done by his wild and unreasoning folly. "Am I a man to thus ill-treat the loveliest girl that ever was born? Sweet injured creature — how she will hate me!" These were some of the expressions that he murmured in the twilight of that lonely room.

Then he said that she certainly had encouraged him, which, unfortunately for her, was only too true. She had seen that he was always in search of her, and she did not put herself out of his way. He was sure that she liked him to admire her. "Yet, no," he murmured, "I will not excuse myself at all."

The night passed away miserably. One conviction by degrees overruled all the rest in his mind — that if she knew precisely how pure had been his longing towards her, she could not think badly of him. His reflections resulted in a resolve to get an interview with her, and make his defence and explanation in full. The decision come to, his impatience could scarcely preserve him from rushing to Tollamore House that very daybreak, and trying to get into her presence, though it was the likeliest of suppositions that she would never see him.

Every spare minute of the following days he hovered round the house, in hope of getting a glimpse of her; but not once did she make herself visible. He delayed taking the extreme step of calling, till the hour came when he could delay no longer. On a certain day he rang the bell with a mild air, and disguised his feelings by looking as if he wished to speak to her merely on copy-books, slates, and other school matters, the school being professedly her hobby. He was told that Miss Allenville had gone on a visit to some relatives thirty-five miles off, and that she would probably not return for a month.

As there was no help for it, Egbert settled down to wait as he best could, not without many misgivings lest his rash action, which a prompt explanation might have toned down and excused, would now be the cause of a total estrangement between them, so that nothing would restore him to the place he had formerly held in her estimation. That she had ever seriously loved him he did not hope or dream; but it was intense pain to him to be out of her favour.

CHAPTER V.

*So I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man,
Round his creep-hole, with never a break
Ran my fires for his sake;
Over head did my thunder combine
With my underground mine:
Till I looked from my labour content
To enjoy the event.
When sudden — how think ye the end?*

A week after the crisis mentioned above, it was secretly whispered to Egbert's grandfather that the park enlargement scheme was after all to be proceeded with; that Miss Allenville was extremely anxious to have it put in hand as soon as possible. Farmer Broadford's farm was to be added to Greenman's, as originally intended, and the old house that Broadford lived in was to be pulled down as an encumbrance.

"It is she this time!" murmured Egbert gloomily. "Then I did offend her, and mortify her; and she is resentful."

The excitement of his grandfather again caused him much alarm, and even remorse. Such was the responsiveness of the farmer's physical to his mental state that in the course of a week his usual health failed, and his gloominess of mind was followed by dimness of sight and giddiness. By much persuasion Egbert induced him to stay at home for a day or two; but indoors he was the most restless of creatures, through not being able to engage in the pursuits to which he had been accustomed from his boyhood. He walked up and down, looking wistfully out of the window, shifting the positions of books and chairs, and putting them back again, opening his desk and shutting it after a vacant look at the papers, saying he should never get settled in another farm at his time of life, and evincing all the symptoms of nervousness and excitability.

Meanwhile Egbert anxiously awaited Miss Allenville's return, more resolved than ever to obtain the audience of her, and beg her not to visit upon an unoffending old man the consequences of a young one's folly. Any retaliation upon himself he would accept willingly, and own to be well deserved.

At length, by making off-hand inquiries (for he dared not ask directly for her again) he learnt that she was to be at home on the Thursday. The following Friday and Saturday he kept a sharp look-out, and, when lingering in the park for at least the tenth time in that half-week, a sudden rise in the ground revealed her coming along a path

Egbert stayed his advance, in order that, if she really objected to see him, she might easily strike off into a side path or turn back.

She did not accept the alternatives, but came straight on to where he lingered, averting her face awaywardly as she approached. When she was within a few steps of him he could see that the trimmings of her dress trembled like leaves. He cleared his dry throat to speak.

"Miss Allenville," he said, humbly taking off his hat, "I should be glad to say one word to you, if you may."

She looked at him for just one moment, but said nothing; and he could see that the expression of his face was flushed, and her mood skittish. The place they were standing in was a remote nook, hidden by the trunks and boughs, so that he could afford to give her plenty of time, for there was no fear of the

being observed or overheard. Indeed, knowing that she often walked that way, Egbert had previously surveyed the spot and thought it suitable for the occasion, much as Wellington antecedently surveyed the field of Waterloo.

Here the young man began his pleading speech to her. He dilated upon his sensations when first he saw her; and as he became warmed by his oratory he spoke of all his inmost perturbations on her account without the slightest reserve. He related with much natural eloquence how he had tried over and over again not to love her, and how he had loved her in spite of that trying; of his intention never to reveal his passion, till their situation on that rainy evening prompted the impulse which ended in that irreverent action of his; and earnestly asked her to forgive him — not for his feelings, since those were his own to commend or blame — but for the way in which he testified of them to one so cultivated and so beautiful.

Egbert was flushed and excited by the time that he reached this point in his tale.

Her eyes were fixed on the grass; and then a tear stole quietly from its corner, and wandered down her cheek. She tried to say something, but her usually adroit tongue was unequal to the task. Ultimately she glanced at him, and murmured, "I forgive you;" but so inaudibly, that he only recognized the words by their shape upon her lips.

She looked not much more than a child now, and Egbert thought with sadness that her tear and her words were perhaps but the result, the one of a transitory sympathy, the other of a desire to escape. They stood silent for some seconds, and the dressing-bell of the house began ringing. Turning slowly away without another word she hastened out of his sight.

When Egbert reached home some of his grandfather's old friends were gathered there, sympathizing with him on the removal he would have to submit to if report spoke truly. Their sympathy was rather more for him to bear than their indifference; and as Egbert looked at the old man's bent figure, and the expression of his face, denoting a wish to sink under the earth, out of sight and out of trouble, he was greatly depressed, and he said inwardly, "What a fool I was to ask forgiveness of a woman who can torture my only relative like this! Why do I feel her to be glorious? Oh that I had never seen her!"

The next day was Sunday, and his grandfather being too unwell to go out, Egbert went to the evening service alone. When it was over, the rector detained him in the churchyard to say a few words about the next week's undertakings. This was soon done, and Egbert turned back to leave the now empty churchyard. Passing the porch he saw Miss Allenville coming out of the door.

Egbert said nothing, for he knew not what to say; but she spoke. "Ah, Mr. Mayne, how beautiful the west sky looks! It is the finest sunset we have had this spring."

"It is very beautiful," he replied, without looking westward a single degree. "Miss Allenville," he said reproachfully, "you might just have thought whether, for the sake of reaching one guilty person, it was worth while to deeply wound an old man."

"I do not allow you to say that," she answered with proud quickness. "Still, I will listen just this once."

"Are you glad you asserted your superiority to me by putting in motion again that scheme for turning him out?"

"I merely left off hindering it," she said.

"Well, we shall go now," continued Egbert, "and make room for newer people. I hope you forgive me for what caused it all."

"You talk in that strain to make me feel regrets; and you think that because you are read in a few books you may say or do anything."

"No, no. That's unfair."

"I will try to alter it — that your grandfather may not leave. Say that you forgive me for thinking he and yourself had better leave — as I forgive you for what you did. But remember, nothing of that sort

ever again.”

“Forgive you? Oh, Miss Allenville!” said he in a wild whisper, “I wish you had sinned a hundred times as much, that I might show how readily I can forgive all.”

She had looked as if she would have held out her hand; but, for some reason or other, directly he had spoken with emotion it was not so well for him as when he had spoken to wound her. She passed on silently, and entered the private gate to the house.

A day or two after this, about three o’clock in the afternoon, and whilst Egbert was giving a lesson in geography, a lad burst into the school with the tidings that Farmer Broadford had fallen from a cornstack they were threshing, and hurt himself severely.

The boy had borrowed a horse to come with, and Mayne at once made him gallop off with it for a doctor. Dismissing the children, the young man ran home full of forebodings. He found his relative in a chair, held up by two of his labouring men. He was put to bed, and seeing how pale he was, Egbert gave him a little wine, and bathed the parts which had been bruised by the fall.

Egbert had at first been the more troubled at the event through believing that his grandfather’s fall was the result of his low spirits and mental uneasiness; and he blamed himself for letting so infirm a man go out upon the farm till quite recovered. But it turned out that the actual cause of the accident was the breaking of the ladder that he had been standing on. When the surgeon had seen him he said that the external bruises were mere trifles; but that the shock had been great, and had produced internal injuries highly dangerous to a man in that stage of life.

His grandson was of opinion in later years that the fall only hastened by a few months a dissolution which would soon have taken place under any circumstances, from the natural decay of the old man’s constitution. His pulse grew feeble and his voice weak, but he continued in a comparatively firm state of mind for some days, during which he talked to Egbert a great deal.

Egbert trusted that the illness would soon pass away; his anxiety for his grandfather was great. When he was gone not one of the family would be left but himself. But in spite of hope the young man perceived that death was really at hand. And now arose a question. It was certainly a time to make confidences, if they were ever to be made; should he, then, tell his grandfather, who knew the Allenvilles so well, of his love for Geraldine? At one moment it seemed duty; at another it seemed a graceful act, to say the least.

Yet Egbert might never have uttered a word but for a remark of his grandfather’s which led up to the very point. He was speaking of the farm and of the squire, and thence he went on to the daughter.

“She, too,” he said, “seems to have that reckless spirit which was in her mother’s family, and ruined her mother’s father at the gaming-table, though she’s too young to show much of it yet.”

“I hope not,” said Egbert fervently.

“Why? What be the Allenvilles to you — not that I wish the girl harm?”

“I think she is the very best being in the world. I — love her deeply.”

His grandfather’s eyes were set on the wall. “Well, well, my poor boy,” came softly from his mouth. “What made ye think of loving her? Ye may as well love a mountain, for any return you’ll ever get. Do she know of it?”

“She guesses it. It was my saving her from the threshing-machine that began it.”

“And she checks you? “

“Well — no.”

“Egbert,” he said after a silence, “I am grieved, for it can but end in pain. Mind, she’s an inexperienced girl. She never thinks of what trouble she may get herself into with her father and with her friends. And mind this, my lad, as another reason for dropping it; however honourable your love may be, you’ll never get credit for your honour. Nothing you can do will ever root out the notion of people that where the man is poor and the woman is high-born he’s a scamp and she’s an angel.”

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