
Charles Reade
Griffith Gaunt

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Romance Novel

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Vol I

CHAPTER I

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"Then I say once for all, that priest shall never darken my doors again."

"Then I say they are my doors and not yours, and that holy man shall brighten them whenever he will."

The gentleman and lady, who faced each other pale and furious, and interchanged this bitter defiance, were man and wife. And had loved each other well.

Miss Catherine Peyton was a young lady of ancient family in Cumberland, and the most striking, but least popular, beauty in the county. She was very tall and straight, and carried herself a little too imperiously; yet she would sometimes relax and all but dissolve that haughty figure, and hang sweetly drooping over her favorites: then the contrast was delicious, and the woman fascinating.

Her hair was golden and glossy; her eyes a lovely grey; and she had a way of turning them on slowly and full, so that their victim could not fail to observe two things: 1. that they were grand and beautiful orbs; 2. that they were thoughtfully overlooking him instead of looking at him.

So contemplated by glorious eyes, a man feels small; and bitter.

Catherine was apt to receive the blunt compliments of the Cumberland squires with this sweet, celestial, superior gaze, and for this, and other imperial charms, was more admired than liked.

The family estate was entailed on her brother; her father spent every farthing he could; so she had no money, and no expectations, except from a distant cousin, Mr. Charlton, of Hernshaw Castle and Bolton Hall.

Even these soon dwindled: Mr. Charlton took a fancy to his late wife's relation, Griffith Gaunt, and had him into his house, and treated him as his heir. This disheartened two admirers who had hitherto sustained Catherine Peyton's gaze, and they retired. Comely girls, girls long-nosed but rich, girls snub-nosed but winning, married on all sides of her, but the imperial beauty remained Miss Peyton at two-and-twenty.

She was rather kind to the poor; would give them money out of her slender purse, and would even make clothes for the women, and sometimes read to them (very few of them could read to themselves in that day). All she required in return was that they should be Roman Catholics, like herself, or at least pretend they might be brought to that faith by little and little.

She was a high-minded girl; and could be a womanly one —whenever she chose.

She hunted about twice a week in the season, and was at home in the saddle, for she had ridden from a child; but so ingrained was her character, that this sport, which more or less unsexes most women, had no perceptible effect on her mind nor even on her manners. The scarlet riding-habit, and little purple cap, and the great white bony horse she rode, were often seen in a good place at the end of a long run: but, for all that, the lady was a most ungenial fox-huntress; she never spoke a word but to her acquaintances, and wore

a settled air of dreamy indifference, except when the hounds happened to be in full cry, and she galloping at their heels. Worse than that, when the hounds were running into the fox, and his fate certain, she had been known to rein in her struggling horse, and pace thoughtfully home, instead of coming in at the death, and claiming the brush.

One day being complimented, at the end of a hard run, by the gentleman who kept the hounds, she turned her celestial orbs on him and said, "Nay, Sir Ralph, I love to gallop; and this sorry business it gives me an excuse."

It was full a hundred years ago: the country teemed with foxes; but it abounded in stiff coverts, and a knowing fox was sure to run from one to another; and then came wearisome efforts to dislodge him; and then Miss Peyton's grey eyes used to explore vacancy, and ignore her companions, biped and quadruped.

But one day they drew Yew-tree Brow and found a stray fox. At Gaylad's first note he broke cover and went away for home across the open country. A hedger saw him steal out, and gave a view halloo; the riders came round halter skelter; the hounds in cover one by one threw up their noses and voices; the horns blew, the canine music swelled to a strong chorus, and away they swept across country, dogs, horses, men; and the deuce take the hindmost.

It was a gallant chase, and our dreamy virgin's blood got up. Erect, but lithe and vigorous, and one with her great white gelding, she came flying behind the foremost riders, and took leap for leap with them; one glossy, golden curl streamed back in the rushing air, her grey eyes glowed with earthly fire, and two red spots on the upper part of her

cheeks showed she was much excited without a grain of fear; yet in the first ten minutes one gentleman was unhorsed before her eyes, and one came to grief along with his animal, and a thorough-bred chestnut was galloping and snorting beside her with empty saddle. Presently young Featherstone, who led her by about fifteen yards, crashed through a high hedge, and was seen no more, but heard wallowing in the deep unsuspected ditch beyond. There was no time to draw bridle. "Lie still, sir, if you please," said Catherine, with cool civility; then up rein, in spur, and she cleared the ditch and its muddy contents, alive and dead, and away without looking behind her.

On, on, on, till all the pinks and buckskins, erst so smart, were splashed with clay and dirt of every hue, and all the horses' late glossy coats were bathed with sweat and lathered with foam, and their gaping nostrils blowing and glowing red; and then it was that Harrowden brook, swollen wide and deep by the late rains, came right between the fox and Dogmore underwood, for which he was making.

The hunt sweeping down a hill-side caught sight of Reynard running for the brook. They made sure of him now. But he lapped a drop, and then slipped in, and soon crawled out on the other side, and made feebly for the covert, weighted with wet fur.

At sight of him the hunt hallooed and trumpeted, and came tearing on with fresh vigor.

But, when they came near the brook, lo! it was twenty feet wide, and running fast and brown. Some riders skirted it, looking for a narrow part. Two horses, being spurred at it, came to the bank, and then went rearing round on their

heels, depositing one hat and another rider in the current. One gallant steed planted his feet like a tower, and snorted down at the water. One flopped gravely in and had to swim, and be dragged out. Another leaped, and landed with his feet on the other bank, his haunches in the water, and his rider curled round his neck and glaring out between his retroverted ears.

But Miss Peyton encouraged her horse with spur and voice, set her teeth, turned rather pale this time, and went at the brook with a rush, and cleared it like a deer. She and the huntsman were almost alone together on the other side, and were as close to the hounds as the hounds were to poor pug, when he slipped through a run in a quickset hedge, and glided into Dogmore underwood, a stiff hazel coppice of five years' growth.

The other riders soon straggled up, and then the thing was to get him out again. There were a few narrow roads cut in the underwood, and up and down these the huntsman and whipper-in went trotting, and encouraged the staunch hounds, and whipped the skulkers back into covert. Others galloped uselessly about, pounding the earth, for daisy-cutters were few in those days; and Miss Peyton relapsed into the transcendental. She sat in one place with her elbow on her knee, and her fair chin supported by two fingers, as undisturbed by the fracas of horns and voices as an equestrian statue of Diana.

She sat so still, and so long, at a corner of the underwood, that at last the harassed fox stole out close to her, with lolling tongue and eye askant, and took the open field again. She thrilled at first sight of him, and her cheeks

burned; but her quick eye took in all the signs of his distress, and she sat quiet and watched him coolly. Not so her horse; he plunged and then trembled all over, and planted his fore-feet together at this angle \, and parted his hind-legs a little, and so stood quivering, with cocked ears, and peeped over a low paling at the retiring quadruped; and fretted and sweated, in anticipation of the gallop his long head told him was to follow. He looked a deal more statuesque than any three statues in England; and all about a creature not up to his knee—and by-the-by; the gentlemen that carve horses in our native isle, did they ever see one?—Out of an omnibus? The whipper-in came by and found him in this gallant attitude, and suspected the truth; but, observing the rider's tranquil position, thought the fox had only popped out and then in again. However, he fell in with the huntsman and told him Miss Peyton's grey had seen something. The hounds appeared puzzled; and so the huntsman rode round to Miss Peyton, and, touching his cap, asked her if she had seen anything of the fox.

She looked him dreamily in the face. "The fox," said she: "he broke cover ten minutes ago."

The man blew his horn lustily, and then asked her reproachfully why she had not tally-hoed him, or winded her horn; with that he blew his own again impatiently. Miss Peyton replied very slowly and pensively that the fox had come out soiled and fatigued, and trailing his brush. "I looked at him," said she, "and I pitied him; he was one, and we are many; he was so little, and we are so big: he had given us a good gallop; and so I made up my mind he should live to run another day."

The huntsman stared stupidly at her for a moment, then burst into a torrent of oaths, then blew his horn till it was hoarse, then cursed and swore till he was hoarse himself; then to his horn again, and dogs and men came rushing to the sound.

"Couple up and go home to supper," said Miss Peyton, quietly. "The fox is half-way to Gallowstree Gorse, and you won't get him out of that this afternoon, I promise you."

As she said this, she just touched her horse with the spur, leaped the low hedge in front of her, and cantered slowly home across country; she was one that seldom troubled the hard road, go where she would.

She had ridden about a mile when she heard a horse's feet behind her; she smiled, and her color rose a little, but she cantered on.

"Halt! in the King's name," shouted a mellow voice, and a gentleman galloped up to her side, and reined in his mare.

"What! have they killed?" inquired Catherine, demurely.

"Not they; he is in the middle of Gallowstree Gorse by now."

"And is this the way to Gallowstree Gorse?"

"Nay, mistress," said the young man; "but, when the fox heads one way and the deer another, what is a poor hunter to do?"

"Follow the slower, it seems."

"Say the lovelier and the dearer, sweet Kate."

"Now, Griffith, you know I hate flattery," said Kate; and the next moment came a soft smile, and belied this unsocial sentiment.

"Flattery?" said the lover. "I have no tongue to speak half your praise. I think the people in this country are as blind as bats, or they'd—"

"All except Mr. Griffith Gaunt; he has found a paragon where wiser people see a wayward, capricious girl."

"Then *he* is the man for you. Don't you see that, mistress?"

"No, I don't quite see that," said the lady, drily.

This cavalier reply caused a dismay the speaker never intended. The fact is, Mr. George Neville, young, handsome, and rich, had lately settled in the county, and had been greatly smitten with Kate. The county was talking about it, and Griffith had been secretly on thorns for some days past. And now he could hide his uneasiness no longer; he cried out, in a sharp, trembling voice, "Why, Kate, my dear Kate, what, could you love any man but me? Could you be so cruel?—could you? There, let me get off my horse, and lie down on this stubble, and you ride over me, and trample me to death. I would rather have you trample on my ribs, than on my heart with loving any one but me."

"Why, what now?" said Catherine, drawing herself up. "I must scold you handsomely;" and she drew rein and turned full upon him; but by this means she saw his face was full of real distress; so, instead of reprimanding him, she said gently, "Why, Griffith, what is to do? Are you not my servant? Do not I send you word whenever I dine from home?"

"Yes, dearest; and then I call at that house, and stick there till they guess what I would be at, and ask me too."

Catherine smiled; and proceeded to remind him that thrice a week she permitted him to ride over from Bolton (a distance of fifteen miles) to see her.

"Yes," replied Griffith, "and I must say you always come, wet or dry, to the shrubbery gate, and put your hand in mine a minute. And Kate," said he piteously, "at the bare thought of your putting that same dear hand in another man's, my heart turns sick within me, and my skin burns and trembles on me."

"But you have no cause," said Catherine, soothingly. "Nobody, except yourself, doubts my affection for you. You are often thrown in my teeth, Griffith—and (clenching her own) I like you all the better—of course."

Griffith replied with a burst of gratitude: and then, as men will, proceeded to encroach. "Ah," said he, "if you would but pluck up courage, and take the matrimonial fence with me at once."

Miss Peyton sighed at that and drooped a little upon her saddle. After a pause, she enumerated the "just impediments." She reminded him that neither of them had means to marry on.

He made light of that, he should soon have plenty; Mr. Charlton had as good as told him he was to have Bolton Hall and Grange: "Six hundred acres, Kate, besides the park and paddocks."

In his warmth he forgot that Catherine was to have been Mr. Charlton's heir. Catherine was too high-minded to bear Griffith any grudge; but she colored a little, and said she was averse to come to him a penniless bride.

"Why, what matters it which of us has the dross, so that there is enough for both?" said Griffith, with an air of astonishment.

Catherine smiled approbation, and tacitly yielded that point. But then she objected the difference in their faith.

"Oh, honest folk get to heaven by different roads," said Griffith, carelessly.

"I have been taught otherwise," replied Catherine, gravely.

"Then give me your hand and I'll give you my soul," said Griffith Gaunt, impetuously. "I'll go to heaven your way, if you can't go mine. Anything sooner than be parted in this world, or the next."

She looked at him in silence; and it was in a faint half apologetic tone she objected "that all her kinsfolk were set against it."

"It is not their business; it is ours," was the prompt reply.

"Well, then," said Catherine, sadly, "I suppose I must tell you the true reason; I feel I should not make you happy; I do not love you quite as you want to be loved, as you deserve to be loved. You need not look so; nothing in flesh and blood is your rival. But my heart it bleeds for the church I think of her ancient glory in this kingdom, and, when I see her present condition, I long to devote myself to her service. I am very fit to be an abbess or a nun; most unfit to be a wife. No, no; I must not, ought not, dare not, many a Protestant. Take the advice of one who esteems you dearly; leave me—fly from me —forget me—do everything but hate me. Nay, do not hate me: you little know the struggle in my

mind. Farewell; the saints, whom you scorn, watch over and protect you: farewell."

And with this she sighed, and struck her spur into the grey, and he darted off at a gallop.

Griffith, little able to cope with such a character as this, sat petrified, and would have been rooted to the spot if he had happened to be on foot. But his mare set off after her companion, and a chase of a novel kind commenced. Catherine's horse was fresher than Griffith's mare, and the latter, not being urged by her petrified master, lost ground.

But, when she drew near to her father's gate, Catherine relaxed her speed, and Griffith rejoined her.

She had already half relented, and only wanted a warm and resolute wooer to bring her round. But Griffith was too sore, and too little versed in woman. Full of suspicion and bitterness he paced gloomy and silent by her side, till they reached the great avenue that led to her father's house.

And, while he rides alongside the capricious creature in sulky silence, I may as well reveal a certain foible in his own character.

This Griffith Gaunt was by no means deficient in physical courage; but he was instinctively disposed to run away from mental pain the moment he lost hope of driving it away from him. For instance, if Catherine had been ill and her life in danger, he would have ridden day and night to save her; but if she had died he would either have killed himself, or else fled the country, and so escaped the sight of every object that was associated with her, and could agonize him. I do not think he could have attended the funeral of one he loved.

The mind, as well as the body, has its self-protecting instincts. This of Griffith's was after all an instinct of that class, and, under certain circumstances, is true wisdom. But Griffith, I think, earned the instinct to excess; and that is why I call it his foible.

"Catherine," said he, resolutely, "let me ride by your side to the house for once; for I read your advice my own way, and I mean to follow it: after to-day you will be troubled with me no more. I have loved you these three years, I have courted you these two years, and I am none the nearer. I see I am not the man you mean to marry; so I shall do as my father did, ride down to the coast, and sell my horse, and ship for foreign parts."

"Oh! as you will," said Catherine, haughtily. She quite forgot she had just recommended him to do something of this very kind.

Presently she stole a look. His fine ruddy cheek was pale; his manly brown eyes were moist; yet a gloomy and resolute expression on his tight-drawn lips. She looked at him sidelong, and thought how often he had ridden thirty miles on that very mare to get a word with her at the shrubbery gate. And now the mare to be sold! The man to go broken-hearted to sea; perhaps to his death! Her good heart began to yearn. "Griffith," said she, softly, "it is not as if I was going to wed anybody else. Is it nothing to be preferred by her you say you love? If I was you I would do nothing rash? Why not give me a little time? In truth, I hardly know my own mind about it two days together."

"Kate," said the young man, firmly, "I am courting you this two years. If I wait two years more it will be but to see

the right man come and carry you in a month; for so girls are won when they are won at all. Your sister that is married and dead she held Josh Pitt in hand for years; and what is the upshot? Why, he wears the willow for her to this day; and her husband, he married again before her grave was green. Nay, I have done all an honest man can do to woo you; so take me now or let me go."

At this, Kate began to waver secretly, and ask herself whether it would not be better to yield, since he was so resolute.

But the unlucky fellow did not leave well alone. He went on to say, "Once out of sight of this place I may cure myself of my fancy. Here I never could."

"Oh!" said Catherine, directly, "if you are so bent on being cured, it would not become me to say nay."

Griffith Gaunt bit his lip and hung his head, and made no reply.

The patience with which he received her hard speech was more apparent than real: but it told. Catherine, receiving no fresh positive provocation, relented again of her own accord, and, after a considerable silence, whispered softly, "Think how we should all miss you."

Here was an overture to reconciliation. But unfortunately it brought out what had long been rankling in Griffith's mind, and was in fact the real cause of the misunderstanding. "Oh!" said he, "those I care for will soon find another to take my place. Soon; quotha. They have not waited till I was gone for that."

"Ah, indeed!" said Catherine, with some surprise: then, like the quick-witted girl she was, "so this is what all the coil

is about." She then, with a charming smile, begged him to inform her who was his destined successor in her esteem. Griffith colored purple at her cool hypocrisy (for such he considered it), and replied, almost fiercely, "who but that young black-a-vised George Neville, that you have been coquetting with this month past; and danced all night with him at Lady Munster's ball, you did."

Catherine blushed, and said deprecatingly. "*You* were not there, Griffith; or to be sure I had not danced with *him.*"

"And he toasts you by name wherever he goes."

"Can I help that? Wait till I toast him before you make yourself ridiculous, and me very angry—about nothing."

Griffith, sticking to his one idea, replied doggedly "Mistress Alice Peyton shilly-shallied with her true lover for years—till Richard Hilton came that was not fit to tie his shoes, and then—." Catherine cut him short: "Affront me, if nothing less will serve; but spare my sister in her grave." She began this sentence angrily, but concluded it in a broken voice. Griffith was half disarmed; but only half. He answered sullenly, "She did not die till she had jilted an honest gentleman and broken his heart, and married a sot, to her cost. And you are of her breed, when all is done; and now that young coxcomb has come, like Dick Hilton, between you and me."

"But I do not encourage him."

"You do not *dis*courage him," retorted Griffith, "or he would not be so hot after you. Were you ever the woman to say, 'I have a servant already that loves me dear?'—That one frank word had sent him packing."

Miss Peyton colored, and the water came into her eyes. "I may have been imprudent," she murmured. "The young gentleman made me smile with his extravagance. I never thought to be misunderstood by him, far less by you." Then, suddenly, bold as brass, "'Tis all your fault; if he had the power to make you uneasy, why did you not check me before?"

"Ay, forsooth! and have it cast in my teeth I was a jealous monster, and played the tyrant before my time. A poor fellow scarce knows what to be at, that loves a coquette."

"Coquette I am none," replied the lady, bridling magnificently.

Griffith took no notice of this interruption. He proceeded to say that he had hitherto endured this intrusion of a rival in silence, though with a sore heart, hoping his patience might touch her, or the fire go out of itself. But at last, unable to bear it any longer in silence, he had shown his wound to one he knew could feel for him, his poor friend Pitt. Pitt, had then, let him know that his own mistake had been over-confidence in Alice Peyton's constancy. "He said to me, 'Watch your Kate close, and, at the first blush of a rival, say you to her, part with him, or part with me.'"

Catherine pinned him directly. "And this is how you take Joshua Pitt's advice; by offering to run away from this sorry rival."

The shrewd reply, and a curl of the lip, half arch, half contemptuous, that accompanied the thrust, staggered the less ready Griffith. He got puzzled, and showed it.

"Well, but," stammered he at last, "your spirit is high; I was mostly afeard to put it so plump to you. So I thought I

would go about a bit, However, it comes to the same thing; for this I do know, that if you refuse me your hand this day, it is to give it to a new acquaintance, as your Alice did before you. And, if it is to be so, 'tis best for me to be gone; best for him, and best for you. You don't know me, Kate, for as clever as you are. At the thought of your playing me false, after all these years, and marrying that George Neville, my heart turns to ice, and then to fire, and my head seems ready to burst, and my hands to do mad and bloody acts. Ay, I feel I should kill him, or you, or both, at the church porch. Ah!" he suddenly griped her arm, and at the same time Involuntarily checked his mare.

Both horses stopped.

She raised her head with an inquiring look, and saw her lover's face discolored with passion, and so strangely convulsed, that she feared at first he was in a fit, or stricken with death or palsy.

She uttered a cry of alarm, and stretched forth her hand towards him.

But the next moment she drew it back from him; for, following his eye, she discerned the cause of this ghastly look. Her father's house stood at the end of the avenue they had just entered; but there was another approach to it, viz., by a bridle-road at right angles to the avenue or main entrance; and up that bridle-road a gentleman was walking his horse, and bade fair to meet them at the hall door.

It was young Neville. There was no mistaking his piebald charger for any other animal in that county.

Kate Peyton glanced from lover to lover, and shuddered at Griffith. She was familiar with petty jealousy; she had

even detected it pinching or coloring many a pretty face that tried very hard to hide it all the time. But that was nothing to what she saw now. Hitherto she had but beheld the feeling of jealousy, but now she witnessed the livid passion of jealousy writhing in every lineament of a human face. That terrible passion had transfigured its victim in a moment: the ruddy, genial, kindly Griffith, with his soft brown eye, was gone; and in his place lowered a face, older, and discolored, and convulsed, and almost demoniacal.

Women (wiser perhaps in this than men) take their strongest impressions by the eye, not ear. Catherine, I say, looked at him she had hitherto thought she knew; looked and feared him. And, even while she looked, and shuddered, Griffith spurred his mare sharply, and then drew her head across the grey gelding's path. It was an instinctive impulse to bar the lady he loved from taking another step towards the place where his rival awaited her. "I cannot bear it," he gasped. "Choose you now once for all between that puppy there and me," and he pointed with his riding-whip at his rival, and waited with his teeth clenched for her decision.

The movement was rapid, the gesture large and commanding, and the words manly; for what says the fighting poet?—

> "He either fears his fate too much,
> Or his deserts are small;
> Who fears to put it to the touch,
> To win or lose it all."

CHAPTER II

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Miss Peyton drew herself up, and back, by one motion, like a queen at bay; but still she eyed him with a certain respect, and was careful now not to provoke nor pain him needlessly.

"I prefer *you*—though you speak harshly to me, sir," said she, with gentle dignity.

"Then give me your hand with that man in sight, and end my torments: promise to marry me this very week. Ah, Kate! have pity on your poor faithful servant who has loved you so long."

"I do, Griffith, I do," said she sweetly; "but I shall never marry now. Only set your mind at rest about Mr. Neville there. He has never asked me, for one thing."

"He soon will then."

"No, no; I declare I will be very cool to him after what you have said to me. But I cannot marry you neither. I dare not. Listen to me, and do pray govern your temper as I am doing mine. I have often read of men with a passion for jealousy—I mean men whose jealousy feeds upon air, and defies reason. I know you now for such a man. Marriage would not cure this madness, for wives do not escape admiration any more than maids. Something tells me you would be jealous of every fool that paid me some stale compliment, jealous of my female friends, and jealous of my relations, and perhaps jealous of your own children, and of that holy persecuted church which must still have a large share of my heart. No, no; your face and your words have shown me a precipice. I

tremble, and draw back, and now I never *will* marry at all; from this day I give myself to the church."

Griffith did not believe one word of all this. "That is your answer to me," said he bitterly. "When the right man puts the question (and he is not far off) you will tell another tale. You take me for a fool, and you mock me: you are not the lass to die an old maid, and men are not the fools to let you. With faces like yours the new servant comes before the first one is gone. Well, I have got my answer. County Cumberland, you are no place for me. The ways and the fields we two have rid together, oh how could I bear their sight without my dear? Why what a poor-spirited fool am I to stay and whine! Come, mistress, your lover waits you there, and your discarded servant knows good breeding: he leaves the country not to spoil your sport."

Catherine panted heavily. "Well, sir," said she, "then it is your doing, not mine. Will you not even shake hands with me, Griffith?"

"I were a brute else," sighed the jealous one, with a sudden revulsion of feeling. "I have spent the happiest hours of my life beside you. If I loved thee less I had never left thee."

He clung a little while to her hand, more like a drowning man than anything else; then let it go, and suddenly shook his clenched fist in the direction of George Neville, and cried out with a savage yell, "My curse on him that parts us twain! And you, Kate, may God bless you single, and curse you married: and that is my last word in Cumberland."

"Amen," said Catherine resignedly.

And even with this they wheeled their horses apart, and rode away from each other: she very pale, but erect with wounded pride; he reeling in his saddle like a drunken man.

And so Griffith Gaunt, stung mad by jealousy, affronted his sweetheart, the proudest girl in Cumberland, and, yielding to his foible, fled from his pain.

Our foibles are our manias.

CHAPTER III

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Miss Peyton was shocked, and grieved at bottom, but she was also affronted and wounded. Now anger seems to have some fine buoyant quality, which makes it rise and come uppermost in an agitated mind. She rode proudly into the courtyard of her father's house, and would not look once behind to see the last of her perverse lover.

The old groom, Joe, who had taught her to ride when she was six years old, saw her coming, and hobbled out to hold her horse, while she alighted. "Mistress Kate," said he, "have you seen Master Griffith Gaunt anywheres?"

The young lady colored at this question.

"Why?" said she.

"Why?" repeated old Joe, a little contemptuously. "Why, where have *you* been not to know the country is out after un? First comed Jock Dennet, with his horse all in a lather, to say old Mr. Charlton was took ill, and had asked for Master Griffith. I told him to go to Dogmore Copse: 'our Kate is a hunting, to-day,' says I, and your Griffith he is sure not to be far from her gelding's tail;' a stick in his spurs and away a goes: what, han't you seen Jock neither?"

"No, no," replied Miss Peyton, impatiently: "what, is there anything the matter?"

"The matter, quo she! Why Jock hadn't been gone an hour when in rides the new footman all in a lather, and brings a letter for Master Griffith from the old gentleman's

housekeeper: ‘you leave the letter with me, in case,' says I, and I sends him a field after t'other. Here be the letter."

He took off his cap and produced the letter.

Catherine started at the sight of it. "Alas!" said she, "this is a heavy day. Look, Joe; sealed with black; poor cousin Charlton! I doubt he is no more."

Joe shook his head expressively, and told her the butcher had come from that part not ten minutes ago, with word that the blinds were all down at Bolton Hall.

Poor human nature! a gleam of joy shot through Catherine's heart; this sad news would compel Griffith to stay at home and bury his benefactor; and that delay would give him time to reflect; and somehow or other she felt sure it would end in his not going at all.

But these thoughts had no sooner passed through her than she was ashamed of them and of herself. What, welcome that poor old man's death because it would keep her cross-grained lover at home? Her cheeks burned with shame, and with a superfluous exercise of self-defense she retired from Old Joe, lest he should divine what was passing in her mind.

But she was so rapt in thought that she carried the letter away with her unconsciously.

As she passed through the hall she heard George Neville and her father in animated conversation. She mounted the stairs softly, and went into a little boudoir of her own on the first floor, and sat down. The house stood high, and there was a very expansive and beautiful view of the country from this window. She sat down by it and drooped, and looked wistfully through the window, and thought of the past, and

fell into a sad reverie. Pity began to soften her pride and anger, and presently two gentle tears dimmed her glorious eyes a moment, and then stole down her delicate cheeks.

While she sat thus lost in the past, jovial voices and creaking boots broke suddenly upon her ear, and came up the stairs: they jarred upon her; so she cast one last glance out of the window, and rose to get out of their way if possible: but it was too late; a heavy step came to the door, and a ruddy port-drinking face peeped in. It was her father. "See-ho!" roared the jovial Squire. "I've found the hare on her form: bide thou outside a moment." And he entered the room; but he had no sooner closed the door than his whole manner changed from loud and jovial to agitated and subdued. "Kate, my girl," said he, piteously, "I have been a bad father to thee. I have spent all the money that should have been thine; thy poor father can scarce look thee in the face. So now I bring thee a good husband: be a good child now, and a dutiful. Neville's Court is his, and Neville's Cross will be, by the entail; and so will the baronetcy. I shall see my girl Lady Neville."

"Never, papa, never," cried Kate.

"Hush! hush!" said the Squire, and put up his hand to her in great agitation and alarm: "hush! or he will hear ye. Kate," he whispered, "are you mad? Little I thought, when he asked to see me, it was to offer marriage. Be a good girl now: don't you quarrel with good luck. You are not fit to be poor, and you have made enemies. Do but think how they will flout you when I die, and Bill's jade of a wife puts you to the door, as she will: and now you can triumph over them all; my Lady Neville; and make your poor father happy; my

Lady Neville. Enough said, for I have promised you; so don't go and make a fool of me and yourself into the bargain. And —and—a word in your ear; he has lent me a hundred pounds."

At this climax the father hung his head; the daughter winced and moaned out, "Papa! how *could* you?"

Mr. Peyton had gradually descended to that intermediate stage of degradation, when the substance of dignity is all gone, but its shadow, shame, remains. He stamped impatiently on the ground, and cut his humiliation short by rushing out of the room. "Here, try your own luck, youngster," he cried at the door. "She knows my mind." He trampled down the stairs, and young George Neville knocked respectfully at the door, though it was half open; and came in with youth's light foot, and a handsome face flushed into beauty by love and hope.

Miss Peyton's eye just swept him, as he entered, and with the same movement she turned away her fair head and blushing cheek towards the window; yet, must I own it, she quietly moulded the letter that lay in her lap, so that the address was no longer visible to the new-comer.

Small secrecy, verging on deceit, you are bred in women's bones.

This blushing and averted cheek is one of those equivocal receptions that have puzzled many a sensible man. It is a sign of coy love; it is a sign of gentle aversion; *our* mode of interpreting it is simple and judicious; whichever it happens to be we go and take it for the other.

The brisk bold wooer that now engaged Kate Peyton was not the man to be dashed by a woman's coyness.

Handsome, daring, good-humored, and vain, he had everything in his favor but his novelty.

Look at Kate! her eye lingers wistfully on that disconsolate horseman whose every step takes him farther from her; but George has her ear, and draws closer and closer to it, and pours love's mellow murmurs into it.

He told her he had made the grand tour, and seen the beauties of every land, but none like her; other ladies had certainly pleased his eye for a moment, but she alone had conquered his heart. He said many charming things to her, such as Griffith Gaunt had never said. Amongst the rest, he assured her the beauty of her person would not alone have fascinated him so deeply; but he had seen the beauty of her mind in those eyes of hers that seemed not eyes, but souls; and, begging her pardon for his presumption, he aspired to wed her mind.

Such ideas had often risen in Kate's own mind; but to hear them from a man was new. She looked askant through the window at the lessening Griffith, and thought "how the grand tour improves a man!" and said as coldly as she could, "I esteem you, sir, and cannot but be flattered by sentiments so superior to those I am used to hear; but let this go no further. I shall never marry now."

Instead of being angry at this, or telling her she wanted to marry somebody else, as the injudicious Griffith had done, young Neville had the address to treat it as an excellent jest, and drew such comical pictures of all the old maids in the neighborhood, that she could not help smiling.

But the moment she smiled, the inflammable George made hot love to her again. Then she besought him to leave