
GEORGE MEREDITH
DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS - COMPLETE


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# Table of Contents

# CHAPTER I. OF DIARIES AND DIARISTS TOUCHING THE HEROINE

Table of Contents

Among the Diaries beginning with the second quarter of our century, there is frequent mention of a lady then becoming famous for her beauty and her wit: 'an unusual combination,' in the deliberate syllables of one of the writers, who is, however, not disposed to personal irony when speaking of her. It is otherwise in his case and a general fling at the sex we may deem pardonable, for doing as little harm to womankind as the stone of an urchin cast upon the bosom of mother Earth; though men must look some day to have it returned to them, which is a certainty; and indeed full surely will our idle-handed youngster too, in his riper season; be heard complaining of a strange assault of wanton missiles, coming on him he knows not whence; for we are all of us distinctly marked to get back what we give, even from the thing named inanimate nature.

The 'LEAVES FROM THE DIARY OF HENRY WILMERS' are studded with examples of the dinner-table wit of the time, not always worth quotation twice; for smart remarks have their measured distances, many requiring to be a brule pourpoint, or within throw of the pistol, to make it hit; in other words, the majority of them are addressed directly to our muscular system, and they have no effect when we stand beyond the range. On the contrary, they reflect sombrely on the springs of hilarity in the generation preceding us; with due reserve of credit, of course, to an animal vivaciousness that seems to have wanted so small

an incitement. Our old yeomanry farmers—returning to their beds over ferny commons under bright moonlight from a neighbour's harvest-home, eased their bubbling breasts with a ready roar not unakin to it. Still the promptness to laugh is an excellent progenitorial foundation for the wit to come in a people; and undoubtedly the diarial record of an imputed piece of wit is witness to the spouting of laughter. This should comfort us while we skim the sparkling passages of the 'Leaves.' When a nation has acknowledged that it is as yet but in the fisticuff stage of the art of condensing our purest sense to golden sentences, a readier appreciation will be extended to the gift: which is to strike not the dazzled eyes, the unanticipating nose, the ribs, the sides, and stun us, twirl us, hoodwink, mystify, tickle and twitch, by dexterities of lingual sparring and shuffling, but to strike roots in the mind, the Hesperides of good things. We shall then set a price on the 'unusual combination.' A witty woman is a treasure; a witty Beauty is a power. Has she actual beauty, actual wit?—not simply a tidal material beauty that passes current any pretty flippancy or staggering pretentiousness? Grant the combination, she will appear a veritable queen of her period, fit for homage; at least meriting a disposition to believe the best of her, in the teeth of foul rumour; because the well of true wit is truth itself, the gathering of the precious drops of right reason, wisdom's lightning; and no soul possessing and dispensing it can justly be a target for the world, however well armed the world confronting her. Our temporary world, that Old Credulity and stone-hurling urchin in one, supposes it possible for a woman to be mentally active up to the point

of spiritual clarity and also fleshly vile; a guide to life and a biter at the fruits of death; both open mind and hypocrite. It has not yet been taught to appreciate a quality certifying to sound citizenship as authoritatively as acres of land in fee simple, or coffers of bonds, shares and stocks, and a more imperishable guarantee. The multitudes of evil reports which it takes for proof, are marshalled against her without question of the nature of the victim, her temptress beauty being a sufficiently presumptive delinquent. It does not pretend to know the whole, or naked body of the facts; it knows enough for its furry dubiousness; and excepting the sentimental of men, a rocket-headed horde, ever at the heels of fair faces for ignition, and up starring away at a hint of tearfulness; excepting further by chance a solid champion man, or some generous woman capable of faith in the pelted solitary of her sex, our temporary world blows direct East on her shivering person. The scandal is warrant for that; the circumstances of the scandal emphasize the warrant. And how clever she is! Cleverness is an attribute of the selecter missionary lieutenants of Satan. We pray to be defended from her cleverness: she flashes bits of speech that catch men in their unguarded corner. The wary stuff their ears, the stolid bid her best sayings rebound on her reputation. Nevertheless the world, as Christian, remembers its professions, and a portion of it joins the burly in morals by extending to her a rough old charitable mercifulness; better than sentimental ointment, but the heaviest blow she has to bear, to a character swimming for life.

That the lady in question was much quoted, the Diaries and Memoirs testify. Hearsay as well as hearing was at work

to produce the abundance; and it was a novelty in England, where (in company) the men are the pointed talkers, and the women conversationally fair Circassians. They are, or they know that they should be; it comes to the same. Happily our civilization has not prescribed the veil to them. The mutes have here and there a sketch or label attached to their names: they are 'strikingly handsome'; they are 'very good-looking'; occasionally they are noted as 'extremely entertaining': in what manner, is inquired by a curious posterity, that in so many matters is left unendingly to jump the empty and gaping figure of interrogation over its own full stop. Great ladies must they be, at the web of politics, for us to hear them cited discoursing. Henry Wilmers is not content to quote the beautiful Mrs. Warwick, he attempts a portrait. Mrs. Warwick is 'quite Grecian.' She might 'pose for a statue.' He presents her in carpenter's lines, with a dab of school-box colours, effective to those whom the Keepsake fashion can stir. She has a straight nose, red lips, raven hair, black eyes, rich complexion, a remarkably fine bust, and she walks well, and has an agreeable voice; likewise 'delicate extremities.' The writer was created for popularity, had he chosen to bring his art into our literary market.

Perry Wilkinson is not so elaborate: he describes her in his 'Recollections' as a splendid brune, eclipsing all the blondes coming near her: and 'what is more, the beautiful creature can talk.' He wondered, for she was young, new to society. Subsequently he is rather ashamed of his wonderment, and accounts for it by 'not having known she was Irish.' She 'turns out to be Dan Merion's daughter.'

We may assume that he would have heard if she had any whiff of a brogue. Her sounding of the letter R a trifle scrupulously is noticed by Lady Pennon: 'And last, not least, the lovely Mrs. Warwick, twenty minutes behind the dinner-hour, and r-r-really fearing she was late.'

After alluding to the soft influence of her beauty and ingenuousness on the vexed hostess, the kindly old marchioness adds, that it was no wonder she was late, 'for just before starting from home she had broken loose from her husband for good, and she entered the room absolutely houseless!' She was not the less 'astonishingly brilliant.' Her observations were often 'so unexpectedly droll I laughed till I cried.' Lady Pennon became in consequence one of the stanch supporters of Mrs. Warwick.

Others were not so easily won. Perry Wilkinson holds a balance when it goes beyond a question of her wit and beauty. Henry Wilmers puts the case aside, and takes her as he finds her. His cousin, the clever and cynical Dorset Wilmers, whose method of conveying his opinions without stating them was famous, repeats on two occasions when her name appears in his pages, 'handsome, lively, witty'; and the stressed repetition of calculated brevity while a fiery scandal was abroad concerning the lady, implies weighty substance—the reservation of a constable's truncheon, that could legally have knocked her character down to the pavement. We have not to ask what he judged. But Dorset Wilmers was a political opponent of the eminent Peer who yields the second name to the scandal, and politics in his day flushed the conceptions of men. His short references to 'that Warwick-Dannisburgh affair' are not verbally malicious.

He gets wind of the terms of Lord Dannisburgh's will and testament, noting them without comment. The oddness of the instrument in one respect may have served his turn; we have no grounds for thinking him malignant. The death of his enemy closes his allusions to Mrs. Warwick. He was growing ancient, and gout narrowed the circle he whirled in. Had he known this 'handsome, lively, witty' apparition as a woman having political and social views of her own, he would not, one fancies, have been so stingless. Our England exposes a sorry figure in his Reminiscences. He struck heavily, round and about him, wherever he moved; he had by nature a tarnishing eye that cast discolouration. His unadorned harsh substantive statements, excluding the adjectives, give his Memoirs the appearance of a body of facts, attractive to the historic Muse, which has learnt to esteem those brawny sturdy giants marching club on shoulder, independent of henchman, in preference to your panoplied knights with their puffy squires, once her favourites, and wind-filling to her columns, ultimately found indigestible.

His exhibition of his enemy Lord Dannisburgh, is of the class of noble portraits we see swinging over inn-portals, grossly unlike in likeness. The possibility of the man's doing or saying this and that adumbrates the improbability: he had something of the character capable of it, too much good sense for the performance. We would think so, and still the shadow is round our thoughts. Lord Dannisburgh was a man of ministerial tact, official ability, Pagan morality; an excellent general manager, if no genius in statecraft. But he was careless of social opinion, unbuttoned, and a laugher.

We know that he could be chivalrous toward women, notwithstanding the perplexities he brought on them, and this the Dorset-Diary does not show.

His chronicle is less mischievous as regards Mrs. Warwick than the paragraphs of Perry Wilkinson, a gossip presenting an image of perpetual chatter, like the waxen-faced street advertizements of light and easy dentistry. He has no belief, no disbelief; names the pro-party and the con; recites the case, and discreetly, over-discreetly; and pictures the trial, tells the list of witnesses, records the verdict: so the case went, and some thought one thing, some another thing: only it is reported for positive that a miniature of the incriminated lady was cleverly smuggled over to the jury, and juries sitting upon these eases, ever since their bedazzlement by Phryne, as you know.... And then he relates an anecdote of the husband, said to have been not a bad fellow before he married his Diana; and the naming of the Goddess reminds him that the second person in the indictment is now everywhere called 'The elderly shepherd'; —but immediately after the bridal bells this husband became sour and insupportable, and either she had the trick of putting him publicly in the wrong, or he lost all shame in playing the churlish domestic tyrant. The instances are incredible of a gentleman. Perry Wilkinson gives us two or three; one on the authority of a personal friend who witnessed the scene; at the Warwick whist-table, where the fair Diana would let loose her silvery laugh in the intervals. She was hardly out of her teens, and should have been dancing instead of fastened to a table. A difference of fifteen years in the ages of the wedded pair accounts poorly

for the husband's conduct, however solemn a business the game of whist. We read that he burst out at last, with bitter mimicry, 'yang—yang—yang!' and killed the bright laugh, shot it dead. She had outraged the decorum of the square-table only while the cards were making. Perhaps her too-dead ensuing silence, as of one striving to bring back the throbs to a slain bird in her bosom, allowed the gap between the wedded pair to be visible, for it was dated back to prophecy as soon as the trumpet proclaimed it.

But a multiplication of similar instances, which can serve no other purpose than that of an apology, is a miserable vindication of innocence. The more we have of them the darker the inference. In delicate situations the chatterer is noxious. Mrs. Warwick had numerous apologists. Those trusting to her perfect rectitude were rarer. The liberty she allowed herself in speech and action must have been trying to her defenders in a land like ours; for here, and able to throw its shadow on our giddy upper-circle, the rigour of the game of life, relaxed though it may sometimes appear, would satisfy the staidest whist-player. She did not wish it the reverse, even when claiming a space for laughter: 'the breath of her soul,' as she called it, and as it may be felt in the early youth of a lively nature. She, especially, with her multitude of quick perceptions and imaginative avenues, her rapid summaries, her sense of the comic, demanded this aerial freedom.

We have it from Perry Wilkinson that the union of the divergent couple was likened to another union always in a Court of Law. There was a distinction; most analogies will furnish one; and here we see England and Ireland changeing

their parts, until later, after the breach, when the Englishman and Irishwoman resumed a certain resemblance to the yoked Islands.

Henry Wilmers, I have said, deals exclusively with the wit and charm of the woman. He treats the scandal as we might do in like manner if her story had not to be told. But these are not reporting columns; very little of it shall trouble them. The position is faced, and that is all. The position is one of the battles incident to women, their hardest. It asks for more than justice from men, for generosity, our civilization not being yet of the purest. That cry of hounds at her disrobing by Law is instinctive. She runs, and they give tongue; she is a creature of the chase. Let her escape unmangled, it will pass in the record that she did once publicly run, and some old dogs will persist in thinking her cunninger than the virtuous, which never put themselves in such positions, but ply the distaff at home. Never should reputation of woman trail a scent! How true! and true also that the women of waxwork never do; and that the women of happy marriages do not; nor the women of holy nunneries; nor the women lucky in their arts. It is a test of the civilized to see and hear, and add no yapping to the spectacle.

Thousands have reflected on a Diarist's power to cancel our Burial Service. Not alone the cleric's good work is upset by him; but the sexton's as well. He howks the grave, and transforms the quiet worms, busy on a single poor peaceable body, into winged serpents that disorder sky and earth with a deadly flight of zig-zags, like military rockets, among the living. And if these are given to cry too much, to

have their tender sentiments considered, it cannot be said that History requires the flaying of them. A gouty Diarist, a sheer gossip Diarist, may thus, in the bequest of a trail of reminiscences, explode our temples (for our very temples have powder in store), our treasuries, our homesteads, alive with dynamitic stuff; nay, disconcert our inherited veneration, dislocate the intimate connexion between the tugged flaxen forelock and a title.

No similar blame is incurred by Henry Wilmers. No blame whatever, one would say, if he had been less, copious, or not so subservient, in recording the lady's utterances; for though the wit of a woman may be terse, quite spontaneous, as this lady's assuredly was here and there, she is apt to spin it out of a museful mind, at her toilette, or by the lonely fire, and sometimes it is imitative; admirers should beware of holding it up to the withering glare of print: she herself, quoting an obscure maximmonger, says of these lapidary sentences, that they have merely 'the value of chalk-eggs, which lure the thinker to sit,' and tempt the vacuous to strain for the like, one might add; besides flattering the world to imagine itself richer than it is in eggs that are golden. Henry Wilmers notes a multitude of them. 'The talk fell upon our being creatures of habit, and how far it was good: She said:—It is there that we see ourselves crutched between love grown old and indifference ageing to love.' Critic ears not present at the conversation catch an echo of maxims and aphorisms overchannel, notwithstanding a feminine thrill in the irony of 'ageing to love.' The quotation ranks rather among the testimonies to her charm.

She is fresher when speaking of the war of the sexes. For one sentence out of many, though we find it to be but the clever literary clothing of a common accusation: 'Men may have rounded Seraglio Point: they have not yet doubled Cape Turk.'

It is war, and on the male side, Ottoman war: her experience reduced her to think so positively. Her main personal experience was in the social class which is primitively venatorial still, canine under its polish.

She held a brief for her beloved Ireland. She closes a discussion upon Irish agitation by saying rather neatly: 'You have taught them it is English as well as common human nature to feel an interest in the dog that has bitten you.'

The dog periodically puts on madness to win attention; we gather then that England, in an angry tremour, tries him with water-gruel to prove him sane.

Of the Irish priest (and she was not of his retinue), when he was deemed a revolutionary, Henry Wilmers notes her saying: 'Be in tune with him; he is in the key-note for harmony. He is shepherd, doctor, nurse, comforter, anecdotist and fun-maker to his poor flock; and you wonder they see the burning gateway of their heaven in him? Conciliate the priest.'

It has been partly done, done late, when the poor flock have found their doctoring and shepherding at other hands: their 'bulb-food and fiddle,' that she petitioned for, to keep them from a complete shaving off their patch of bog and scrub soil, without any perception of the tremulous transatlantic magnification of the fiddle, and the splitting discord of its latest inspiriting jig.

And she will not have the consequences of the 'weariful old Irish duel between Honour and Hunger judged by bread and butter juries.'

She had need to be beautiful to be tolerable in days when Englishmen stood more openly for the strong arm to maintain the Union. Her troop of enemies was of her summoning.

Ordinarily her topics were of wider range, and those of a woman who mixed hearing with reading, and observation with her musings. She has no doleful ejaculatory notes, of the kind peculiar to women at war, containing one-third of speculative substance to two of sentimental—a feminine plea for comprehension and a squire; and it was probably the reason (as there is no reason to suppose an emotional cause) why she exercised her evident sway over the mind of so plain and straightforward an Englishman as Henry Wilmers. She told him that she read rapidly, 'a great deal at one gulp,' and thought in flashes—a way with the makers of phrases. She wrote, she confessed, laboriously. The desire to prune, compress, overcharge, was a torment to the nervous woman writing under a sharp necessity for payment. Her songs were shot off on the impulsion; prose was the heavy task. 'To be pointedly rational,' she said, 'is a greater difficulty for me than a fine delirium.' She did not talk as if it would have been so, he remarks. One is not astonished at her appearing an 'actress' to the flat-minded. But the basis of her woman's nature was pointed flame: In the fulness of her history we perceive nothing histrionic. Capricious or enthusiastic in her youth, she never trifled with feeling; and if she did so with some showy phrases and occasionally

proffered commonplaces in gilt, as she was much excited to do, her moods of reflection were direct, always large and honest, universal as well as feminine.

Her saying that 'A woman in the pillory restores the original bark of brotherhood to mankind,' is no more than a cry of personal anguish. She has golden apples in her apron. She says of life: 'When I fail to cherish it in every fibre the fires within are waning,' and that drives like rain to the roots. She says of the world, generously, if with tapering idea: 'From the point of vision of the angels, this ugly monster, only half out of slime, must appear our one constant hero.' It can be read maliciously, but abstain.

She says of Romance: 'The young who avoid that region escape the title of Fool at the cost of a celestial crown.' Of Poetry: 'Those that have souls meet their fellows there.'

But she would have us away with sentimentalism. Sentimental people, in her phrase, 'fiddle harmonics on the strings of sensualism,' to the delight of a world gaping for marvels of musical execution rather than for music. For our world is all but a sensational world at present, in maternal travail of a soberer, a braver, a brighter-eyed. Her reflections are thus to be interpreted, it seems to me. She says, 'The vices of the world's nobler half in this day are feminine.' We have to guard against 'half-conceptions of wisdom, hysterical goodness, an impatient charity'—against the elementary state of the altruistic virtues, distinguishable as the sickness and writhings of our egoism to cast its first slough. Idea is there. The funny part of it is our finding it in books of fiction composed for payment. Manifestly this lady did not 'chameleon' her pen from the colour of her

audience: she was not of the uniformed rank and file marching to drum and fife as gallant interpreters of popular appetite, and going or gone to soundlessness and the icy shades.

Touches inward are not absent: 'To have the sense of the eternal in life is a short flight for the soul. To have had it, is the soul's vitality.' And also: 'Palliation of a sin is the hunted creature's refuge and final temptation. Our battle is ever between spirit and flesh. Spirit must brand the flesh, that it may live.'

You are entreated to repress alarm. She was by preference light-handed; and her saying of oratory, that 'It is always the more impressive for the spice of temper which renders it untrustworthy,' is light enough. On Politics she is rhetorical and swings: she wrote to spur a junior politician: 'It is the first business of men, the school to mediocrity, to the covetously ambitious a sty, to the dullard his amphitheatre, arms of Titans to the desperately enterprising, Olympus to the genius.' What a woman thinks of women, is the test of her nature. She saw their existing posture clearly, yet believed, as men disincline to do, that they grow. She says, that 'In their judgements upon women men are females, voices of the present (sexual) dilemma.' They desire to have 'a still woman; who can make a constant society of her pins and needles.' They create by stoppage a volcano, and are amazed at its eruptiveness. 'We live alone, and do not much feel it till we are visited.' Love is presumably the visitor. Of the greater loneliness of women, she says: 'It is due to the prescribed circumscription of their minds, of which they become aware in agitation.

Were the walls about them beaten down, they would understand that solitariness is a common human fate and the one chance of growth, like space for timber.' As to the sensations of women after the beating down of the walls, she owns that the multitude of the timorous would yearn in shivering affright for the old prison-nest, according to the sage prognostic of men; but the flying of a valiant few would form a vanguard. And we are informed that the beginning of a motive life with women must be in the head, equally with men (by no means a truism when she wrote). Also that 'men do not so much fear to lose the hearts of thoughtful women as their strict attention to their graces.' The present market is what men are for preserving: an observation of still reverberating force. Generally in her character of the feminine combatant there is a turn of phrase, like a dimple near the lips showing her knowledge that she was uttering but a tart measure of the truth. She had always too much lambent humour to be the dupe of the passion wherewith, as she says, 'we lash ourselves into the persuasive speech distinguishing us from the animals.'

The instances of her drollery are rather hinted by the Diarists for the benefit of those who had met her and could inhale the atmosphere at a word. Drolleries, humours, reputed witticisms, are like odours of roast meats, past with the picking of the joint. Idea is the only vital breath. They have it rarely, or it eludes the chronicler. To say of the great erratic and forsaken Lady A****, after she had accepted the consolations of Bacchus, that her name was properly signified in asterisks 'as she was now nightly an Ariadne in heaven through her God,' sounds to us a roundabout, with

wit somewhere and fun nowhere. Sitting at the roast we might have thought differently. Perry Wilkinson is not happier in citing her reply to his compliment on the reviewers' unanimous eulogy of her humour and pathos:—the 'merry clown and poor pantaloon demanded of us in every work of fiction,' she says, lamenting the writer's compulsion to go on producing them for applause until it is extremest age that knocks their knees. We are informed by Lady Pennon of 'the most amusing description of the first impressions of a pretty English simpleton in Paris'; and here is an opportunity for ludicrous contrast of the French and English styles of pushing flatteries—'piping to the charmed animal,' as Mrs. Warwick terms it in another place: but Lady Pennon was acquainted with the silly woman of the piece, and found her amusement in the 'wonderful truth' of that representation.

Diarists of amusing passages are under an obligation to paint us a realistic revival of the time, or we miss the relish. The odour of the roast, and more, a slice of it is required, unless the humorous thing be preternaturally spirited to walk the earth as one immortal among a number less numerous than the mythic Gods. 'He gives good dinners,' a candid old critic said, when asked how it was that he could praise a certain poet. In an island of chills and fogs, coelum crebris imbribus ac nebulis foedum, the comic and other perceptions are dependent on the stirring of the gastric juices. And such a revival by any of us would be impolitic, were it a possible attempt, before our systems shall have been fortified by philosophy. Then may it be allowed to the Diarist simply to relate, and we can copy from him.

Then, ah! then, moreover, will the novelist's Art, now neither blushless infant nor executive man, have attained its majority. We can then be veraciously historical, honestly transcriptive. Rose-pink and dirty drab will alike have passed away. Philosophy is the foe of both, and their silly cancelling contest, perpetually renewed in a shuffle of extremes, as it always is where a phantasm falseness reigns, will no longer baffle the contemplation of natural flesh, smother no longer the soul issuing out of our incessant strife. Philosophy bids us to see that we are not so pretty as rose-pink, not so repulsive as dirty drab; and that instead of everlastingly shifting those barren aspects, the sight of ourselves is wholesome, bearable, fructifying, finally a delight. Do but perceive that we are coming to philosophy, the stride toward it will be a giant's—a century a day. And imagine the celestial refreshment of having a pure decency in the place of sham; real flesh; a soul born active, wind-beaten, but ascending. Honourable will fiction then appear; honourable, a fount of life, an aid to life, quick with our blood. Why, when you behold it you love it—and you will not encourage it?—or only when presented by dead hands? Worse than that alternative dirty drab, your recurring rose-pink is rebuked by hideous revelations of the filthy foul; for nature will force her way, and if you try to stifle her by drowning, she comes up, not the fairest part of her uppermost! Peruse your Realists—really your castigators for not having yet embraced Philosophy. As she grows in the flesh when discreetly tended, nature is unimpeachable, flower-eke, yet not too decoratively a flower; you must have her with the stem, the thorns, the roots, and the fat bedding of roses. In

this fashion she grew, says historical fiction; thus does she flourish now, would say the modern transcript, reading the inner as well as exhibiting the outer.

And how may you know that you have reached to Philosophy? You touch her skirts when you share her hatred of the sham decent, her derision of sentimentalism. You are one with her when—but I would not have you a thousand years older! Get to her, if in no other way, by the sentimental route:—that very winding path, which again and again brings you round to the point of original impetus, where you have to be unwound for another whirl; your point of original impetus being the grossly material, not at all the spiritual. It is most true that sentimentalism springs from the former, merely and badly aping the latter,—fine flower, or pinnacle flame-spire, of sensualism that it is, could it do other? and accompanying the former it traverses tracts of desert here and there couching in a garden, catching with one hand at fruits, with another at colours; imagining a secret ahead, and goaded by an appetite, sustained by sheer gratifications. Fiddle in harmonics as it may, it will have these gratifications at all costs. Should none be discoverable, at once you are at the Cave of Despair, beneath the funereal orb of Glaucoma, in the thick midst of poniarded, slit-throat, rope-dependant figures, placarded across the bosom Disillusioned, Infidel, Agnostic, Miserrimus. That is the sentimental route to advancement. Spirituality does not light it; evanescent dreams: are its oil-lamps, often with wick askant in the socket.

A thousand years! You may count full many a thousand by this route before you are one with divine Philosophy.

Whereas a single flight of brains will reach and embrace her; give you the savour of Truth, the right use of the senses, Reality's infinite sweetness; for these things are in philosophy; and the fiction which is the summary of actual Life, the within and without of us, is, prose or verse, plodding or soaring, philosophy's elect handmaiden. To such an end let us bend our aim to work, knowing that every form of labour, even this flimsiest, as you esteem it, should minister to growth. If in any branch of us we fail in growth, there is, you are aware, an unfailing aboriginal democratic old monster that waits to pull us down; certainly the branch, possibly the tree; and for the welfare of Life we fall. You are acutely conscious of yonder old monster when he is mouthing at you in politics. Be wary of him in the heart; especially be wary of the disrelish of brainstuff. You must feed on something. Matter that is not nourishing to brains can help to constitute nothing but the bodies which are pitched on rubbish heaps. Brainstuff is not lean stuff;—the brainstuff of fiction is internal history, and to suppose it dull is the profoundest of errors; how deep, you will understand when I tell you that it is the very football of the holiday-afternoon imps below. They kick it for pastime; they are intelligences perverted. The comic of it, the adventurous, the tragic, they make devilish, to kindle their Ogygian hilarity. But—sharply comic, adventurous, instructively tragic, it is in the interwinding with human affairs, to give a flavour of the modern day reviving that of our Poet, between whom and us yawn Time's most hollow jaws. Surely we owe a little to Time, to cheer his progress; a little to posterity, and to our country. Dozens of writers will be in at yonder

yawning breach, if only perusers will rally to the philosophic standard. They are sick of the woodeny puppetry they dispense, as on a race-course to the roaring frivolous. Well, if not dozens, half-dozens; gallant pens are alive; one can speak of them in the plural. I venture to say that they would be satisfied with a dozen for audience, for a commencement. They would perish of inanition, unfed, unapplauded, amenable to the laws perchance for an assault on their last remaining pair of ears or heels, to hold them fast. But the example is the thing; sacrifices must be expected. The example might, one hopes, create a taste. A great modern writer, of clearest eye and head, now departed, capable in activity of presenting thoughtful women, thinking men, groaned over his puppetry, that he dared not animate them, flesh though they were, with the fires of positive brainstuff. He could have done it, and he is of the departed! Had he dared, he would (for he was Titan enough) have raised the Art in dignity on a level with History; to an interest surpassing the narrative of public deeds as vividly as man's heart and brain in their union excel his plain lines of action to eruption. The everlasting pantomime, suggested by Mrs. Warwick in her exclamation to Perry Wilkinson, is derided, not unrighteously, by our graver seniors. They name this Art the pasture of idiots, a method for idiotizing the entire population which has taken to reading; and which soon discovers that it can write likewise, that sort of stuff at least. The forecast may be hazarded, that if we do not speedily embrace Philosophy in fiction, the Art is doomed to extinction, under the shining multitude of its professors. They are fast capping the

candle. Instead, therefore, of objurgating the timid intrusions of Philosophy, invoke her presence, I pray you. History without her is the skeleton map of events: Fiction a picture of figures modelled on no skeleton-anatomy. But each, with Philosophy in aid, blooms, and is humanly shapely. To demand of us truth to nature, excluding Philosophy, is really to bid a pumpkin caper. As much as legs are wanted for the dance, Philosophy is required to make our human nature credible and acceptable. Fiction implores you to heave a bigger breast and take her in with this heavenly preservative helpmate, her inspiration and her essence. You have to teach your imagination of the feminine image you have set up to bend your civilized knees to, that it must temper its fastidiousness, shun the grossness of the over-dainty. Or, to speak in the philosophic tongue, you must turn on yourself, resolutely track and seize that burrower, and scrub and cleanse him; by which process, during the course of it, you will arrive at the conception of the right heroical woman for you to worship: and if you prove to be of some spiritual stature, you may reach to an ideal of the heroical feminine type for the worship of mankind, an image as yet in poetic outline only, on our upper skies.

'So well do we know ourselves, that we one and all determine to know a purer,' says the heroine of my columns. Philosophy in fiction tells, among various other matters, of the perils of this intimate acquaintance with a flattering familiar in the 'purer'—a person who more than ceases to be of else to us after his ideal shall have led up men from their flint and arrowhead caverns to

intercommunicative daylight. For when the fictitious creature has performed that service of helping to civilize the world, it becomes the most dangerous of delusions, causing first the individual to despise the mass, and then to join the mass in crushing the individual. Wherewith let us to our story, the froth being out of the bottle.

# CHAPTER II. AN IRISH BALL.

Table of Contents

In the Assembly Rooms of the capital city of the Sister Island there was a public Ball, to celebrate the return to Erin of a British hero of Irish blood, after his victorious Indian campaign; a mighty struggle splendidly ended; and truly could it be said that all Erin danced to meet him; but this was the pick of the dancing, past dispute the pick of the supping. Outside those halls the supping was done in Lazarus fashion, mainly through an excessive straining of the organs of hearing and vision, which imparted the readiness for more, declared by physicians to be the state inducing to sound digestion. Some one spied the figure of the hero at the window and was fed; some only to hear the tale chewed the cud of it; some told of having seen him mount the steps; and sure it was that at an hour of the night, no matter when, and never mind a drop or two of cloud, he would come down them again, and have an Irish cheer to freshen his pillow. For 'tis Ireland gives England her soldiers, her generals too. Farther away, over field and bogland, the whiskies did their excellent ancient service of watering the dry and drying the damp, to the toast of 'Lord Larrian, God bless him! he's an honour to the old country!' and a bit of a sigh to follow, hints of a story, and loud laughter, a drink, a deeper sigh, settling into conversation upon the brave Lord Larrian's deeds, and an Irish regiment he favoured—had no taste for the enemy without the backing of his 'boys.' Not he. Why, he'd never march to battle and they not handy; because when he struck he