
MARIE CORELLI
LOVE,-AND THE PHILOSOPHER: A STUDY IN SENTIMENT

Marie Corelli

Love,—and the Philosopher: A Study in Sentiment

EAN 8596547178972

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

FOREWORD

Table of Contents

THE following story is of the simplest character, purposely so designed. It has no “abnormal” or “neurotic” episodes; no “problems” and no “psychoanalysis.” Its “sentiment” is of an ordinary, everyday type, common to quiet English homes where the “sensational” press finds no admittance, and where a girl may live her life as innocent of evil as a rose;—where even the most selfish of cynical “philosophers” may gradually evolve something better than Self. There are no “thrills,” no “brain storms,” no “doubtful moralities”—no unnatural overstrained “emotionalisms,” whatever. The personages who figure in the tale are drawn absolutely from life—“still life” I might call it—and are fit to make the acquaintance of any “Young Person” of either sex. I have hopes that the “Philosopher,” though selfish, may be liked, when he is known, for his *un*selfishness,—and that the “Sentimentalist” may waken a sister-sympathy among those many charming women, who though wishing to be gentle and just to their admirers, do not always know their own minds in affairs of love. Whether my heroine chose the right partner for life is for my readers to determine. I myself am not more sure about it than she was!

M. C.

LOVE,—AND THE PHILOSOPHER

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I

Table of Contents

“YOU women are always so sentimental!” said the Philosopher, leaning back in a comfortable garden chair and lazily flicking off the ash from an excellent cigar;—“You overdo the thing. You carry every emotion to an extreme limit. It shows a lamentable lack of judgment.”

She listened to him with the tiniest quiver of a smile, but offered no reply. She did not even look at the Philosopher. There were many other things which (apparently) engaged her attention, so that unless you knew her very well, you might have said she was not even aware of the Philosopher’s existence. This would have been a mistake,—but no matter! However, there was the garden, to begin with. It was a lovely garden, full of sweet-smelling, old-fashioned flowers. There were roses in such lavish quantity that they seemed to literally blaze upon the old brick walls and rustic pergolas which surrounded and hemmed in the numerous beds and borders set in among the grass. Then there were two white doves strutting on the neatly kept path and declaring their loves, doubts or special mislikings in their own curiously monotonous manner. There was also a thrush perched on a spray of emerald green leaves and singing to his own heart’s content, oblivious of an audience. All these trifles of a summer’s day pleased her;—but then, she was easily pleased.

“You magnify trifles into momentous incidents,” went on the Philosopher, placidly smoking. “Look at the way you behaved about that dead robin yesterday! Found it lying in

the garden path,—picked it up and actually cried over it! Now think of the hundreds of men and women starving to death in London! You never cry over *them*! No! Like all women you must see a dead robin before you can cry!”

She turned her eyes towards him. They were soft eyes, with a rather pleading look just now in their blue depths.

“The poor bird!” she murmured. “Such an innocent little thing! It was sad to see it lying dead in the bright sunshine.”

“Innocent! Sad! Poor!” exclaimed the Philosopher. “Good heavens! What of the human beings who are poor and sad and innocent and all the rest of it, and who die uncared for every day? Besides, how do you know a robin is innocent or sad? I’ve watched the rascal, I tell you, many a time! He fights with all the other birds as hard as he can,—he is spiteful,—he is cruel,—and he positively trades on his red breast. Trades on it, I tell you! You women again! If he hadn’t a red breast you would never be sorry for him. You wouldn’t weep for a sparrow. I tell you, as I’ve often told you before, that you women overdo sentiment and make too much fuss about nothing.”

She perceived that his cigar had gone out, and handed him a match from a small box on a garden table near them. He accepted it condescendingly.

“If you ever fall in love—” pursued the Philosopher. Here he paused, and striking the match she had given him, relighted his cigar and began to puff out smoke with evident enjoyment. She stood patiently watching him.

“If you ever fall in love—” he went on, ... Now it was very strange that the Philosopher should pause again. He was

seldom at a loss for words, but for the moment his profuse vocabulary appeared to have given out.

“If you ever fall in love—” he murmured.

Again that tiny quiver of a smile appeared on her face.

“Well! Go on!” she said.

The Philosopher nerved himself to an effort.

“If you ever fall in love,” he continued, “never try on sentiment with a man. He won’t like it. He won’t understand it. No man ever does.”

The little quivering smile deepened.

“I’m sure you are quite right!” she answered, in a voice that was almost dove-like in its humility.

The Philosopher was silent for a moment. He seemed nonplussed. There is perhaps nothing that so completely bewilders and confuses even a philosopher as an agreeable acquiescence in all his opinions, whether such opinions be sagacious or erroneous.

“Well!” he added, somewhat lamely—“Don’t you forget it!”

She moved a step or two from his side.

“I should never dream of forgetting it!” she said.

Her back was now turned to him. Furtively, and one would almost have said with an air of timidity, the Philosopher peeped at her sideways. Decidedly her back was not unpleasing. The folds of her skirt fell exactly as the Philosopher would have had them fall could he have stood in the shoes of Worth or Paquin,—her hair was arranged in precisely the way he considered becoming. The garden hat, ... but no!... no philosopher is capable of describing a

woman’s garden hat. There followed a silence which was embarrassing,—not to her, but to him. Presently he said:

“Are you going?”

She turned her head, ever so slightly.

“Do you wish me to go?”

Another silence, more embarrassing than the previous one.

“I like to see you about,” said the Philosopher at last. “You give a touch to the landscape which is—which is natural and agreeable.”

She moved slowly away, her back still turned towards him, and presently stepped lightly among the flower borders, lifting a trailing rose here or setting aside a straying branch there, and looking, in her simple white gown, like the presiding goddess of the garden, as indeed she was. The Philosopher heaved a sigh,—whether of relief or vexation he hardly knew. He had a book to read,—a rather dull and drily written volume of profound essays, entitled “The Natural Evolution and Decay of Nations,” and, opening it at the place he had left off, he endeavoured to immerse himself in its contents. Nevertheless, now and again his attention wandered. His eyes roved away from the printed page and followed the slow gliding of the white-robed figure through the garden. He liked to watch it,—and yet in a curious way was half ashamed of his liking. Needless to say the Philosopher was a very well-balanced, self-restrained man. He was a profound student of logic and prided himself on his sound reasoning ability. He was also a good orator, and had astonished numerous audiences by his eloquence on the general inability of the human being to understand reason.

The human being was, in his opinion, a poor creature at best, and sometimes he quite forgot that he was a human being himself. The feminine human being came into his calculations as the merest appendage to the intricate and mysterious scheme of existence—an appendage which, though apparently necessary, seemed a little unfortunate,—except—well!—except when it wore a white gown and a fascinating garden hat and moved gracefully among flowering plants and was not too much in the way. He began to think in a curious desultory fashion about incidents and circumstances which had nothing whatever to do with “The Natural Evolution and Decay of Nations.”

“She’s really quite gentle and amenable,” he said to himself—“if it were not for that sentiment of hers! She has too much of it altogether. If I allowed myself to fall in love with her she would make my life a burden—a positive burden! If I ever did anything that seemed to suggest indifference to, or neglect of her—such as reading a book like this, for example,—or a newspaper,—her eyes would fill with tears and she would say: ‘Ah! You don’t love me any more!’ She would! All women do that sort of thing! It’s the most fatal mistake in the world! But they all make it!”

Here his attention was distracted by the swinging noise of an opening gate, and turning his looks in the direction indicated, he saw a young man walking with a breezy air up the garden path to the place where the white figure with the pretty hat strolled by itself among the flowers. This young man had no eyes for the Philosopher;—he was bent on one goal, and made straight for it.

“Hello! How are you?” he called, in much too robust a voice for the Philosopher’s delicate sense of hearing. “Charming afternoon, isn’t it? Can I help you to prune the roses?”

The white figure paused. The Philosopher saw a little hand stretched out in welcome to the owner of the robust voice and heard a laugh ripple on the air.

“It isn’t the pruning season,” she answered. “But you can come and help me gather a few for the drawing-room.”

“Nothing I should like better!”—and the young man immediately joined her, thus presenting to the Philosopher the picture of two figures walking among the flowers instead of one.

Somehow the prospect was not so agreeable. The Philosopher shut out the scene by holding his book well up before his eyes and severely scanning the printed page which told him about the “Natural Evolution and Decay of Nations.” Every now and again he heard that robustious laugh which almost shattered his nerves, accompanied by a little silvery ripple of merriment, which gave his heart a rather unusual thrill. “The Natural Evolution and Decay of Nations” was fast becoming a bore. He puffed at his cigar. It had gone out. He shook the match-box on the table—there was not a match left in it. He felt in his pocket—no matches there. Whereupon he leaned back in his chair with a heavy sigh and looked forlornly at the dull end of his Havana.

“What a confounded bore!” he murmured. “If that ass were not here I’d call her—and she would come,—I’m sure she’d come!—and she’d get me a match directly.”

He thought a little, then laid the half-smoked cigar down. Sitting bolt upright he watched the two figures strolling among the flower-borders.

“How she can put up with that insufferable idiot passes my comprehension!” he ejaculated. “But women are all like that! The fool can talk a little sentiment—quotes poetry—talks about dewdrops and sunsets,—and that always goes down. Heigh-ho!”

Here he fell upon “The Natural Evolution and Decay of Nations” with a kind of avidity, and perused page after page with the sternest attention.

“I’m afraid you’ve no matches!” said a sweet voice near him. “Shall I get you some?”

He started.

“If you would be so kind,” he murmured, with elaborate courtesy.

A light movement and she was gone. Another light movement and she was back again with the box of matches desired. The Philosopher looked up as he took them from her hand.

“You have a visitor this afternoon?”

“Only Jack,” she replied.

“Jack seems a good deal about here,” remarked the Philosopher, airily.

“Yes,” she said, with gentle unconcern. “Quite harmless, I assure you!”

He laughed despite himself. There was something quaint in the accent of her voice.

“He’s a sentimental sort of boy,” she went on. “He’s very fond of gardening, and he attaches the greatest possible

importance to trifles. For instance, I gave him a rose a week ago and he tells me he has pressed it in a book of favourite poems so that he may keep it for ever."

"Young noodle!" growled the Philosopher. "Spoiling the book with messy crushed petals which are sure to stain it. I wouldn't do such a thing for the world."

"I know you wouldn't," she agreed, calmly.

He glanced at "The Natural Evolution and Decay of Nations," marked the place where he had been reading, and shut it up.

"You know you like all that sort of thing," he said, settling himself in his chair ready for an argument. "Has he gone?"

"Yes!"

"Well, he didn't stay long," admitted the Philosopher, rather reluctantly. "Did he take another rose to damage a book with?"

She laughed.

"I'm afraid he did!"

"Come now, you're not afraid he did. You *know* he did! And you know you gave it to him."

The Philosopher's voice was decidedly raspy. She raised her eyes to his,—her face was dimpled with smiles.

"Well, if I must be accurate—" she began.

"Of course you must!" snapped the Philosopher. "Accuracy is always desirable, and accuracy is what you women always fail in! Briefly,—to be perfectly accurate, you gave him a rose. Didn't you?"

She nodded with a charmingly assumed air of mock penitence.

“To a noodle like that,” said the Philosopher, sternly, “the gift of a rose from you means encouragement. You have given him an inch—he will take an ell. Of course if you *wish* to encourage him—”

“Encourage him in what?” she asked, demurely.

“In—in—his attentions to you,” said the Philosopher.

She smiled sweetly, but said nothing.

“I don’t consider it a good match,” went on the Philosopher.

“Oh! Wouldn’t it light?” she asked, innocently. “I thought it was a wax one—not one of those things that must have its own box.”

The Philosopher’s mouth twitched under his moustache and his eyes sparkled. But he maintained a dignified demeanour.

“I wasn’t speaking of either a Vesta or of a Bryant and May,” he said. “And you know I wasn’t.”

She drew a small rustic bench towards him and sat down very nearly at his feet,—then looked up from under her garden hat.

“What are you reading?” she asked.

The Philosopher wished her eyes would not swim in such liquid blue, and that the garden hat was not quite so becoming.

“Nothing that you would care for,” he answered, with condescending politeness. “It’s called ‘The Natural Evolution and Decay of Nations’.”

She nodded sagaciously.

“*I* know!” she said. “It’s all the same thing and it all seems no use. Nations begin and grow and progress, and

then just like fruit they get over-ripe and the wasps begin to eat them and they rot and fall off the tree. Oh, yes! It can all be said in quite a few lines. There’s really no occasion to write a thick book about it; unless the man wants to show himself off.”

The Philosopher gasped and glared.

“The man! Show himself off! You foolish child! The man is a Fellow of Balliol and a most profound scholar.”

“Is he?” And she shrugged her pretty shoulders indifferently. “Well, I suppose he wants the public to know it.”

The Philosopher was for the moment rendered speechless. He looked down at her, but her face was bent and he could only see the crown of the garden hat; there was a most absurd little knot of ribbon on that crown, perfectly useless and half lost in a twisted mist of pale blue chiffon.

“I suppose you don’t care much about poetry?” she said, raising her head so suddenly that the light of her eyes quite dazzled him. “It would be too sentimental for you. But if you did, I could tell you some lines that would quite cover the ground.”

“Could you?” he murmured.

“Yes! Shall I say them?”

The Philosopher was conscious of an uncomfortable nervousness.

“If you like,” he answered, rather slowly. “But poetry is not in my line.”

“I know it isn’t,” she agreed emphatically. “But just listen!”

And in a soft musical voice she repeated slowly and with well-modulated emphasis and intonation:

> “Hence pageant history!—hence gilded cheat!
> Swart planet in the universe of deeds!”

“Keats!” murmured the Philosopher, dreamily. “Honey and water!”

> “Wide sea, that one continuous murmur breeds
> Along the pebbled shores of memory!
> Many old rotten-timbered boats there be
> Upon thy vaporous bosom magnified
> To goodly vessels; many a sail of pride,
> And golden-keeled, is left unlaunched and dry!
> But wherefore this? What care, though owl did fly
> About the great Athenian admiral’s mast
> The Indus with his Macedonian numbers?
> Though old Ulysses tortured from his slumbers
> The glutted Cyclops, what care?...”

“Not in the least!” interposed the Philosopher. “What do you know about ‘glutted Cyclops’?”

She continued:

> “Juliet leaning
> Amid her window-flowers—sighing—weaning
> Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow,
> Doth more avail than these: ...”

“Ah! Of course you like that,” interrupted the Philosopher.

She went on, calmly:

> “the silver flow
> Of Hero’s tears, the swoon of Imogen,
> Fair Pastorella in the bandit’s den,
> Are things to brood on with more urgency
> Than the death-day of empires.”

The sweet voice ceased. The Philosopher’s hand inadvertently fell at his side and came in contact with a deliciously soft arm.

“Have you done?” he enquired, in mild accents.

“Yes!” was the reply.

“Well,” he observed, “you spoke your lines very prettily,—that’s all I can say. Your quotation is from ‘Endymion,’ and I suppose you realise that ‘Endymion’ is utterly spoilt by its excess of cloying sentimentality. Yet—”

Absent-mindedly he began to stroke the soft arm up and down with a light caress such as he would have bestowed on a child.

“What I should like to explain,” he said, with an argumentative air, “and what you women will never understand, is that any exaggeration of feeling is always bad form, both in literature and in life. You’ve got plenty of intelligence and you ought to grapple with and master this fact. Certain things are taken for granted and it is not necessary to dwell upon them. Outward displays of emotion should always be suppressed. The brave man hides his wound,—and of course in matters of love the one who says least loves most.”

“I thought,” she interposed, in the most dulcet accents, “that to be in really good form one should never love at all.”

Her eyes were full of the most melting enquiry. The Philosopher began to feel a little confusion in his head. But he rallied his forces.

“Regard and esteem,” he said, sententiously, “are safer emotions than what is called love, which is a term often used to cover the lowest passions. An affection founded on mutual respect is dignified, sober and acceptable and generally leads to great tranquillity and happiness in marriage.”

She sprang up laughing.

“How dull!” she exclaimed. “I’m sure you are quite right! You always are quite right; but, oh, how dull! Dull, dull, dismally dull!” And throwing herself into one of the most picturesque attitudes imaginable, she uttered a soft call, apparently to the air, whereupon in swift response one of the white doves on the garden path flew up and settled on her outstretched hand.

The Philosopher gazed, as well he might. Such a charming curve to the back! Such a fall and flow of the white garments!—such a sudden tilt of the garden hat, showing the clustering hair underneath it, and, oh, dear me! such a very small hand,—as white as the dove that had settled upon it. She made a perfect picture in which “The Natural Evolution and Decay of Nations” had no part. She was a living, breathing embodiment of joy, and there was no reasoning her away. The Philosopher took refuge in a kind of hypocrisy.

“Do you want any more roses gathered?” he asked, with a deep sigh.

She smiled.

“Come and choose one for yourself,” she answered.

Now the Philosopher did not want a rose. He was the last man in the world to wear a flower in his coat, and as for gathering a rose for himself—the idea was perfectly monstrous. However, he left his chair quite obediently and followed his fair guide, with the dove still perched on her hand, through the intertwisting pergolas, wondering vaguely what they all meant and where they would lead to. A bright idea presently struck the profound recesses of his brain, and this was that he would actually gather a rose on his own account and offer it to her! She might press it in a book—who could tell? Women are always so sentimental! He perceived a beautiful dewy blush-pink bud, and made for it at once, recklessly plunging his hand awkwardly through the bush to get at its stalk. Suddenly he uttered a piercing howl:

“Damnation!”

This was a rude word. It was one he was rather fond of using. A thorn had scratched him mercilessly, drawing blood.

“Look here!” he cried, loudly. “Here’s a pretty business. My hand’s disfigured for life!”

She ran to his side, her face full of the prettiest sympathy.

“Oh! You poor thing!” she murmured. “But it’s only a scratch!”

“Only a scratch! Come, I like that! The most awful cases of blood-poisoning have been set up by a scratch. I may be

dead in three days! Don’t you know that? Look at the blood! Why, it’s horrible!”

She drew out the daintiest handkerchief, and dipping it in a cool spring of water that bubbled in a nook of the old rose-covered wall, bathed the wounded hand gently, though her face was dimpled all over with smiles.

“‘Outward displays of emotion should always be suppressed,’” she said, in a soft small voice that shook with restrained laughter. “‘The brave man hides his wound’—doesn’t he?” Here she peeped up at him in the most fascinating manner. “‘Certain things,’—like scratches—‘are taken for granted and it is not necessary to dwell on them!’ Isn’t that right? There!” And she tied the handkerchief deftly round the “disfigured” hand. “It will be all right in a very little while.”

“Not at all!” said the Philosopher, drearily, with almost a wail. “It won’t be all right—it will be all wrong! *You* call it a scratch. You women never pay attention to anything that’s really serious, though you make no end of a fuss over trifles. This is a positive scar! and it’s most painful—most painful, I tell you! Why, it’s quite hot and throbbing!”

She smiled up into his eyes.

“Is it? I’m so sorry! But,—do think of Napoleon’s march to Moscow!”

The Philosopher’s brow clouded.

“What’s that to do with it?” he demanded, sharply.

“Well!—the poor soldiers were starved and frozen to death,” she said, “and you are only scratched by a rose thorn. Of course the march to Moscow happened a long time ago—but *that* doesn’t matter!—you ought to feel it just as

much—so much that your scratch should seem nothing but purest joy if you had the *right* sort of sentiment."

A reluctant smile overspread his face and presently shone so broadly that in spite of his being a Philosopher he became almost good-looking.

"Don't play!" he urged. "I'm in earnest—I am really!"

"About what?" she asked, mirthfully.

"About the scratch—and—perhaps—about you," he said, suddenly, moved by an impulse he could not understand. "I don't know whether you come before the scratch or after. You see I wanted to get you a rose—"

"Most kind of you," she murmured, pretending not to be aware that his arm had somehow got round her waist. "Why?"

"I don't know why," he said. "Oh, that scratch! Really, joking apart, it's very painful!"

She unbound the handkerchief and looked at the damage critically. Suddenly, and with a fleeting blush, she stooped and kissed it.

"There!" she said. "That's what *we women* do to—babies! Kiss the place and make it well! All *sentiment*! Better now?"

"Positively I think it is!" admitted the Philosopher, his eyes beginning to shine in quite a human and unphilosophical manner. "But what a goose you are! The absurdity—"

"Yes!" she interrupted quickly. "I quite agree with you! The absurdity of a clever man,—a learned man,—a distinguished man,—giving way to his emotions on account of a scratch! Well! But that's the way you men always go

on! You neglect the most serious things of life and you fret and fidget yourselves over the merest trifles! You are the slaves of your feelings! Even swearing! Oh! Now if it had been Jack—”

“Hang Jack!” said the Philosopher. “You’re always trotting him out! You’d better marry him!”

“Would you like me to?” she asked, demurely.

His arm was still round her waist. For a Philosopher he felt fairly comfortable. He peered under the garden hat—and found an expression of face that pleased him. Proud of his discovery he enjoyed it in silence for a while.

“Would I like you to marry Jack?” he repeated. “Well! Let me consider—you know these sort of questions take a long time to answer! ‘Would I like you to marry Jack?’ No!—I don’t think so—not just yet!”

CHAPTER II

Table of Contents

“ONE thing I will say of you,” remarked the Philosopher, condescendingly, “and that is—you are not a Nagger!”

He and she were walking together across a meadow full of buttercups and daisies, and they had just been on the point of what the middle-classes politely call “words.” He was not without temper—she was not without spirit—hence the little breeze that had for the moment ruffled the calm of their platonic friendship. Her “sentimentalism,” however, had saved the situation. When she perceived that his irritability was fast developing into downright bearishness, she had suddenly raised her eyes and shown them full of tears.

“Don’t be cross,” she had murmured, cooingly—“it’s so ugly!”

Whereat the Philosopher’s set mouth had relaxed into a rather grieved smile, and he had casually observed:

“You seem to have caught a cold. Your eyes are red!”

But to this she had made no answer,—and merely swallowing an uncomfortable lump in her throat had walked on quietly, light-footed and serene. And it was this swiftly attained composure of hers that had moved him to the implied compliment he had just uttered: “You are not a Nagger!”

She did not speak—so he went on.

“Of all detestable things in this world a Nagger is the worst! Once—years ago—I knew one.”

She turned her head towards him.

“Man or woman?” she asked.

“Woman, of course! Foolish child! Did you ever hear of a male nagger? The type is essentially feminine!”

She smiled, but was silent.

“This woman,” he continued, “was by way of being a domestic martyr. A sort of self-created aureole of glory shone over her head—and one heard the rustle of heavenly palm branches where’er she walked. ‘Pray don’t mind me!’ she would observe, with mournful sweetness, at times when she was most confoundedly in the way—‘I’m so accustomed to take a second, even a *third* place, that it really doesn’t matter!’ And if she and her belongings had a little difference”—here he hesitated—“such as you and I have been having—she would shed torrents of tears. ‘All my life,’ she would wail, dismally, ‘I’ve done more than my duty to you! Money could not buy such devotion as mine! And this is my reward!’ And on she would go like a flowing stream, the victim to circumstances—the ‘buffer’ of cruel mischance. Men fled from her as from the eye of Medusa, though she was not bad-looking, and had managed to secure a husband.”

“What was her husband like?”

“Oh, he was quite a decent sort of chap—a hard-working, easy-going, scientific man. She had her waves of sentiment, too,—they came rolling over her in the most unexpected places. For example, one morning, having nagged her husband till he put both hands to his head in an effort to keep his trembling scalp in its place, she suddenly altered her tone and asked him if she should bring him the ‘cure-all’ for his corns! There now!—I thought you would laugh!”

She certainly did laugh; a pretty little laugh full of subdued merriment.

“It’s much better to laugh than to cry,” said the Philosopher, sententiously. “Men don’t understand women’s tears. They’re so—so wet and uncomfortable! This Nagger I’m telling you of was always shedding them—a regular water-barrel with the tap forever turned on.”

“How unfeeling you are!” she said, reproachfully. “Poor woman!”

“Poor woman! Poor man, you mean! Think of her husband!—working hard all day and a great part of the night as well—and getting no sympathy in his aims, no touch of interest in his work—nothing but stories of domestic martyrdom nobly endured for duty’s sake, and copious weeping! Now if you were married, you wouldn’t behave like that, would you?”

“No, I shouldn’t!” she replied. “But *we women* are not *all* alike, though *you men* generally think so!”

“Confound it all!” and the Philosopher, suddenly stopped short in his walk, trying to rekindle his pipe. A soft wind played about the vesta he had struck and puffed it out as though in fun. “Can’t get the cursed thing to light anyhow!”

She came close up to him, and held a pair of little hands curved like a couple of shells round the bowl of his briar, while he lit a fresh vesta and made another essay,—this time successfully.

“Thanks!” he said, curtly. “You really can be very useful when you like!”

She laughed and moved away, stepping quickly over the grass as though bent on making distance between herself

and him.

“Where are you going?” called the Philosopher, irritably. “Don’t skip about like that! Can’t you be quiet for five minutes?”

She came back slowly and stood still, with a quaint air of mock humility.

“You’re playing!” said the Philosopher, severely. “And I’m not always in a playing mood.”

“No?”

The question slid through a little round O of a mouth that suggested kisses. The Philosopher quickly averted his eyes.

“No!” he answered, with increased sternness. “I’m in a thinking mood to-day.”

He walked on, and she walked with him; her soft linen gown made a little “frou-frou” sound among the grasses that was pleasant and companionable. Her footsteps were too light to be heard at all, and presently the Philosopher, through two whiffs of his pipe, caught himself smiling.

“What a little goose it is!” he half murmured. “Dear little sentimental goose!”

Here he coughed loudly—quite an ugly cough.

“Are you tired?” he demanded.

“Not at all!”

“You women generally get tired after half an hour’s walking,” he said. “Would you like to sit on that stile and look at the scenery?”

“No, thanks! I would rather go on.”

The Philosopher’s face fell. The stile he had alluded to was quite a tempting thing. It was situated under an ancient tree whose broad branches spread out sheltering foliage on

all sides, and it would have been very agreeable to him to sit there and rest for a few minutes, even with a “sentimental goose” for his companion. But this goose would rather go on. And she did go on;—she was over the stile, too, before he could so much as assist her, and he only caught a glimpse of a frilled flounce and the point of a buckled shoe. This was really too bad!

“You’re in such a hurry this morning,” he grumbled. “And we’ve come out for a sociable walk.”

“Oh, no, we haven’t!” she said. “Much more than that! You want to think, you know!”

“Well, a man must think sometimes,” he observed.

“Indeed he must!” she agreed, emphatically. “Not only sometimes, but always! Then he will know what he is doing!”

“*Then he will know what he is doing!*” echoed the Philosopher, grimly. “That’s deep,—very deep! Quite beyond me! Are there ever any occasions,—setting drink aside,—when he *doesn’t* know what he is doing?”

She gave him a fleeting glance.

“Oh, yes! Many!”

“Indeed! You are developing a very singular perspicuity! Could you name one of those occasions?”

She laughed.

“Well! Let us say when he’s in love!”

“In love!” The Philosopher almost snorted contempt. “In love! You women think of nothing but love! Do you know—have you ever realised—that being ‘in love’ as you call it, is the least and most unimportant part of a man’s career?”

She looked up at him.