

"Il est vrai," said Florac with a shrug. "I comprehend neither the suicide nor the chaise de-poste. What will you? I am not yet enough English, my friend. We make marriages of convenience in our country, que diable, and what follows; but no scandal afterward. Do not adopt our institutions à demi, my friend. Vous ne me comprenez pas non plus, mon pauvre Jack!"

"There is one way still, I think," said the third of the speakers in this scene. "Let Lord Highgate come to Rosebury in his own name, leaving that of Mr. Harris behind him. If Sir Barnes Newcome wants you, he can seek you there. If you will go, as you should, and God speed you, you can go, and in your own name, too."

"Parbleu, c'est ça," cries Florac, "he speaks like a book—the Romancier!" I confess, for my part, I thought that a good woman might plead with him, and touch that manly not disloyal heart now trembling on the awful balance between evil and good.

"Allons! let us make to come the drague!" cries Florac. "Jack, thou returnest with us, my friend! Mme. Pendennis, an angel, my friend, a *quakre* the most charming, shall roucoule to thee the sweetest sermons. My wife shall tend thee like a mother—a grandmother. Go make thy packet!"

Lord Highgate was very much pleased and relieved, seemingly. He shook our hands; he said he should never forget our kindness, never! In truth, the didactic part of our conversation was carried on at much greater length than as here noted down; and he would come that evening, but not with us, thank you; he had a particular engagement—some letters he must write. Those done, he would not fail us, and would be at Rosebury by dinner time.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### "ONE MORE UNFORTUNATE."

The fates did not ordain that the plan should succeed which Lord Highgate's friends had devised for Lady Clara's rescue or respite. He was bent on one more interview with the unfortunate lady; and in that meeting the future destiny of their luckless lives was decided. On the morning of his

return home, Barnes Newcome had information that Lord Highgate, under a feigned name, had been staying in the neighborhood of his house, and had repeatedly been seen in the company of Lady Clara. She may have gone out to meet him but for one hour more. She had taken no leave of her children on the day when she left her home, and far from making preparations for her own departure, had been engaged in getting the house ready for the reception of members of the family, whose arrival her husband announced as speedily to follow his own. Ethel and Lady Ann, and some of the children were coming. Lord Farintosh's mother and sisters were to follow. It was to be a reunion previous to the marriage which was closer to unite the two families. Lady Clara said 'yes' to her husband's orders; rose mechanically to obey his wishes and arrange for the reception of the guests; and spoke tremblingly to the housekeeper as her husband gazed at her. The little ones had been consigned to bed early, and before Sir Barnes' arrival. He did not think fit to see them in their sleep, nor did their mother. She did not know, as the poor little creatures left her room in charge of their nurses, that she looked on them for the last time. Perhaps, had she gone to their bedsides that evening, had the wretched, panic-stricken soul been allowed leisure to pause, and to think, and to pray, the fate of the morrow might have been otherwise, and the trembling balance of the scale have inclined to right's side. But the pause was not allowed her. Her husband came and saluted her with his accustomed greetings of scorn, and sarcasm, and brutal insult. On a future day he never dared to call a servant of his household to testify to his treatment of her, though many were ready to attend to prove his cruelty and her terror. On that very last night Lady Clara's maid, a country girl from her father's house at Chanticleere, told Sir Barnes in the midst of a conjugal dispute that her lady might bear his conduct, but she could not, and that she would no longer live under the roof of such a brute. The girl's interference was not likely to benefit her mistress much; the wretched Lady Clara passed the last night under the roof of her husband and children, unattended save by this poor domestic who was about to leave her, in tears and hysterical outcries, and then in moaning stupor. Lady Clara put to sleep with laudanum, her maid carried down the story of her wrongs to the servants' quarters, and half a dozen of them took in their resignation to Sir Barnes as he sat over his

breakfast the next morning, in his ancestral hall, surrounded by the portraits of his august forefathers, in his happy home.

Their mutiny, of course, did not add to their master's good humor, and his letters brought him news which increased Barnes' fury. A messenger arrived with a letter from his man of business at Newcome, upon the receipt of which he started up with such an execration as frightened the servant waiting on him, and letter in hand he ran to Lady Clara's sitting room. Her ladyship was up. Sir Barnes breakfasted rather late on the first morning after an arrival at Newcome. He had to look over the bailiff's books, and to look about him round the park and grounds; to curse the gardeners; to damn the stable and kennel grooms; to yell at the woodman for clearing not enough or too much; to rail at the poor old work-people brooming away the fallen leaves, etc. So Lady Clara was up and dressed, when her husband went to her room, which lay at the end of the house, as we have said, the last of a suite of ancestral halls.

The mutinous servant heard a high voice and curses within; then Lady Clara's screams; then Sir Barnes Newcome burst out of the room, locking the door, and taking the key with him, and saluting with more curses James, the mutineer, over whom his master ran.

"Curse your wife, and don't curse me, Sir Barnes Newcome!" said James, the mutineer, and knocked down a hand which the infuriated baronet raised against him with an arm that was thrice as strong as Barnes' own. This man and maid followed their mistress in the sad journey upon which she was bent. They treated her with unalterable respect. They never could be got to see that her conduct was wrong. When Barnes' counsel subsequently tried to impugn their testimony, they dared him, and hurt the plaintiff's case very much. For the balance had weighed over; and it was Barnes himself who caused what now ensued, and what we learned in a very few hours afterward from Newcome, where it was the talk of the whole neighborhood.

Florac and I, as yet ignorant of all that was occurring, met Barnes near his own lodge gate, riding in the direction of Newcome, as we were ourselves returning to Rosebury. The Prince de Montcontour, who was driving, affably saluted the Baronet, who gave us a scowling recognition, and rode on, his groom behind him. "The figure of this garçon," says Florac, as our acquaintance passed, "is not agreeable. Of

pale, he has become livid. I hope these two men will not meet, or evil will come!" Evil to Barnes there might be, Florac's companion thought, who knew the previous little affairs between Barnes and his uncle and cousin, and that Lord Highgate was quite able to take care of himself.

In half an hour after Florac spoke, that meeting between Barnes and Highgate actually had taken place—in the open square of Newcome, within four doors of the King's Arms inn, close to which lives Sir Barnes Newcome's man of business; and before which Mr. Harris, as he was called, was walking, and waiting till a carriage which he had ordered came round from the inn yard. As Sir Barnes Newcome rode into the place many people touched their hats to him, however little they loved him. He was bowing and smirking to one of these, when he suddenly saw Belsize.

He started back, causing his horse to back with him on to the pavement, and it may have been rage and fury, or accident and nervousness merely, but at this instant Barnes Newcome, looking toward Lord Highgate, shook his whip.

"You cowardly villain!" said the other, springing forward. "I was going to your house."

"How dare you, sir," cried Sir Barnes, still holding up that unlucky cane, "how dare you to —"

"Dare, you scoundrel?" said Belsize. "Is that the cane you strike your wife with, you ruffian?" Belsize seized and tore him out of the saddle, flinging him, screaming, down on the pavement. The horse, rearing and making way for himself, galloped down the clattering street; a hundred people were round Sir Barnes in a moment.

The carriage which Belsize had ordered came round at this very juncture. Amid the crowd, shrinking, bustling, exultating, threatening, who pressed about him, he shouldered his way. Mr. Taplow, aghast, was one of the hundred spectators of the scene.

"I am Lord Highgate," said Barnes' adversary. "If Sir Barnes Newcome wants me, tell him I will send him word where he may hear of me." And getting into the carriage, he told the driver to go "to the usual place."

Imagine the hubbub in the town, the conclaves at the inns, the talks in the countinghouses, the commotion among the factory people, the paragraphs in the Newcome papers, the bustle of surgeons and lawyers, after this event. Crowds gathered at the King's Arms, and waited round Mr. Speers the

lawyer's house, into which Sir Barnes was carried. In vain policemen told them to move on; fresh groups gathered after the seceders. On the next day, when Barnes Newcome, who was not much hurt, had a fly to go home, a factory man shook his fist in at the carriage window, and with a curse, said, "Serve you right, you villain." It was the man whose sweet-heart this Don Juan had seduced and deserted years before—whose wrongs were well known among his mates—a leader in the chorus of hatred which growled round Barnes Newcome.

Barnes' mother and sister Ethel had reached Newcome shortly before the return of the master of the house. The people there were in disturbance. Lady Ann and Miss Newcome came out with pallid looks to greet him. He laughed and reassured them about his accident—indeed his hurt had been trifling; he had been bled by the surgeon, a little jarred by the fall from his horse; but there was no sort of danger. Still their pale and doubtful looks continued. What caused them? In the open day, with a servant attending her, Lady Clara Newcome had left her husband's house; and a letter was forwarded to him that same evening from my Lord Highgate, informing Sir Barnes Newcome that Lady Clara Pulleyn could bear his tyranny no longer, and had left his roof; that Lord Highgate proposed to leave England almost immediately, but would remain long enough to afford Sir Barnes Newcome the opportunity for an interview, in case he should be disposed to demand one; and a friend (of Lord Highgate's late regiment) was named who would receive letters and act in any way necessary for his lordship.

The debates of the House of Lords must tell what followed afterward in the dreary history of Lady Clara Pulleyn. The proceedings in the Newcome Divorce Bill filled the usual number of columns in the papers—especially the Sunday papers. The witnesses were examined by learned peers whose business—nay, pleasure—it seems to be to enter into such matters; and for the ends of justice and morality, doubtless, the whole story of Barnes Newcome's household was told to the British public. In the previous trial in the Court of Queen's Bench, how grandly Sergeant Rowland stood up for the rights of British husbands! With what pathos he depicted the conjugal paradise; the innocent children prattling round their happy parents; the serpent, the destroyer, entering into that Belgravian Eden; the wretched and deserted husband alone by his desecrated hearth, and calling for re-

dress on his country! Rowland wept freely during his noble harangue. At not a shilling under twenty thousand pounds would he estimate the cost of his client's injuries. The jury was very much affected. The evening papers gave Rowland's address in extenso, with some pretty sharp raps at the aristocracy in general. The Day, the principal morning journal of that period, came out with a leading article the next morning, in which every party concerned and every institution was knocked about. The disgrace of the peerage, the ruin of the monarchy (with a retrospective view of the well-known case of Gyges and Candaules), the monstrosity of the crime, and the absurdity of the punishment were all set forth in the terrible leading article of the Day.

But when, on the next day, Sergeant Rowland was requested to call witnesses to prove that connubial happiness which he had depicted so pathetically, he had none at hand.

Oliver, Q. C., now had his innings. A man, a husband, and a father, Mr. Oliver could not attempt to defend the conduct of his unfortunate client; but if there could be any excuse for such conduct, that excuse, he was free to confess, the plaintiff had afforded, whose cruelty and neglect twenty witnesses in court were ready to prove—neglect so outrageous, cruelty so systematic, that he wondered the plaintiff had not been better advised than to bring this trial, with all its degrading particulars, to a public issue. On the very day when the ill-omened marriage took place, another victim of cruelty had interposed as vainly—as vainly as Sergeant Rowland himself interposed in court to prevent this case being made known, and with piteous outcries, in the name of outraged, neglected women, of castaway children pleading in vain for bread, had besought the bride to pause, and the bridegroom to look upon the wretched beings who owed him life. Why had not Lady Clara Pulleyn's friends listened to that appeal? And so on, and so on, between Rowland and Oliver the battle raged fiercely that day. Many witnesses were mauled and slain. Out of that combat scarce anybody came well, except the two principal champions, Rowland, Sergeant, and Oliver, Q. C. The whole country looked on, and heard the wretched story, not only of Barnes' fault and Highgate's fault, but of the private peccadilloes of their suborned footmen and conspiring housemaids. Mr. Justice C. Sawyer charged the jury at great length—those men were respectable men and fathers of families themselves. Of course they dealt full measure to Lord

Highgate for his delinquencies, consoled the injured husband with immense damages, and left him free to pursue the farther steps for releasing himself altogether from the tie which had been bound with affecting Episcopal benediction at St. George's, Hanover Square.

So Lady Clara flies from the custody of her tyrant, but to what a rescue! The very man who loves her, and gives her asylum, pities and deplores her. She scarce dares to look out of the windows of her new home upon the world, lest it should know and reproach her. All her sisterhood of friendship is cut off from her. If she dares to go abroad she feels the sneer of the world as she goes through it, and knows that malice and scorn whisper behind her. People as criminal, but undiscovered, make room for her as if her touch were pollution. She knows she has darkened the lot and made wretched the home of the man whom she loves best; that his friends who see her treat her with but a doubtful respect; and the domestics who attend her, with a suspicious obedience. In the country lanes, or the streets of the county town, neighbors look aside as the carriage passes in which she sits splendid and lonely. Rough hunting companions of her husband come to her table—he is driven perforce to the company of flatterers and men of inferior sort; his equals, at least in his own home, will not live with him. She would be kind, perhaps, and charitable to the cottagers round about her, but she fears to visit them lest they, too, should scorn her. The clergyman who distributes her charities blushes and looks awkward on passing her in the village, if he should be walking with his wife or one of his children. Shall they go to the Continent, and set up a grand house at Paris or Florence? There they can get society, but of what a sort! Our acquaintances of Baden, Mme. Schlangenbad, and Mme. de Cruchecassée, and Mme. d'Ivry, and Messrs. Loder and Punter, and Blackball and Deuceace, will come and dance, and flirt, and quarrel, and gamble, and feast round about her; but what in common with such wild people has this poor, timid, shrinking soul? Even these scorn her. The leers and laughter on those painted faces are quite unlike her own sad countenance. She has no reply to their wit. Their infernal gayety scares her more than the solitude at home. No wonder that her husband does not like home, except for a short while in the hunting season. No wonder that he is away all day; how can he like a home which she has made so wretched? In the midst

of her sorrow, and doubt, and misery, a child comes to her; how she clings to it! how her whole being, and hope, and passion centers itself on this feeble infant! . . . but she no more belongs to our story; with the new name she has taken, the poor lady passes out of the history of the Newcomes.

If Barnes Newcome's children meet yonder solitary lady, do they know her? If her once husband thinks upon the unhappy young creature whom his cruelty drove from him, does his conscience affect his sleep at night? Why should Sir Barnes Newcome's conscience be more squeamish than his country's, which has put money in his pocket for having trampled on the poor weak young thing, and scorned her, and driven her to ruin? When the whole of the accounts of that wretched bankruptcy are brought up for final audit, which of the unhappy partners shall be shown to be most guilty? Does the Right Reverend Prelate who did the benedictory business for Barnes and Clara his wife repent in secret? Do the parents who pressed the marriage, and the fine folks who signed the book, and ate the breakfast, and applauded the bridegroom's speech, feel a little ashamed? O Hymen Hymenae! The bishops, beadles, clergy, pew openers, and other officers of the temple dedicated to Heaven under the invocation of St. George, will officiate in the same place at scores and scores more of such marriages; and St. George of England may behold virgin after virgin offered up to the devouring monster Mammon (with many most respectable female dragons looking on)—may see virgin after virgin given away, just as in the Soldan of Babylon's time, but with never a champion to come to the rescue!

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### IN WHICH ACHILLES LOSES BRISEIS.

Although the years of the Marquis of Farintosh were few, he had spent most of them in the habit of command; and from his childhood upward, had been obeyed by all persons round about him. As an infant he had but to roar, and his mother and nurses were as much frightened as though he had been a Libyan lion. What he willed and ordered was law among his clan and family. During the period of his London