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For the National Era.

HERMAN;

OR

YOUNG KNIGHTHOOD.

BY E. FOXTON,

Author of "Premices."

CHAPTER XV—Continued.

"He smiled. 'The study can hardly be any great pleasure to you, then,' said he. 'Why do you pursue it?'

"'I hardly know. Why do others?'

"'A few men and women from love of it. Many men from ambition.'

"'And no woman from ambition?'

"'A woman of creative genius may perhaps, here and there, to strengthen and expand her brains; as an athlete fights with a shadow, to strengthen and expand his muscles, as a means, not as an end.'

"'But why should not other women, too, as well as the many men, who, as you say, become learned from ambition? I do not think I quite understand. Surely not all of them who do so are creative geniuses.'

"'By no means, my daughter. [How patiently and pityingly the word came out! I had been an orphan so long!] But they can be merchants, physicians, lawyers, and dignitaries in Church and State; and in all their several walks of life they find full employment and demand for highly-cultivated minds. Diplomas are showered upon them, professorships conferred upon them, and flatteries interchanged with them by other scholars, all the world over. Are you ambitious?'

"'I hardly know. Not very, I believe, naturally, or, at least, not for myself. If I sometimes strive to become so now, ambition itself is to me a means rather than an end. If I am ambitious, it is to obtain the power of exorcism.'

"'In your turn, you puzzle me.'

"'I am haunted, father!'

"'My child, by what?'

"'By a thought!' I said; and I closed my eyes involuntarily, to shut it out. Oh, Herman! I never could repeat all this to you, if I did not grudge it to any man, the holiest and the best, that he should know anything of me that was kept back from you, my betrothed!"

"My own sweet Constance! Why should you shrink from making me believe, if you can, that you cared for me one thousandth part as much as I did for you?"

Constance smiled faintly, glanced timidly into his face, looked down again, and went on: "Then the Bishop said, very gently and compassionately, 'Cannot you explain yourself a little further, my daughter? Take courage, and endeavor to think aloud. Forget that any ear is present to hear you, except that of Him whose mouth-piece I am. Remember, that a painful malady is always less terrible to the physician than to the patient. You know that I may almost be said to have a hereditary right to your confidence. Perhaps you will allow me to offer a conjecture as to the nature of your suffering?'

"I bowed. He opened the 'Golden Legend,' which lay before us on the table, and turned, and pointed to the lines,

> "Love, that in every woman's heart
> Will have the whole, and not a part;
> And is to her, in Nature's plan,
> More than ambition is to man."

"I started. He looked at me. The trap had sprung. There was no escape. Covering my face with my hands, I cried, 'My lover proved unworthy; (I really thought so then, Herman; there is nothing too unjust for us to believe, if we do but assert it often enough;) and I discarded him, at once and forever. One can be very strong for an hour. He returns no more. His memory does, and is driven away only to return, in solitude, in society, in hours that should be gay, and in hours that should be holy. Who can be strong at all times, and forever? I struggle. My life shall give way before my resolution does; but I sometimes think that both may before my grief. Press me no further, kind father; but, if you have the skill, teach me the way to cast this demon out. Could not ambition do it, think you?'

"He hesitated. 'Tell me what you really think,' I urged; 'surely my openness deserves frankness in return.'

"His answer was to the point, as usual. (It is one great charm of his conversation, that he always takes up a subject just where you leave it; instead of merely waiting for you to pause, and then—as so many people do—going on to make a speech of his own, perfectly disconnected with what you have said, as if he was playing *cranks*.) 'You shall have it, my daughter,' said he, 'since you asked for it. As a man of honor, I cannot deny that successful ambition may often stupefy misery like yours; though, like other opiates and anodynes, it is apt in the end to leave behind a worse disorder in the place of that which it alleviates. But the world has three prizes only, that I recollect, to offer to the ambition of women; and the triumph of learning is not one. Study as hard as you can, for the sake of that, and you will succeed only in becoming a woman among scholars, and a scholar amongst women. You will find no companionship in your own sex, nor admiration in the other. Crowd your fine and subtle but small and sensitive brain as full as it will bear with Greek and Hebrew roots and crabbed Latin authors. Hundreds of thick-skulled Germans, Englishmen, and even New Englanders, will bear away the palm from you. Your head will no more hold as much as theirs, than your stomach would. You might as well challenge a prize-fighter to eat forty pounds of beef with you upon a wager. You are like a swan running a race with an ostrich. The creature is out of its element. Men will ridicule and despise your vain attempt to outdo them on their own ground, and join with women in setting down to the account of your unfeminine accomplishments all the shortcomings in feminine avocations in which they can detect you, or of which they can suspect you.'"

"The Bishop was severe," said Herman.

"But right, was he not?"

"Half. Right enough, I dare say, in thinking that Nature had been unkind enough to incapacitate most women from outstripping in their greedy race mere gluttonous ostriches of envious and selfish pedantry. But I interrupted you"——

"The Bishop went on: 'Let Cicero alone, then, or read him in English, if you don't like Latin. The real prizes which the world offers to the ambition of a woman and a lady are three: first, what it calls a great match; secondly, eminence as a writer; and, thirdly, success in sculpture, painting, or the composition of music, which arts we will throw into one department, and consider them together under one head, as among them all they may furnish one ever-green laurel wreath, for one woman, in one century. Can you think of any others?'

"'I have sometimes thought that, if I were a poor girl, and if actors and actresses were a more refined set of people than they are said to be, I could find a career, excitement, and oblivion, among them.'

"He looked at me with astonishment, and something more like sternness than I had ever seen in his face before, and rejoined. 'But now? being what they are said to be, and you a lady?'——

"'I cannot go upon the stage.'

"His brows unbent; and he replied, 'Right! If I were indeed your spiritual father, and we were considering your eternal instead of your temporal welfare, I should be obliged to tell you that you could take no more probable way than that to purchase a little temporary ease or delirium, at the expense of everlasting torments and horror! But one thing at a time. I am to talk to you, just now, as a man of the world to a woman of the world. My three alternatives remain. Let us consider your chances as a candidate for each. Marriage: women like you—supposing that there are enough women like you to constitute a class—do not, unless my penetration is at fault, love twice, nor marry without love?' He waited for an answer.

"'Your penetration is not at fault. Oh, father, in pity let us speak no more of that!'

"'Forgive me! No; I will not touch your poor heart again until you give me leave to heal it; and if I have done so hitherto, it was not from heedlessness, but from necessity. My child, it was needful that the wound should be thoroughly searched before it could be dressed, but that has now been done. For the present, let it alone. There, remain then, open to you, literature and art, if you are a woman of genius; if not, of course failure will be your only reward in either. Now, what is vulgarly called *talent*, I know that you have to a rare degree; but genius is so rare that the presumption is always strongly against its being possessed by any one, either man or woman, until its possession has been proved. Perhaps you have it, notwithstanding. Let us see. Let me ask you a question or two. For which do you feel within yourself the greatest aptitude, literature or art?'

"'Of the two, I think for literature. I can copy with my pencil anything that I see; but I cannot design. I can read any music, and even play *fantasie* when I am in the mood, but I fear that they owe all their merit, which they have, to their being executed with the expression of the momentary feeling which prompts them. I cannot write to order. I know nothing of the rules of music; and I am sure that what little instruction I have would die under the drudgery of learning and conforming to them. On the other hand, I write prose and verse with ease, and sometimes with pleasure.'

"'In literature you will probably succeed, then, if in either. Your destiny, perhaps, often faces you when you arise in the morning, or arouses you in the night, or confronts you in the day-time, with a dim form in her hand—a sketch of a romance, a poem, or a play. She will give you only fitful glimpses of it, probably. She half unrolls it; then the vision folds it up. She lets you see sometimes the beginning only, sometimes the middle, sometimes the two ends. She is very seldom indulgent enough to reveal to you the whole at once. And she ever does so, it is, most likely, for an instant only, and with a malignant purpose to overload and overwhelm you with more details than your memory can hold. She says, however, this plan, which I hold in my hand, half hidden from your eyes, you are doomed to carry out before the eyes of mankind. The memory of its unearthly beauty shall haunt and torment you; its grandeur shall oppress you; its very difficulty shall defy and taunt you, until your work is done. From what I have already shown you, guess the rest. The rest is there—somewhere—and traceable in full harmonious proportions from the portion you have seen. Dispatch! For you there is to be no cheerful, calm companionship, no refreshing sleep, no relished food, until the task lies behind you, that now lies before. You may fly; but I shall follow. You may pine; I shall not pity. You may fall sick; but I shall lie in wait for your recovery, and put your pen before your needle, into your trembling hand.

"'She speaks; and you obey, impatient to have the doom behind you, instead of before. You go apart fearfully, shut your door, and give yourself up to the mysterious prompting, like a Pythia forced to the tripod. You are no longer a woman, but a seer, a soothsayer, a writing-medium. Ideal creatures swarm in the air about you. You throw yourself into them; they themselves into you. You speak their words, do their deeds, feel their feelings, shrick their pangs. The thoughts thicken. They dazzle—they blind you. Your brain reels with them. Bewildered, you turn this way and that until you are dizzy, to catch them before they escape you, as a child does to catch all the snow-flakes in a hurrying storm. Your heart beats hard, your breath pants fast. Still you hurry on; because you cannot stop, because the preternatural dictation does not. Time hurries on with you. Your clock strikes the hours as fast as it usually ticks the minutes—hours which do on you the work of years—such hours as print wrinkles on the brow and the brain.

"'At length, a sudden stop surprises you. Coming to yourself, you look about you, and perceive that your task is finished. That is, at least, a relief. You languidly take it up, turn it over, and read it, at first with curiosity, then with admiration, and then with amazement. It is something new under the sun. It does not seem to you to be yours. It is not, properly speaking, though it makes you famous. It is the work of the demon whose servant you are. It is strong; but you are weak, weaker than before. He has taken much of your life to put into it. A few more such achievements, and all will be spent, and you will go to him for the arrears of your wages.

"'Have you ever felt anything like this?' said the Bishop. I never had."

"Thank God!" cried Herman.

"Are you glad? Then I am, too, now; though I was rather sorry at that time, to tell the truth."

"Indeed I am! Self-forgetfulness is one thing, and one of the noblest things, too, under the sun—self-abandonment quite another. Nobody can love a generous ardor and enthusiasm more than I do, but I distrust and detest unnatural excitement of all kinds. Why should it be more right or reputable wilfully to inflame and finally destroy one's God-given brain with undue solitude, fasting, or labor, than with opium, in order to write, carve, or paint, better than one's neighbors? for that, I take it, is what the cant about sacrificing one's self to art commonly means, in plain English."

"The Bishop was glad, too," said Constance. "'But that,' said he, 'is female genius. It is the forbidden fruit which is now and then offered to Eve's daughters by the serpent, as it was to her. Like her, they do not thrive upon it. It first intoxicates, then kills them.'

"'But surely,' I exclaimed, 'not all women of genius are of this description!'

"'To be sure,' said he, 'now I think of it, there are exceptions, some of whom you may have met with, but whom I did not consider it necessary to mention, because I could not believe that your place could be found among them—female geniuses, if you will, but females not of feminine but of masculine genius. I have myself chanced here and there to encounter a nondescript, calling herself a woman, who, without any goading inward gad-fly or exhausting fire in her veins, besieged eminence scientifically, month by month, and year by year, and conquered it at last, by regular approaches, like a man. She has no heart to unsettle her aim by its perturbations; and her iron nerves and India-rubber spirits are incapable of weariness and discouragement. She eats, drinks, sleeps, laughs, and talks, but deliberately succeeds, notwithstanding. She regularly and readily takes her seat on the tripod every day, for a certain number of hours; she suffers only when she is kept away, and even then she endures it stoically. If Apollo will not come down, she cheerfully makes him a curtsey at the end of the time, and goes away, watching all the time, however, with the stanch, calm, cold-blooded, persistent instinct of a cat that sits beside a mouse-hole, while she seems intent upon her needle-work or housekeeping, to pull him down upon her head if he lets drop within her reach so much as the hem of his garment, or one golden hair. The next day, she is at her post again, and on the next; until she fairly tires him down, and he does her bidding to be rid of her.

"'She is a quick-eyed, clear-sighted looker-on in life; and what others secretly feel, she openly expresses. Men have hitherto had the pen to themselves almost as exclusively as the sword. The thoughts and feelings of distinctive manhood have become commonplace by long repetition. Women, with a few exceptions, have but lately begun to write with energy, truth, and the artistic skill which comes of liberal culture; and, even now, there is not more than one woman in ten thousand capable of writing with force and fire what distinctive womanhood has been thinking and feeling from the beginning of time. Hence, such a person as I have in my mind finds fresh themes in plenty ready to her firm, bold, and masterly hand. She handles them accordingly, and has her reward; but her very reward would be intolerable to you.

"'The world will not believe that a woman's ink can glow so with anything but her own heart's blood. They analyze it, in order to find out what sort of stuff her heart is made of, and pronounce it confidently to be the gall of bitterness. They cannot attribute to her the possession of a head for any practical purpose. The utterance of her divination, which lays bare the souls of others, will always be taken for a revelation of her own. Her cold heart is sure to get the credit of all the fire of her pages. People insist on pitying her for sorrows which she is incapable of feeling. She takes their sympathy coolly, silently, and graciously, as a tribute to her power, which is all that this mere mind, clad with womanhood, cares about. She smiles in her sleeve, and keeps her own counsels. Could you do so? Could you bear to have it supposed, how falsely soever, by every chance reader in the booksellers' shops, that you had laid your autobiography, with the leaves cut, invitingly in his way? Could you bear to have it asserted that you had sold the sacred privacy of your shrinking, shuddering soul for fame?'"

"Is it permitted to me to say a word or two to the Bishop, in behalf of this poor representative woman of his," asked Herman, "if I will do so very respectfully?"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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For the National Era.

JASPER: A ROMANCE.

BY EDWARD SPENCER.

VI.

How Mr. Classic Changed His Lodgings.

[CHAPTER SIXTH CONCLUDED.]

Mrs. Fleming's lawyer and Plato Classic found but little difficulty in coming to a proper understanding in regard to the affairs of the latter. His accounts were soon examined, the amount of his liabilities was ascertained, and Plato's heart was overjoyed to hear the precise man of business say that he would see that the sale did not go on. The valueless scrip was also taken possession of by the lawyer, who at the same time made a note in regard to the broker's name and the matter generally, saying that he would look into the transaction a little, and see if it was not possible to recover something, or prove fraudulent dealing. These things settled, the attorney next spoke of an arrangement which his client proposed, and which would doubtless prove acceptable to him. It seems there was in the park, within fifty yards of the mansion on Mrs. Fleming's estate, a neat little summer lodge of two airy rooms, well fitted up with every convenience. Mrs. Fleming proposed that Mr. Classic should take immediate possession of this house, and consider himself in other respects, thenceforward, a member of her family. A horse would always be at his disposal, and all his comforts and wishes should be scrupulously respected. Besides this——

"But," interrupted Plato, "I cannot accept any such proposition as this. It is all on one side, and makes me, in fact, the pensioner of her bounty. I am exceedingly grateful to Mrs. Fleming, but you remember the words that Plautus puts in the mouth of Ergasilus—

> 'Miser homo est, qui ipse sibi, quod edit, quærit, et id aegre invenit:'

and I have nothing of the Gnatho in my composition."

"Of course not, my dear sir," said the lawyer, with a gentle smile. "But you have heard only one side. In return for the use of the house—which costs Mrs. Fleming nothing, and she would only suffer a friend to occupy it—and in consideration of a salary of three hundred dollars, which I think little enough, in all conscience, Mrs. Fleming will expect you to read prayers night and morning in her family, to perform the regular services on such Sundays as the weather prevents her from going out, and to arrange and catalogue her large and splendid library against the return of Mr. Jasper Fleming. So you see that you will by no means be idle."

"Still, I cannot consent to accept any pay. The balance would be too much against me."

"Now, my dear Mr. Classic," said the lawyer, confidentially, still smiling in that gentle penetrating way he had, "take my advice in this matter. You are not receiving any favors from Mrs. Fleming in this matter. Your office will be no sinecure. Mrs. F. needs society, now that Jasper is away. She lives in too unprotected a way. Your residence on the place is just exactly what she requires, and take my word for it—I know the woman—she will keep you busy. If she intends any favor to you, it is a prospective one, and of a kind you will not object to."

"What is that?"

"She is going to build a church in her neighborhood, as soon as she can find a plan that suits her. Said church will require an officiating minister, and probably that is one reason she has for securing you in advance."

Plato's eyes fairly glistened. "I have paid some little attention to sacred architecture myself, and have studied the earlier forms of Gothic, especially the Norman, so that I may be able to render her some valuable assistance in the selection of a design."

"Undoubtedly you can. And besides—I don't know whether I am doing right in telling you, as she only hinted the matter to me—do you know I am pretty certain that Mrs. Fleming intends to take lessons with you in Greek! Her time hangs very heavily on her hands, and you know she is very fond of books. Think of *that*, my dear sir! only reflect upon the pleasure of instructing such a splendid woman as my client is in the sonorous mysteries of the classics! Why, I should not feel more honored were the Queen of England herself to summon me to become her instructor in Cujaccius, and the interpreter of the glosses—which last would be a douced hard task, by the way," added he, *sotto voce*.

"Enough, enough!" cried Plato, fairly dancing about the room in his delight at having his scruples thus triumphantly annihilated, "I will pack up forthwith, and go thither next week."

"Mehercle!" said he to himself, rubbing his hands after the departure of his visiter, "she shall drink in Homer's divine wisdom even at the fount itself, and from the brown pages of my glorious Princeps, while I will also give her the benefit of Heyne's annotations. Yet, 'tis strange she should wish to learn Greek! I wonder if she knows aught of Latin yet? She must, or she will not be able to profit by the notes and interpretations."

While the lawyer, as he went down the steps, said to himself, reflectively: "How she must love that boy, to concern herself even about this pedantic old numskull, simply because he was his tutor. And yet, talk as I would of him to-day, I could bring no tear to her eye, no quiver to her lip. A wonderful strong woman. Wonderful!"

In a few days, Plato and his books took possession of the pretty little lodge, and he himself entered upon the round of his imagined duties, which, excepting so far as prayers were concerned, existed only in his own conscientiousness, for how to begin the arrangement of Mrs. Fleming's library passed his comprehension, though he fussed back and forth between that handsome room and his own lodge at least twenty times a day, putting up books solely, it seemed, for the purpose of pulling them down again, and feasting his ever-greedy eyes upon these new treasures. Mrs. Fleming had for some time given up this, her former favorite resort, and but seldom came into it. Probably there were painful associations connected with it, or the dark panelling and sombre waving Arras had some subtle depressing influence over her spirits. At any rate, her present sitting-room was an elegant boudoir, on the second floor, beautifully finished in a rich and warm style of decoration, a perfect little *salon de Louis Quinze*, in white and gold, with a touch of blue in the panelling and hangings, but very chaste and severe in taste, and entirely purified of all the pruriency and *rococo* which usually mars that otherwise very pleasant style of interior.

Au Reste, she sometimes had her meals alone, sometimes in company with Plato, and then, if no visiters were present, which occasionally happened, our bookworm laboriously exerted himself to entertain her, though even *he* suspected, with but very meagre success. Still, he imagined it to be his duty, and, like an honest and faithful worker, persevered in it.

"Mrs. Fleming," said he, one morning, "when am I to have the pleasure of entering with you into the mighty Greek kingdoms, and instructing you in the language of Homer and Sophocles?"

Jasper's mother smiled faintly, as she responded:

"This morning, if you will."

Exuberantly elated, Plato awaited her coming in the library. As soon as she was seated, he began:

"Shall we begin at once *ab initio* with the declensions, and a verbal paradigm, madam, as I did with your son Jasper? or shall we take up some simple text-book, and endeavor to analyze from the start? The latter course would be more satisfactory to you, I imagine, though the other is much the more thorough method of procedure."

Mrs. Fleming had winced at the mention of "her son Jasper" in that room, but she answered, carelessly:

"Oh no, Mr. Classic; I do not care to become so profound a Greek scholar as all that amounts to. I am getting too old now, and am not sufficiently industrious to undertake so extensive a task. The Medea of Euripides: can you tell me, does it resemble the Medea of Corneille? If so, suppose we begin with that."

Plato stood aghast.

"I have never read the Medea of Corneille, Mrs. Fleming, but I understand it to be imitated from the tragedy of the same subject by the *pseudo*-Seneca, 'a wearisome pomp of declamation,' and vastly inferior to the splendid production of Euripides, where we have the stern woman sacrificing love to pride in all her terrible grandeur. There is, to be sure, somewhat too much of the loquacious sophist in our author, and occasionally an offensive petit-maitre-ism in the way he thrusts forward the philosophical dicta he had picked up in the company of Anaxagoras, for which Aristophanes most effectually scores him, as well as for his plagiarism, as for instance in the laughable *Ranæ*, where Æacus speaks of him as consorting in Hades with cut-purses, and thieves, and house-breakers, the most disputatious, and shrillest, and most eel-like of sophists. Still he was a master of the passions and emotions, and he has especially excelled in portraying the struggle between pride wounded and the maternal claims, in the frenzied yet haughty and self-reliant Medea."

"Let us read it, then, Mr. Classic. There are copies of it here, I believe."

"But madam, you are probably not aware that the text of Euripides, as of any advanced author, presents almost insuperable difficulties to the inexperienced beginner, especially in the variety of forms of the verb, and the many ellipses required by the necessities of verse. For instance, unless you were acquainted with the various inflections of the verb, how could you ascertain that *etupon* and *tetuphos* were simply modal and temporal modifications of the common radical *tupto*?"

"Never mind that, Mr. Classic," interrupted Mrs. Fleming, "we will take the verbs for granted. Suppose you begin and read me the first act of Medea."

Mr. Classic wondered enough at this novel way of learning a language, but began to recite *ore rotundo* the querulous syllables of the nurse's complaint about the ship Argo and the blue Symplagades, when he was again interrupted:

"I meant to have said *translate*, Mr. Classic," said Mrs. Fleming, waving her hand with a slightly impatient gesture; and thus was our chop-fallen Plato transformed from the honored instructor he had expected to be, into a simple means of amusement to a melancholy woman—a converter of the iambic sophisms of Euripides ("the most tragic of the poets," as Aristotle calls him,) into the less elaborate prose of his own extemporiety.

If Mrs. Fleming was satisfied, however, said he to himself, by way of consolation, certainly Plato Classic had no right to complain.

VII.

How Mrs. Fleming Played the Queen.

The reader must not suppose I intend him to think that Mrs. Fleming's whole time was spent in her boudoir, and in hearing Plato Classic read the Medea. In her own way she also moved in society. Not naturally of a social habit, she had much secluded herself upon the death of her husband, giving up entirely the city mansion, and living in comparative solitude at the Hall. Still, she had never entirely severed the bonds between society and herself; she had always visited and received the visits of a chosen circle of friends whom she esteemed for qualities, the genuineness of which she had proven. Either with them in the city, or having them about her at the Hall, she kept up an intimacy which was at once pleasurable and beneficial to her. Nevertheless, though peculiarly qualified for society, shining at no time with greater splendor than when the centre of a brilliant circle of friends and admirers; though evidently taking delight in company when with it, and willingly adding the charm of fine conversational powers to the superbness of her personal presence, Mrs. Fleming inwardly would have preferred solitude absolute and perfect. The cell and the pallet, the serge robe and the stone pavement, the dry crust and the cruse of water, had more charms for her sombre fancy than the utmost pleasures to be derived from intercourse with congregated humanity. Whether it was from natural bent, or a consequence of some after torsion, Mrs. Fleming was of an introvertive disposition, and lived best in a world of her own thoughts, too completely peopled for her to need the additional stimulus of social intercourse. Why then did she not follow her bent, the reader will ask; and the answer is conveyed in a single word:

Jasper.

For him, her pole-star, she acted. For him, with far-reaching plans, she kept up her relations with society, even in his childhood; for him she had been wont to gather around her, during his vacations, the fairest and best of the land, in gay and brilliant coterie. For him, during the year after he left college, had Jasper's mother formally entered society again, and entered it not as Queen Dowager, but as Queen Regnant, just as Madame Victoria goes back from secluded Balmoral to Buckingham Palace and crushing "Drawing Rooms." It might have appeared strange to some, to see this stately woman acting the part of chaperon to her handsome son, but in reality she was very competent to it, and she did it in such a way that none but her intimates would have guessed she was acting for other than herself. Her social advantages were many and superior. Mr. Fleming, when he married her, was not only a man of immense wealth, but also of high position. He had taken sufficient interest in political matters to give him quite a prominent share in the affairs of the nation, and to secure him all the social advantages he cared to reap. His wife was just the woman to avail herself of this position, and to conquer where she stood. The brilliant triumphals of Mrs. Fleming were among the traditions of the Federal City, of the Metropolis, and of the watering-places. Her beauty was acknowledged to be equalled by nothing so nearly as by her accomplishments, the refined elegance of her manners, and the fascinations of her conversation. "*La Reine Americaine*" was a title which had been granted her in Parisian salons, and an introduction to her had been at home the very acme of ambition to the young social aspirant. Thus she had become a power in her own right, and was authorized to wield an undisputed sceptre wherever she listed. Thus, too, her advantages for her after object were many and superior.

When, upon Mr. Fleming's death, she had retired from society, she simply *retired*, did not *withdraw*. Though she had ceased to lead, she had not excluded herself from the leadership. For a time the war was over, and the army reduced to a peace establishment, but the battalions and squadrons still existed *en cadre*, and only needed a new levy to reassume their commanding front. Mrs. Fleming no longer took an active part in the offairs of *beau-monde*; she had retired to her quiet country home; but she was still recognised, for she still preserved her relations with all whom she thought worthy to be invited thither. Those who merited her esteem, either for brilliancy of talent and manners, superiority of thought, or other such elements of command, were still members of her select coterie, still drank in the charms of her beauty and esprit. These and their families she gathered around her, and introduced to Jasper, claiming for them with him the regard which was rightly due them, and for him with them the place she expected him eventually to fill—*her* place, so to speak—the leadership in *beau-monde*.

Hence, when in the splendor of her still unimpaired beauty and the quiet empressement of her refined manners, she re-entered society for the purpose of securing to Jasper that place which she deemed rightly his, these devoted followers flocked around her, proclaimed her, and swore fidelity to the heir. Once again she reigned by common consent. It was a return from Elba—the old Guard were ready to die by the eagle, and the Conscripts were filled with the same enthusiasm that inflamed the veterans. But, to carry out the figure, it was noticed that Fouché gave in but a very lukewarm adherence, and that Talleyrand fled the Court altogether, and renewed his plots. *C'est à dire*—she had rivals, enemies, because she had overthrown those who had wielded the sceptre during her retirement. She could not have been a woman of character, and be without enemies. Mortal enemies they were, too, and dangerous; the more so, because of Mrs. Fleming's proud security and supercilious disdain.

This brings us to another element in her character. Mrs. Fleming was the very woman most calculated to have enemies. Your earnest, proud, *prononcée* dames are never popular, in the broad sense of the word. They reign, but it is only because no one is capable of rivalling them; they are loved with intense devotion, but only by those who are worthy of having that love returned; they are honored by all who can appreciate the reactive benefit of that honor; and they are hated by all who have failed successfully to rival them; by all who have failed to win their approving smile; by all who have been dismissed from their favor. And the reader may be sure that Mrs. Fleming's haters were many. As Queen of Society, she had reigned at once by divine right of exalted beauty, [that right by which bare-bosomed Phryne asserted her innocence before the gray-bearded judges of Thespiae,] and by election for supremity of attainment; and she had in consequence never been called upon to exercise those little arts, by means of which less exalted personages are wont to elbow their way towards the front rank. She had never stooped to the minor means of popularity, nor could she have successfully exercised them, even had it been necessary for her to do so. One could not expect it of her; so large, so grand, was she, that to see her occupying herself with the cajoleries, the wire-pullings, and log-rollings, the flatteries and masked batteries of smile and courtesy, which inferior place-hunters resorted to, would have been somewhat like seeing the free, perfect, sweeping lines of Mother Eve's contour "cribbed, cabined, and confined" within the lacings of a modern belle's corsage. She swept on, those who won her smiles never forgetting them, those who failed to win them never forgiving her. In her earnest straightforwardness she was too severe; she resorted to no medium process; either she adopted with fervor, or she rejected with disdain, following ever her instincts, and rarely deceived by them. To be scorned by her was, to most persons, to be ineradicably branded with a shame-stamp, which, however invisible to the outsider, ever throbbed and burned upon the wearer with a fierce intensity that forbade oblivion. And, on Mrs. Fleming's return to society, there were many of this class, *bagne*-marked on the sensitive epidermis of their own consciousness, who moved near her, and hated her with a hate proportioned to their sense of the slight. Her disdain was passive, and herself careless of them; their malignity was active, and themselves energetic for her humiliation. And thus, while she reigned undisputed, they plotted undisturbed.

Prominent among these enemies we shall characterize two persons who were most admirably qualified for efficient hatred; one, a soi-disante rival for the social sovereignty; the other, a degraded favorite.

Mrs. Morninglory was a leader in society, who possessed advantages almost equal to those of Mrs. Fleming, and had also the further good fortune of having "come out" nearly ten years later. She was—Mrs. Browning's Lady Waldemar:

> "How they told,
> Those alabaster shoulders and bare breasts,
> On which the pearls, drowned out of sight in milk,
> Were lost, excepting for the ruby clasp!
> They split the amaranth velvet boddice down
> To the waist, or nearly, with the audacious press
> Of full breathed beauty. If the heart within
> Were half so white! but, if it were, perhaps
> The breast were closer covered, and the sight
> Less aspectable, by half, too"*

Have you not seen such? There have been many generals who have marched to conquest by hazarding all their resources upon a move, and thus defeating a more careful antagonist, who dares not send his forces to the front, though his reserves twice outnumber those of his conqueror. Mrs. Morninglory acted upon a similar principle. She was beautiful, and she took care to wear her beauty in public. She was brilliant, and she exercised her brilliancy to its full compass. Her aim was conquest, and she burned her ships behind her, the better to achieve it. What use is there in the possession of personal charms, except one can fascinate by means of them? Dress is not the jewel-case, but the diamond's setting. It is not meant to conceal, but to develop, to heighten, to perfect. What avails a charm, if it is not made accessory to power, and what better use of power than to make it react for the exalting of these charms? Thus Mrs. Morninglory reasoned, and thus she acted. Treading with utmost care and nicest tact upon the boundary line that divides the immodest from the modest, striking in conversational brilliancy, fascinating by the exercise of her full-blown and admirably-paraded beauty, and by that abandon and freedom of manner which is so magnet-like when properly brought to bear, she triumphantly led in society, and wore the queenly tiara. But her power was a power of conquest, and to be sustained with difficulty; not a power admitted, and naturally attendant upon presence. She was an artificial queen, and, if she did not keep a constant guard over her actions, was liable to fatal mistakes. Like Eugenie, she had not been used to her rank, had not been *born in it*, and would occasionally betray her sense of parvenuity, as the Empress did her Montijo days, by stooping to pick up the necklace she might have dropped. And hence, when Mrs. Fleming re-entered society, every one knew the true Demetrius from the usurper, and Mrs. Morninglory reigned no more. But reign she must; for, not supreme, her place was nothing worth. Overthrow the parvenu usurper, and his memory perishes.

Your Richard Cromwell was King, as Protector, but once off the throne, too puny to be punished. And Mrs. Morninglory was fully aware of this. So long as Mrs. Fleming held her rank, there was no place for *her*. And, moreover, Mrs. Fleming had long since seen the hollowness of her pretensions; and even in the full blush of her triumphs, when Jasper's mother was only Jasper's mother, and no rival, had rejected her scornfully, and with unqualified determinateness. Could she, a worldly woman, help hating one who treated her thus? Could she help obeying the dictates of that hate, and the promptings of her own aspirations, to attempt the undermining and overthrow of her scorner and her enemy? The reader knows, perhaps has experienced, woman's hate. Doth the simoom's breath come more scorchingly, or with more withering power?

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

* Aurora Leigh.

SEWARD'S SPEECH IN THE SOUTH.—The Louisville *Journal*, undoubtedly the ablest paper in Kentucky, for years the stanch defender of Henry Clay, declares Mr. Seward's Rochester speech to be one of the ablest and most graceful ever delivered on the American stump." It says:

"The doctrine of the incompatibility of the systems of Slavery and Free Labor is obviously just at present a favorite crotchet with the Republicans. It is a crotchet, but nothing more. Nevertheless, it is a horrid bugbear to not a few Southern Democrats. Mr. Seward, in the course of his speech at Rochester, expressed it as follows:

"'It was the antagonistic political tendencies of the two systems which the first Napoleon was contemplating when he predicted that Europe would ultimately be either all Cossack or all Republican. Never did human sagacity utter a more pregnant truth. The two systems are at once perceived to be incongruous. But they are more than incongruous, they are incompatible. They never have permanently existed together in one country, and they never can. It would be easy to demonstrate this impossibility, from the irreconcilable contrast between their great principles and characteristics. But the experience of mankind has conclusively established it.'

"This is the language which Southern Democrats, who gape and stare at Mr. Seward as the Prince of all the Goblins, have understood, or pretended to understand, as a declaration on behalf of the Republicans of a settled resolution to exterminate Slavery in the States. It is an annunciation which the organs of Southern Democratic opinion are holding up and flourishing as the avowal of a distinct design on the part of the Republicans to wage fierce and unrelenting and bloody war upon Slavery wherever it exists. Surely the men who perpetrate or circulate this pitiful misconstruction must know better. The whole import of Mr. Seward's proposition, as expressed above, is clear. It is unmistakable. But, if it isn't, unquestionably the following precautionary paragraph renders it so:

"'It remains to say on this point only one word, to guard against misapprehension. If these States are to again become universally slave-holding, I do not pretend to say with what violations of the Constitution that end shall be accomplished. On the other hand, while I do confidently believe and hope that my country will yet become a land of universal Freedom, I do not expect that it will be made so otherwise than through the action of the several States co-operating with the Federal Government, and all acting in strict conformity with their respective Constitutions.'

"Thus the terrible hobgoblin vanishes before the first beam of candor. The proposition is perfectly innocent. It is, in fact, but the reproduction, in somewhat sharper form, of a pet opinion of Mr. Clay's. Nothing could be further from the harrowing import with which distempered or designing fancies have invested it. The notion belongs wholly to the realm of ideas. It does not contemplate a plan of action, but merely a scheme of natural development. It is a speculation, not a project—the outline of a conviction, not of a campaign. It is a mere forecast of events. It is Mr. Seward's theory of our national progression. It is his judgment as to what will happen, in the ordinary course of things."

SOCIAL LIFE AT WASHINGTON.—There will be a good many accustomed faces missing this winter. The Russian Minister, Mr. Stoeckl, and his wife, have gone to St. Petersburgh, with the hope of getting his pay increased to the grade of the English mission—that is, $35,000 a year, instead of $15,000. They did not aspire to entertain beyond the usual formalities. Baron Evolt, the Prussian Minister, will be absent until spring or summer; but he will not be so much missed, as far as contribution to social enjoyments is concerned. The hospitable residence of Senor Albuquerque, the Minister from Brazil, will be closed this winter, owing to his absence in Europe. But the British Embassy will be open as usual, though it is said Lady Napier will return to England in the spring, to superintend the education of her children. The French Minister is still perched on the heights of Georgetown, safely secluded from any pressure of society, and necessarily relieved from its expensive exactions. Gen. Robles, the Mexican Minister, is still lingering near Vera Cruz, waiting for admission into his own country. Senor Tasara, the Minister from Spain, lives quietly, and learns English. The rest of the corps are quartered in unpretending lodgings, and do their most active service during the "season," when the proverbial hospitality of this metropolis detaches them from the study of Puffendorff, Grotius, Vattel, and other learned Thebans.

THE WAR IN OREGON.—The Oregon *Weekly Times* of a recent date says:

"We heard on every hand rumors that the northern war is closed for the present at any rate; that some at least of the hostile Indians have come in and sued for peace; that several of the leading spirits have been hung and otherwise summarily disposed of; and that hostages have been taken for the future good behaviour of the Indians. These rumors contain the further information that the surrender was wholly unconditional, and that Kamiakin has fled beyond the mountains. We give them for what they are worth. To us, at least, it seems as if the war had vanished in mist. We can learn nothing satisfactory as to its termination; we are at a loss to know what to say of the affair, and we are at a still greater loss to determine whether the Indians have been whipped at all or not. We are now gravely assured that the report of Col. Steptoe, estimating the hostile Indians engaged in the attack upon his command at fifteen hundred, is a moustrous exaggeration, and that in fact but about three hundred Indians, all told, were engaged in that conflict. The official reports throughout the campaign show an Indian loss of far less than fifty men; and, if these reports are to be discounted for exaggeration at the rate three hundred, in lieu of fifteen hundred, then