

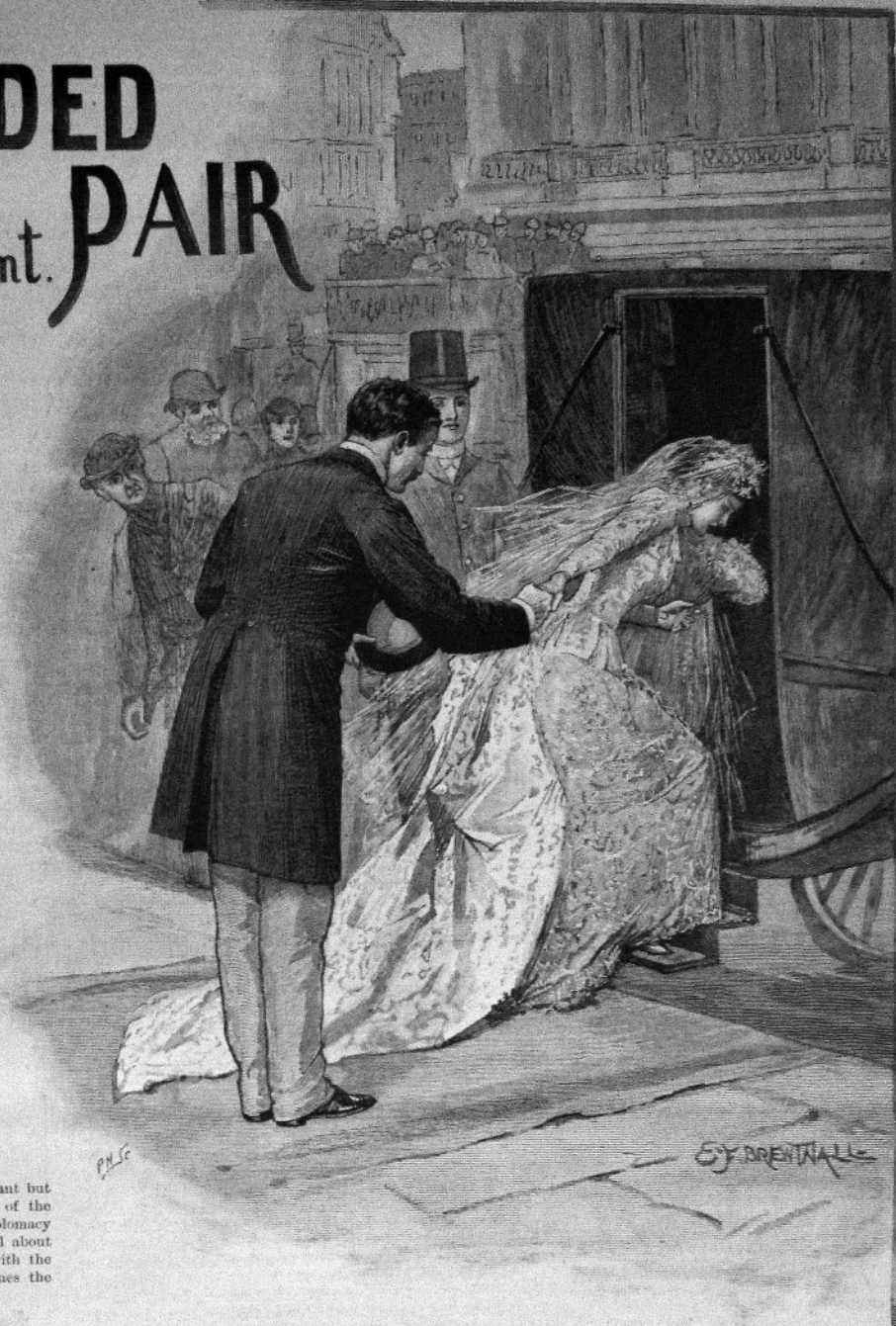
A DIVIDED PAIR

by Mrs. Oliphant.

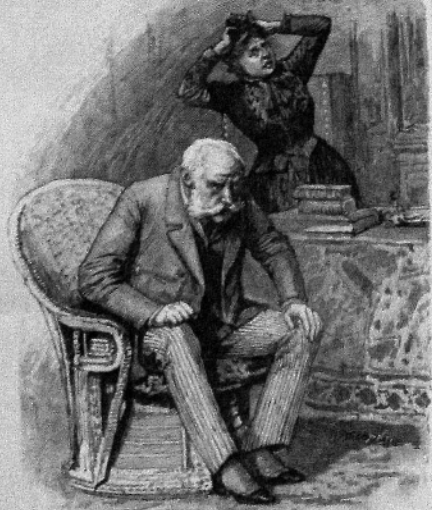
CHAPTER I.

TO leave his wife at the church door! The newspapers would describe it as a romance in real life, an incident for a novel, the subject of a play, everything that a man would least like his marriage to be; the most vulgar romance in the world, a sort of thing which would almost justify a man in taking up another romantic rôle—the rôle of the bridegroom-villain, who does not appear at all, even at the church door, but insults the pale bride by exposing her to all the comments and the pity of her friends. Nothing but romance, anyhow, confound it! Maurice Mostyn was not a man who could afford to be romantic. It is the last thing that commends itself to a man who is in Society, yet is by no means sovereign in Society. There are people who can carry that sort of thing off. It does not much matter, for instance, what a young duke does, or how much he gets himself talked about. Probably he never knows of it up in the sublime regions where he lives: probably he rather likes it, as a homage to his position, and a proof how great the general interest is in dukes. Nor does it at all matter to a millionaire struggling into standing ground, whose romantic story will call attention and rouse people to a consciousness of his name. But romance is fatal to a young man with just a young man's position and no more, who is asked out to the best houses but only as one among a crowd, yet whom everybody knows, in that curious completeness of knowledge which is proper to Society—everything about him—and who is called familiarly by his christian name by some thousands of people. A romantic story about such a man runs far and wide. It flies through the clubs, it penetrates to the very heights of the service to which he belongs—civil or military: it probably goes even to Windsor, and is remembered there for ever. What a fool a fellow must be to get himself talked of like that! people say. And yet what could the unfortunate man do?

He was a man attached to the Foreign Office, but not in the sprightly way of attachéship or even clerkship. He was one of the far more important but less dazzling persons who are sent off to the ends of the world on private missions, who burrow into the diplomacy of Russia, or of the Oriental Powers, who know all about things that nobody else knows, and are familiar with the secret intrigues of potentates with whose very names the



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rest of the world is unacquainted. He could talk his way to the Great Wall of China, people said, and, perhaps, further than that. He could turn himself into a Persian, or a Circassian, or a Bedouin, and the race to which he thus joined himself at a moment's notice would never find the imposture out. It was imposture, it is true, but, as it was in the service of his country, this never troubled Mostyn's conscience. He was the kind of man of whom such stories are easy to believe—a man who, though he was an unmistakable English gentleman, was scorched and dried into a sort of desert colour, the colour of the endless sands and yellow rocks, no colour at all, you might say, and yet a high tone when compared with the pale faces of the drawing-rooms. He was a man whom the sun had dried and scorched, and whose eyes had the watchful, ever-attentive look of one who has often carried his life in his hand, and whose keen outlook, while scoring even the faintest intimation of danger, was his chief defence. That he should have fallen in love with little Sybil Somerville in her first season was wonderful enough; yet not so wonderful—for to a man out of the desert what could be so attractive as that little dainty creature, all bloom and freshness like a flower!—as that she should have fallen in love with him, rather than with one of the curled darlings so much more like herself who surrounded her, and to whom old Somerville's daughter and only child was very well worth looking after, however highly placed they might be. When it was found that Sybil would have no one but that sand-coloured Foreign Office man, whom many people called "the Arab," there was much gnashing of teeth and tearing of hair in Grosvenor Place. It was, to tell the truth, Sybil herself who was most energetic about it: for the thought of her money overwhelmed Mostyn. He did not mind a little money with the woman he

was going to marry. It would be so much better for herself on the frequent occasions when he would have to leave her, in pursuance of his arduous and not too well remunerated profession. But he was overawed by the great fortune that was at little Sybil's back, and declared openly that he never would have allowed himself to think of her had he known in time. But she had set her heart upon him as something entirely out of the common, and though Lady Somerville scattered her locks to the wind (it was so easy to buy a more becoming front at Truefitt's, any day), and old Sir Matthew sat for days together and growled, and would speak to no one, yet the girl had her way. It was known that Mostyn was under orders to proceed to the end of the world in a very short time, which at the last was what sweetened the bitter pill to her father and mother. The child would have her gorgeous wedding, would receive her innumerable presents, and go off on her honeymoon, and enjoy herself or not as might be. And then she would come back to her parents, and the husband would be swept off into the unseen, and possibly never come back again to trouble anybody. That is always on the cards when a man is sent into the mysterious East. And, accordingly, the wedding-day was fixed at last. She knew she would have to part with him in a shorter or longer time, as the Foreign Office should ordain. And he knew that he would have to go and leave her, but not—good heavens!—not on the wedding-day!

The poor fellow had for the moment a sort of access of madness when he got the dispatch—the day before the wedding! He would not go. He would throw up everything—service of the country, orders of the F.O., hopes of advancement—everything! He would not be ordered off like a slave, taken out of his place like a horse, discharged like a cannon, without any will

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of his— But soon this fever fit went off, leaving him cold. Without the F.O. he was nothing—a younger son, without either money or place in the world; whereas Mostyn of the Foreign Office was a man who was known, a celebrity in his way, acknowledged to be one of the best men in the service. It was his chief defence against the appalling wealth of these Somerville people. If he were to throw it up he would be at their mercy. And it was his profession, which a man cannot give up. Slowly he reconciled himself to the dreadful necessity, sent out a servant as keen and almost as experienced as himself to secure at a few hours' notice, as can always be done in London, an outfit very different from the bridegroom's trappings which that functionary had been packing so neatly. And then he set out for Grosvenor Place, to break the terrible news—turning over and over in his mind one of the plans of desperation which had seized hold upon him. Surely there would be human feeling enough in their hearts to let her go with him as far as Vienna—as far as Constantinople, where he might have to wait a few days—surely, surely they would do something to prevent the odious publicity and bathos and ridicule of that parting at the church door! I don't say that it was the ridicule only he felt. He felt bitterly the parting, the horrible disappointment, the festival of life turned into a mockery and misery; but the last element of all was the insufferable laughter which he knew would mingle with everybody's pity. Surely they would feel, even for Sybil's sake if not for his, that this must not be!

He went in with such a face of misery that he scarcely needed to tell his tale and show his telegram.

"Start to-morrow—to-morrow!" both the ladies cried, Sybil in a flutter of changing colour from white to red, her mother purple with indignation. The girl clasped her arms round his, and leaned upon him, laying her head against his arm, half-fainting. Lady Somerville raved, and all but swore. "Leave to-morrow—leave Sybil—leave my daughter at the church door!" Her voice grew choked at last in the vehemence of her passion. She spoke as if he did it on purpose, by way of a studied insult to her.

"I have come to throw myself on your mercy," he said. "Let her go with me, Lady Somerville! Let me take her as far as Constantinople! I know it's a great thing to ask, but I may have to wait there for instructions—one never can tell. They may be all ready, or I may have to await them. Everything will be comfortable. I have to spend a day and a night in Vienna, and she wouldn't mind the journey! You won't mind the journey, would you, Sybil, with me? It is our only chance," he cried, "to avoid this horrible tragedy of parting at the church door!"

"Is that all you are thinking of?" cried the unreasonable mother, who had just herself been insisting upon it with all the heat of fury.

"Would you like me to tell you all I am thinking of?" said Mostyn, whose passion of disappointment and mortification and wounded love and baffled hope was stronger even than hers. "Let me have this little alleviation, and I will be grateful to you all my life."

"Do you mean to take my daughter to—Timbuctoo, or wherever you are going, Mr. Mostyn, to perish among savages? Is that what you dare to propose to me? Perhaps that was what you meant all the time—to carry my Sybil off into the desert, where I should never hear of her again."

"Oh! Mamma," cried Sybil in remonstrance, still holding fast by her bridegroom's arm.

"I have told you what I mean," said Mostyn, keeping his temper with an effort—"I to take her with me as far as Constantinople. It is not such an alarming journey—there

are trains *de luxe* and all that. I have to stop at Vienna for information, then at Constantinople, perhaps to wait there till my instructions are complete. It is the best time for travelling now, in the spring, it will not be too hot. There is nothing to be afraid of in the journey. Sybil, you would come, wouldn't you? I could take you up the Bosphorus—it is the most lovely place in the world."

"And après, Mr. Mostyn?" said the mother.

They looked at each other for a moment, two enemies facing each other before the battle began.

"Après? if you did not take her with you into the desert—you mean to leave Sybil, my child, to return from that outlandish place alone."

It was on Mostyn's lips to ask what difference it made to the facts that it was *her* child upon whom this fate had fallen: but he restrained himself. "There is nothing impossible in it," he said, "with her good maid, and every arrangement made for her comfort. Many ladies do it. And I could send Rumbold with her, who knows every step of the way."

"Rumbold! your servant! to bring back my daughter, who has never done anything for herself, never needed to take a railway ticket or order a carriage, or?"

"I assure you, Lady Somerville, there is nobody better qualified to take the charge of all that than Rumbold!"

"Perhaps to act as her companion too," cried the mother, furious. And then, carried beyond herself by her passion, she appealed to heaven and earth whether she had not always been sure that there would be some accident of this kind—always known, when Sir Matthew gave his consent in spite of all she could say, that it would turn out badly, and her poor child be forsaken. Poor little Sybil's cries of "Mamma, mamma!" which was all she could oppose to this storm, were of little effect; and the silence of Mostyn, who let it all pour forth without any reply, aggravated the rage which of all things in the world could bear silent opposition least. And Sir Matthew, startled by the sound, came in; and he took upon himself an air of virtuous indignation which was still more hard to bear than his wife's rage, treating the whole matter as a wilful device on the part of Mostyn to embarrass the family and put them to shame.

"What object could you have in forcing us to all these preparations, to all the expense and fuss, in order to turn upon us at the last moment?" cried the old gentleman.

"If I had any object," cried Mostyn in reply, "it could only be to make myself very unhappy and very ridiculous, which was not very likely to be my aim."

Sir Matthew stared for a moment, and then asked with scorn what his unhappiness mattered?

"Your unhappiness! Look at that child, and look at her mother; and all our habits interfered with, and our engagements disturbed, and the house turned upside down. I'll tell you what, Sir," cried the old gentleman, "since you think so little of interfering with our arrangements, I'll cut the knot for you. There shall be no wedding at all! It's better to break it off at the last moment than to have a wife that's no wife thrown back on our hands, and all the talk that will get up. My lady," he cried out, "go to your desk this moment, and write to all those people that there will be no wedding, and the marriage is broken off!"

Angry as Lady Somerville was, however, she did not go so far as this. A marriage broken off the day before the wedding is a very serious thing. To describe how the day went on, in a succession of furious and aggrieved discussions, would be very unnecessary, even if there were room for it—which there is not. Sybil alone gave her bridegroom a strong but silent support. She said little—poor little thing!—except now and then a cry of "Papa! papa!" or "Mamma! mamma!" when things were at their hottest. She stood holding Mostyn's arm with both her own—holding him fast, saying nothing even to him. She was so young, so shy, so little accustomed to hold her own, which had been given to her without contention all her life. It astonished her more than words can say to find herself the subject of such red-hot controversies. But I need not say that every moment spent in discussion made it more and more impossible that the wedding, all arranged for to-morrow, the bishop who was to perform it, the Princess who was to be present, the fashionable mob which had sent presents and arranged all its engagements so as to be there, rustling in silk and satin, or with white waistcoats and garlands, could be put off, or, still worse, broken off. The presents themselves would have been an enormous difficulty.

"What should we do with them?" said Lady Somerville to her husband. "That lovely thing the Princess gave her; and all the lists made up for the newspapers, with everybody's names—printed by this time, and can't be recalled! Besides, the talk it would make! And there is really nothing against him; and we knew that this appointment was hanging over his head. And if he were to be driven in despair, as he partly threatened, to give up the service!"

"What does it matter to me if he gives up the service? Do you think I will give my daughter to a man who is nothing and has nothing, a mere burden on our hands?"

"I knew you would think that," said Lady Somerville, bitterly. "His Foreign Office connection is really the only thing—and one never knows what it may come to. I would not hear of giving it up."

There is nothing so effectual in restoring an angry woman to her reason as for her husband to lose his. I do not know if

it tells vice versa; but, when Sir Matthew began to vapour about "my daughter," Lady Somerville saw that it was absurd—as if the fact that Sybil was *his* daughter could have anything to do with the sending away of her bridegroom. But neither of them was accessible to reason upon the one point for which Mostyn pleaded till the last moment. That Sybil, a bride of eighteen, should make her way back from Constantinople alone—even if it had been possible to allow her to be spirited away there, such a tremendous journey—was a thing that neither father nor mother would hear of. In charge of Rumbold and her maid! The thing was out of the question, however true it might be that Rumbold knew every step of the way and that Mostyn's wife might travel like a princess, glorified by her husband's name. There was nothing for it after all, but that ridiculous parting by the church door.

CHAPTER II.

Mostyn was a little more than a year away. He had accomplished a most difficult mission, and covered himself with glory. I decline to mention what that mission was: the secrets of the Foreign Office are safe in my hands. What savage potentates he mastered—what subtle, half-completed treaties with other Powers he discovered and made waste-paper of, are things with which the present writer and reader have nothing to do. On his way home, at last, more scorched, more dried up by desert winds and burned by tropical suns than ever, he fell ill at Vienna, and lay there for a long time unable to convey any news of himself to the outer world. It is true, of course, that his illness was known at the Embassy, and the news conveyed to the Foreign Office: from whence it crept into the newspapers; but it was not sent to Sir Matthew Somerville; and, as the family was now in the country, it happened that a long time elapsed, and no news of her husband reached Sybil. There had been but few letters all the time, as may be readily supposed; but to know that he must now be within the circle of civilisation, and to hear nothing, was hard. When he was able to write, his letter was not kept from her—the father and mother, whatever their schemes might be, did not descend to the meanness of intercepting letters, though they did conceal from her the news of his illness, which they themselves were aware of through the medium aforesaid of the papers. It rankled in Sybil's mind very much that he should have been about three weeks in Vienna, as it turned out, without writing to her—for, naturally, when he did write he made as light of his illness as possible; and it gave poor Mostyn in his convalescence a heavy heart to think that they must have known he was ill, and that it never came



They followed him to the door in the impudence of their triumph, driving him forth. He turned on the threshold to launch his last defiance.



The knot was cut by Sybil, who came stealing in with hesitating steps.

into his wife's mind so much as to think of coming to nurse her husband. Thus there was a cloud upon both when the time of his return came. She did not even come to London to meet him, which surely, surely she might have done; but awaited his arrival in the country, in the north, a day's journey from town, and where he could not go till he had delivered his report to the Foreign Office, and communicated all the information that was wanted. As soon as this was done, Mostyn left London by the first train, full of an eagerness modified by alarm and anxiety. Not even a letter from Sybil in town, only one from Sir Matthew to say that he would be expected by the train he had mentioned. Why did not Sybil write? His wife, hearing his name, yet waiting coldly in the depths of the country, not even sending him a word of welcome! There was not even a carriage to meet him at the station, which, however, was one of those mistakes which occasionally happen just in the nick of time, to aggravate everything without intention on the part of anyone principally concerned. This gave Mostyn's hopes almost the last blow. He asked

himself what they could mean, what Sybil could mean, as he drove along the country road in the gig which was all he could find at the little rural station. He had been almost certain that, at least, she would come to meet him there.

When he got to the gate, fear, and the flutter of an almost desperate hope, got the better of him. He put off the crisis a little by dismissing his gig there. Kimbold was coming with his baggage by a later train, that baggage which was made weighty by so many rare and curious things which he had picked up for his wife. Would she have them, now that they were here? He dismissed the gig, and walked up the avenue, his heart sick with eagerness and anxiety and pain. To see Sybil with an averted face was, he felt, almost more than he could bear.

And here an incident occurred which does not tell for very much in the story of Mostyn's trouble, but which at first sight seemed to do so, and was of the nature of an incident in a novel. There were some wonderful old holly hedges at Sir Matthew Somerville's place, of which the family was very

prudent, and at the upper end of the avenue one of these hedges separated from it the old-fashioned flower-garden. It was so thick and so high that nothing was visible on the other side, but it did not impede the passage of sound; and poor Mostyn started as if he had been shot, and came to a sudden pause, as he heard on the other side Sybil's voice. His wife's voice—which he had last heard pronouncing the vows which were to have made them one—the soft little tones, so young, almost childish, in contrast with all the rude voices of alien life amid which he had been since—affected him more than any roar of warfare could have done. To think that those little musical tones might reject him, defy him, was impossible—it was impossible! They were made for nothing but sweetness, for gentle words and assent. But she was talking to someone: another voice mingled with hers, and it was the voice of a man. Some fellow was walking with her in the garden. If Mostyn had been armed, as he had been for most of the past twelvemonth, with pistols at his belt, I doubt whether, fresh as he was from savage life, that fellow would have been safe.

"So you are expecting your wanderer—immediately, I suppose?" said the fellow, who seemed to be walking slowly, very slowly, by Sybil's side.

"In about an hour," she said, with a tremble in her voice. "The carriage was to go for him at five."

This gave Mostyn a scarcely perceptible gleam of comfort, as showing that there had been a mistake.

"Are you very nervous, Sybil?"

Sybil! He called her by her Christian name!

"Oh, nervous!" she cried. "Is that the word? I am more, far more than nervous—I am torn in two!"

"The parents are always as determined as ever? But it will be a dreadful thing for you to be a party to a lawsuit—and of such a kind!"

"They say it will all be private, and no scandal. Oh, if that were all! But to break my vow—to be unfaithful—to abandon him when perhaps he is weak—when he has just come home—when perhaps he expects something so different! Oh, why didn't he write to me from Vienna!—then I could have believed that he cared for me still!"

"But he was ill at Vienna!"

"A man does not get ill in a moment—he can write a word or line to his wife first. He can make somebody telegraph—to say 'come.'"

"How could he?" said the fellow, who, after all, did not seem an enemy. "They would not have let you go. How could you have gone?"

"With Elizabeth. I could go anywhere with Elizabeth. She says she is sure—quite sure—we could have managed perfectly well. But what is the use of speaking of that, when he did not want me—never asked me, never wrote or sent a word at all!"

"I don't think it can have been his fault."

"Mamma thinks it means simply that he cares for me no more, and that it will be no shock to him, that it will be a relief to be free—to go off wherever he likes. But Elizabeth—there is nobody, nobody in all the house that ever says a word for him but Elizabeth. And what am I to do? How am I to see him, and hear them tell him?"

"But it is you, after all, who must decide."

"How can I go against them?" Sybil cried. "And why didn't he write to me from Vienna? Then I might have had something to say."

The listener scarcely made out these last words, which were said as the pair turned down another of the garden walks. He stood for a moment almost paralysed, yet ready to shout out his explanation—to tell it to the whole silent world around him. How could he have written from Vienna, when he had almost died? And what—what were they plotting against him? He stood still for a moment in his consternation, and then hurried on. The avenue took a long round before it reached the house, and seemed to mock him with its turns and twistings. And when he got to the door at last, he was met by a strange servant, who did not know him, and demanded his name. Mostyn pushed past in impatience into the open hall.

"I want Mrs. Mostyn," he said. "Where is Mrs. Mostyn? Be so good as to let her know at once that her husband is here."

"Mrs. Mostyn, Sir," the servant faltered, looking with an alarmed eye at this resolute and imperious man. "Her Ladyship is in the drawing-room." He had got his orders, but he was evidently somewhat afraid of carrying them out.

"Tell my wife I am here."

"If you please, Sir, her Ladyship and Sir Matthew."

A young man here came forward from the end of the hall.

"My cousin's just gone upstairs," he said. "I'll see she's sent for at once. They didn't expect you so soon. I've no right to speak, I know," he added. "But, if you're Mostyn, I advise you to go in and have it out with them at once."

The stare with which this wanderer of the wilds regarded the golden youth who had been all this time at Sybil's ear was fierce for a moment, but it melted before the good feeling in the young man's face. He turned to follow the footman with an impatience he did not attempt to conceal.

"I say," said the young man in his ear, in a whisper, "however badly things may look, don't forget her heart's with you, all the same."

It was the only word of encouragement he had heard since his return. He put out his hand and gave the other a grip which I think that young man never forgot all his life. And then he marched in to meet the foe.

They were seated in grim expectancy on either side of the fire—it was October, and already cold in the north country—Sir Matthew in a great chair, a sort of throne of judgment, her Ladyship opposite, much more upright, but more comfortable. She barely rose to receive her son-in-law, the old gentleman stood in front of his chair. Not a step was made to meet him, not a word of welcome said. "We expected you to arrive," said Sir Matthew, "by the five train—the carriage was to go. Don't you think I had better ring, my dear, and command it, now Mr. Mostyn's here?"

"I hope you are not much fatigued by your journey," Lady Somerville said.

"I am as you see me," said Mostyn, "and you will understand that I am most anxious to see my wife."

"Three weeks in Vienna and two days in London don't look like such very great anxiety, Mr. Mostyn."

"Is it possible you don't know? I nearly died in Vienna, and in London I had my report to make to my chiefs. It would have been no great stretch of kindness to have brought Sybil to meet me there."

"It is a stretch I would never make—to a man who married my daughter only to abandon her!"



"Maurice! it is me!"

"Hush, Sir Matthew, for goodness' sake!" said his wife. "Mr. Mostyn, there is a great deal to be said between us, before we come to that."

"I don't know what is to be said. I want Sybil," he said. "I want my wife."

"It does not look as if you wanted her very much, when you have left her so long, and for weeks and months, without a word."

He gave her one of those fierce looks which his desert habits had taught him, and then, without a word, went to the bell and rang it violently.

"How dare you, Sir," cried Sir Matthew, "ring the bell in my house?"

The answer came with such suspicious haste that the



This honeymoon pair were halfway to town before it was known in Somerville Hall that Sybil was not crying in her room.

servant must have been very close at hand: and it was the butler this time, important but obsequious, and more interested and excited than any butler has a right to be.

"Tell Mrs. Mostyn that her husband is here and waiting for her," said Mostyn in imperious tones.

"Tell my daughter nothing of the kind," said Sir Matthew in shrill rage. "Nobody shall give orders to my servants but myself!"

The knot was cut by Sybil, who came stealing in with hesitating steps, flushed and frightened. She gave a cry—was it welcome, was it fear?—at the sight of him, and then looked at her mother with anxious eyes. Mostyn, as may be supposed,

did not leave her much time for hesitation. He made but one stride to her, and seized his wife in his arms. If it was something like taking possession by capture, that was not his fault; and surely the captive was not unwilling? It is a little hard upon father and mother to see their only child engulfed in a man's arms, swallowed up by him, even though he is her husband. And for that moment I feel a little sympathy with the elder pair.

"Sybil!" her mother cried, with a voice that rang through everything—and "Let go my daughter, Sir!" shouted Sir Matthew, as he had never shouted before in his life.

But neither of the others made any reply.

How many minutes passed before Lady Somerville managed to extricate her daughter from that embrace, and Sir Matthew, within a very short distance of a fit of apoplexy, secured the attention of his son-in-law, it would be difficult to say. Such minutes seem long in the passing. Lady Somerville at last drew Sybil away. "You will have the decency to allow that she is best out of the room while we speak to you."

"There is neither decency nor indecency involved that I know of," Mostyn said; but he neither did nor could resist. He saw the young cousin who was friendly, outside the door, and he heard Lady Somerville ask, "Where is Elizabeth? Let Elizabeth come instantly! My daughter wants Elizabeth," before the closing of the door shut her out from his eyes. He did not in the least know who Elizabeth was, but he had the sensation of another friend outside, and his heart rose.

He had need, indeed, of something to encourage him, for the intimation which Sybil's father and mother made to him was no less than that they had already begun a suit for nullity of marriage in the Scotch courts. Their house was a few miles over the border, so that this was open to them. I need not describe the behaviour of Mostyn at such a tremendous moment. He was as violent, as furious in his indignation, as defiant as a man could be; but there is no space here to describe the struggle which raged for an hour or two within that inappropriate battlefield. In the end, of course, he was vanquished for the moment; and his demand to see Sybil, if but for a moment—if only to say good-bye—which sank into a prayer before he turned away, met nothing but the sternest negative.

"You should not have seen her at all, had we had our will," Lady Somerville said.

The unfortunate husband was helpless in the house that was not his. They followed him to the door in the impudence of their triumph, driving him forth. He turned on the threshold to launch his last defiance.

"You speak of your daughter," he cried, "as if that was her only distinction; and yet you will subject your daughter to all that exposure, to the publicity, to the indignity!"

"There will be neither. The case will be heard with closed doors."

"Not if it is fought step by step," cried Mostyn, "as it shall be to my last shilling and my last breath—and no mercy to the losers, which you will be? And recollect this!" he cried, not without some satisfaction in the sight of an audience of furtive heads behind, "that I will not shrink either from law or force, or fraud, if necessary, to get back my wife." Thus saying, he turned from the hostile door, and, leaving a violent, yet in their hearts somewhat frightened, foe behind, rushed out into the night.

It was by this time dark, with that depth of darkness which only exists among woods. He plunged along, scarcely seeing where he went, not caring—indifferent to the miles of distance between him and the railway to which he must make his way, he did not know how, but in such a turmoil of feeling, such rage, such sense of injustice, and sickness of hope deferred, such longing for his little love whom he had seen but for a moment, and held in his arms only to have her torn from him! He did not blame her at all, or even say to himself that she ought to have stood by him, being his wife. He acquitted her entirely. And by this time there gleamed across his mind a ray of comfort in a name—not her name, not Sybil, but Elizabeth. Elizabeth! Who was Elizabeth? He had not an idea, but he said the name over to himself like a spell. When he was halfway down the avenue he met a noisy country hackney coach coming up laden with luggage, in which was Rumbold: and stopped it and got in, grateful for the relief. What he said to his astonished servant I do not know, but the heavily laden vehicle turned slowly, with some effort, on the not very wide road. Mostyn had sunk into a corner, indifferent to everything, chewing the cud of his very bitter fancies, while this operation was performed. And he was very impatient when Rumbold from outside let down the window with some statement to make. "What is it?" he said, almost angrily.

"It is two—persons, Sir, who have stopped the cab," Rumbold said.

"Two persons? What do you mean? Hide them down! Drive over them!" cried the fierce envoy from the East.

But the next moment he was out of the cab, with a suppressed outcry that rang all through the woods. "Oh! hush, hush!" said two voices together. And then one said, breathless, "Maurice! it is me! Elizabeth said!"

But what Elizabeth said was never known: for in another minute Mr. and Mrs. Mostyn were tearing (metaphorically—cab horse dragging five people and a quantity of luggage does not tear along, though it made noise enough) tearing, I repeat, through the shocked yet delighted air which made echoes of every jingle of the harness and joggle of the badly fitting windows, with Mr. and Mrs. Mostyn within, and Rumbold trying hard to make nothing of himself in order to leave a place beside the driver for the maid. For Elizabeth was Mrs. Mostyn's maid.

And this honeymoon pair were halfway to town before it was known in Somerville Hall that Sybil was not crying in her room, with the maid by her side administering sol volatile to soothe her. I think, for my own part, that the young cousin, whose fingers were still bloodless with Mostyn's grip, had a strong idea what Elizabeth had said, and where Sybil was.