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## THE BLACK ROBE.

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

—AUTHOR OF—

"THE WOMAN IN WHITE," "THE MOON STONE," "AFTER DARK," "NO NAME," "MAN AND WIFE," "THE LAW AND THE LADY," "THE NEW MAGDALEN," ETC., ETC.

WINTERFIELD'S DIARY CONTINUED.

Mrs. Eyrecourt paused, evidently expecting me to offer an opinion of some sort. For the moment I was really unable to speak. Stella's mother never had a very high opinion of my abilities. She now appeared to consider me the stupidest person in the circle of her acquaintance.

"Are you a little deaf, Winterfield?" she asked.

"Not that I know of."

"Do you understand me?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then why can't you say something? I want a man's opinion of our prospects. Good gracious, how you fidget! Put yourself in Romayne's place and tell me this. If you had left Stella—"

"I should never have left her, Mrs. Eyrecourt."

"Be quiet. You don't know what you would have done. I insist on your supposing yourself to be a weak, superstitious, conceited, fanatical fool. You understand? Now, tell me, then—could you keep away from your wife when you were called back to her in the name of your first-born child? Could you resist that?"

"Most assuredly not!"

I contrived to reply with an appearance of tranquillity. It was not very easy to speak with composure. Envious, selfish, contemptible—no language is too strong to describe the turn my thoughts now took. I never hated any human being as I hated Romayne at that moment. "Hang him, he will come back!" There was my inmost feeling expressed in words.

In the meantime Mrs. Eyrecourt was satisfied. She dashed at the next subject as fluent and as confident as ever.

"Now, Winterfield, it is surely plain to your mind that you must not see Stella again, except when I am present to tie the tongue of scandal. My daughter's conduct must not allow her husband—if you only knew how I detest that man!—must not, I say, allow her husband the slightest excuse for keeping away from her. If we give that odious old Benwell the chance he will make a priest of Romayne before we know where we are. Did Stella tell you that he actually shook Romayne's belief in his own marriage? Ah, I understand; she kept that to herself, poor dear, and with good reason, too."

I thought of the turned-down page in the letter. Mrs. Eyrecourt readily revealed what her daughter's delicacy had forbidden me to read, including the monstrous assumption which connected my marriage before the registrar with her son-in-law's scruples.

"Now, tell me, Winterfield," she continued, "don't you think—taking the circumstances into consideration—that you will act like a thoroughly sensible man, if you go back to Devonshire while we are in our present situation? What with foot-warmers in the carriage, and newspapers and magazines to amuse you, it isn't such a very long journey. And then Beaupark—dear Beaupark—is such a remarkably comfortable house in the winter; and you, you enviable creature, are such a popular man in the neighborhood. Oh, go back! go back!"

I got up and took my hat. She patted me on the shoulder. I could have throttled her at that moment. And yet she was right.

"You will make my excuses to Stella?" I said.

"You dear, good fellow, I will do more than make your excuses; I will sing your praises, as the poet says." In her ungovernable exultation at having got rid of me, she burst into extravagant language. "I feel like a mother to you," she went on, as we shook hands at parting. "I declare could almost let you kiss me."

There was not a single kissable place about Mrs. Eyrecourt unpainted, undyed or unpowdered. I resisted temptation and opened the door. There was still one last request that I could not help making.

"Will you let me know," I said, "when you hear from Rome?"

"With the greatest pleasure," Mrs. Eyrecourt answered, briskly. "Good-bye, you best of friends—good-bye."

I write these lines while the servant is packing my portmanteau. Traveler knows what that means. My dog is glad, at any rate, to get away from London. I think I shall hire a yacht and try what a voyage around the world will do for me. I wish to God I had never seen Stella.

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*10th February.*—News at last from Mrs. Eyrecourt.

Romayne has not even read the letter that she addressed to him—it has actually been returned to her by Father Benwell. Mrs. Eyrecourt writes, naturally enough, in a state of fury. Her one consolation, under this insulting treatment, is that her daughter knows nothing of the circumstanses. She warns me (quite needlessly) to keep the secret, and sends me a copy of Father Benwell's letter.

"DEAR MADAM—Mr. Romayne can read nothing that diverts his attention from his preparation for the priesthood, or that recalls past associations with errors which he has renounced forever. When a letter reaches him it is his wise custom to look at the signature first. He has handed your letter to me unread, with a request that I will return it to you. In his presence I instantly sealed it up. Neither he or I know, or wish to know, on what subject you have addressed him. We respectfully advise you not to write again."

In those terms he expresses himself. I shall have lived long enough, if I only live to see that man caught in one of his own traps!

*11th February.*—I was disappointed at not hearing from Stella yesterday. This morning has made amends. It has brought me a letter from her.

She is not well, and her mother's conduct sadly perplexes her. At one time Mrs. Eyrecourt's sense of injury urges her to indulge in violent measures. She is eager to place her deserted daughter under the protection of the law; to insist on a restitution of conjugal rights, or on a judicial separation. At another time she sinks into a state of abject depression; declares that it is impossible for her, in Stella's deplorable situation, to face society, and recommends immediate retirement to some place on the continent in which they can live cheaply. This latter suggestion Stella is not only ready but eager to adopt. She proves it by asking my advice in a postscript; no doubt, remembering the happy days when I courted her in Paris, and the many foreign friends of mine who called at our hotel.

The postscript gave me the excuse that I wanted. I knew perfectly well that it would be better for me not to see her, and I went to London, for the sole purpose of seeing her, by the first train.

*12th February.*—I found mother and daughter together in the drawing-room. It was one of Mrs. Eyrecourt's days of depression. Her little twinkling eyes tried to cast on me a look of tragic reproach; she shook her dyed head and said: "Oh, Winterfield, I didn't think you would have done this! Stella, fetch me my smelling-bottle."

But Stella refused to take the hint. She almost brought the tears to my eyes, she received me so kindly. If her mother had not been in the room—but her mother was in the room; I had no other choice than to enter on my business, as if I had been the family lawyer.

Mrs. Eyrecourt began by reproving Stella for asking my advice, and then assured me that she had no intention of leaving London. "How am I to get rid of my house?" she asked, irritably enough. I knew that "her house" (as she called it) was the furnished upper part of a house belonging to another person, and that she could leave it at a short notice. But I said nothing. I addressed myself to Stella.

"I have been thinking of two or three places which you might like," I went on. "The nearest place belongs to an old French gentleman and his wife. They have no children and they don't let lodgings; but I believe they would be glad to receive friends of mine, if their spare rooms are not already occupied. They live at St. Germain, close to Paris."

I looked at Mrs. Eyrecourt as I said those last words—I was as sly as Father Benwell himself. Paris justified my confidence; the temptation was too much for her. She not only gave way but actually mentioned the amount of rent which she could afford to pay. Stella whispered her thanks to me as I went out.

"My name is not mentioned, but my [illegible] papers," she said. "Well-meaning friends are calling and condoling with me already. I shall die if you don't help me to get away from among strangers!"

I start for Paris by the mail-train to-night.

*Paris, 13th February.*—It is evening. I have just returned from St. Germain. Everything is settled—with more slyness on my part.

My good friends, Monsieur and Madam Raymond, will be only too glad to receive English ladies, known to me for many years. The spacious and handsome first floor of their house (inherited from once wealthy ancestors by Madam Raymond) can be got ready to receive Mrs. Eyrecourt and her daughter in a week's time.

Our one difficulty related to the question of money. Monsieur Raymond, living on a government pension, was modestly unwilling to ask terms, and I was too absolutely ignorant of the subject to be of the slightest assistance to him. It ended in our appealing to a house-agent at St. Germain. His estimate appeared to me to be quite reasonable, but it exceeded the pecuniary limit mentioned by Mrs. Eyrecourt. I had known the Raymonds long enough to be in no danger of offending them by proposing a secret arrangement which permitted me to pay the difference. So that difficulty was got over in due course of time.

We went into the large garden at the back of the house, and there I committed another act of duplicity.

In a nice sheltered corner I discovered one of those essentially French buildings, called a "pavilion;" a delightful little toy house of three rooms. Another private arrangement made me the tenant of this place. Madam Raymond smiled.

"I bet you," she said to me, in her very best English, "one of these ladies is in her fascinating first youth."

The good lady little knows what a hopeless love affair mine is. I must see Stella sometimes—I ask and hope for no more. Never have I felt how lonely my life is as I feel it now.

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*London, 1st March.*—Stella and her mother have set forth on their journey to St. Germain this morning without allowing me, as I had hoped and planned, to be their escort.

Mrs. Eyrecourt set up the old objection of the claims of propriety. If that were the only obstacle in my way I should have set it aside by following them to France. Where is the impropriety of my seeing Stella as her friend and brother, especially when I don't live in the same house with her, and when she has her mother on one side and Madam Raymond on the other to take care of her?

No! the influence that keeps me away from St. Germain is the influence of Stella herself.

"I will write to you often," she said "but I beg you for my sake not to accompany us to France." Her look and tone reduced me to obedience. Stupid as I am I think (after what passed between me and her mother) I can guess what she meant.

"Am I never to see you again?" I asked.

"Do you think I am hard and ungrateful?" she answered. "Do you doubt that I shall be glad, more than glad to see you when—?" She turned away from me and said no more.

It was time to take leave. We were under her mother's superintendence; we shook hands—and that was all.

Matilda (Mrs Eyrecourt's maid) followed me downstairs to open the door. I suppose I looked, as I felt, wretchedly enough. The good creature tried to cheer me. "Don't be anxious about them," she said; "I am used to traveling, sir, and I'll take care of them." She was a woman to be thoroughly depended on, a faithful and attached servant. I made her a little present at parting, and I asked her if she would write to me from time to time.

Some people might consider this to be rather an undignified proceeding on my part. I can only say it came naturally to me. I am not a dignified man; and when a person means kindly toward me I don't ask myself whether that person is higher or lower, richer or poorer than I am. We are, to my mind, on the same level, when the same sympathy unites us. Matilda was sufficiently acquainted with all that had passed to foresee, as I did, that there would be certain reservations in Stella's letters to me. "You shall have the whole truth from me, sir, don't doubt it," she whispered. I believed her. When my heart is sore give me a woman for my friend. Whether she is lady or lady's maid she is equally precious to me.

*Cowes, 2d March.*—I am in treaty with an agent for the hire of a yacht.

I must do something and go somewhere. Returning to Beaupark is out of the question, People with tranquil minds can find pleasure in the society of their country neighbors. I am a miserable creature, with a mind in a state of incessant disturbance. Excellent fathers of families talking politics to me; exemplary mothers of families offering me matrimonial opportunities with their daughters—that is what society means if I go back to Devonshire. No, I will go for a cruise in the Mediterranean, and I will take one friend with me whose company I never weary of—my dog.

The vessel is discovered—a fine schooner of three hundred tons, just returned from a cruise to Madeira. The sailing-master and crew only ask for a few days on shore. In that time the surveyor will have examined the vessel, and the stores will be on board.

*3d March.*—I have written to Stella, with a list of addresses at which letters will reach me, and I have sent another list to my faithful ally the maid. When we leave Gibraltar our course will be to Naples; thence to Civita, Vecchia, Leghorn, Genoa, Marseilles. From any of those places I am within easy traveling distance of St. Germain.

*7th March. At Sea.*—It is half-past six in the morning. We have just passed Eddystone Lighthouse with the wind abeam. The log registers ten knots an hour.

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[illegible] at the beginning of my voyage has not been fulfilled. Owing to contrary winds, storms and delay at Cadiz in repairing damages, we have only arrived at Naples this evening. Under trying circumstances of all sorts the yacht has behaved admirably. A stouter and finer sea-boat never was built.

We are too late to find the postoffice open. I shall send ashore for letters the first thing to-morrow morning. My next move will depend entirely on the news I get from St. Germain. If I remain for any length of time in these regions I shall give my crew the holiday they have well earned at Civita Vecchia. I am never weary of Rome; but I always did, and always shall, dislike Naples.

*11th May.*—My plans are completely changed. I am annoyed and angry. The further I get away from France the better I shall be pleased.

I have heard from Stella, and heard from the maid. Both letters inform me that the child is born, and that it is a boy. Do they expect me to feel any interest in the boy? He is my worst enemy, before he is out of his long clothes.

Stella writes kindly enough. Not a line in her letter, however, invites me, or holds out the prospect of inviting me, to St. Germain. She refers to her mother very briefly; merely informing me that Mrs. Eyrecourt is well, and is already enjoying the gayeties of Paris. Three-fourths of the letter are occupied with the baby. When I wrote to her, I signed myself, "Yours affectionately." Stella signs, "Yours sincerely." It is a trifle, I daresay; but I feel it, for all that.

Matilda is faithful to her engagement; Matilda's letter tells me the truth.

"Since the birth of the baby," she writes, "Mrs. Romayne has never once mentioned your name; she can talk of nothing, and think of nothing, but her child. I make every allowance, I hope, for a lady in her melancholy situation. But I do think it is not very grateful to have quite forgotten Mr. Winterfield, who has done so much for her, and who only asks to pass a few hours of his day innocently in her society. Perhaps, being a single woman, I write ignorantly about mothers and babies. But I have my feelings, and though I never liked Mr. Romayne, I feel for you, sir, if you will forgive the familiarity. In my opinion, this new craze about the baby will wear out. He is already a cause of difference of opinion. My good mistress, who possesses knowledge of the world, and a kind heart as well, advises that Mr. Romayne should be informed of the birth of a son and heir. Mrs. Eyrecourt says, most truly, that the old priest will get possession of Mr. Romayne's money, to the prejudice of the child, unless steps are taken to shame him into doing justice to his own son. But Mrs. Romayne is as proud as Lucifer; she will not hear of making the first advances, as she calls it. 'The man who has deserted me,' she says, 'has no heart to be touched either by wife or child.' My mistress does not agree with her. There have been hard words already, and the nice old French gentleman and his wife try to make peace. You will smile when I tell you that they offer sugar plums as a sort of composing gift. My mistress accepts the gift, and has been to the theater at Paris, with Monsieur and Madam Raymond, more than once already. To conclude, sir, if I might venture to advise you, I should recommend trying the effect on Mrs. R. of absence and silence."

A most sensibly-written letter. I shall certainly take Matilda's advice. My name is never mentioned by Stella, and not a day has passed without my thinking of her!

Well, I suppose a man can harden his heart if he likes. Let me harden my heart and forget her. The crew shall have three days ashore at Naples, and then we sail for Alexandria. In that port the yacht will wait my return. I have not yet visited the cataracts of the Nile; I have not yet seen the magnificent mouse-colored women of Nubia. A tent in the desert and a dusty daughter of nature to keep house for me—there is a new life for a man who is weary of the vapid civilization of Europe! I shall begin by letting my beard grow.

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*Civita Vecchia, 28th February, 1863.*—Back again on the coast of Italy, after an absence, at sea and ashore, of nine months.

What have my travels done for me? They have made me browner and thinner; they have given me a more patient mind and a taste for mild tobacco Have they helped me to forget Stella? Not the least in the world—I am more eager than ever to see her again. When I look back at my diary I am really ashamed of my own fretfulness and impatience. What miserable vanity on my part to expect her to think of me when she was absorbed in the first cares and joys of maternity, especially sacred to her, poor soul, as the one consolation of her melancholy life! I withdraw all that I wrote about her, and from the bottom of my heart I forgive the baby.

*Rome, 1st March.*—I have found my letters waiting for me at the office of my banker.

The latest news from St. Germain is all that I could wish. In acknowledging the receipt of my last letter from Cairo (I broke my rash vow of silence when we got into port after leaving Naples) Stella sends me the long-desired invitation. "Pray take care to return to us, dear Bernard, before the first anniversary of my boy's birthday on the twenty-seventh of March." After those words she need feel no apprehension of my being late at my appointment. Traveler—the dog has well merited his name by this time—will have to bid good-bye to the yacht (which he loves) and journey homeward by the railway (which he hates). No more risk of storms and delays for me. Good-bye to the sea for one while.

I have sent the news of my safe return from the East by telegraph. But I must not be in too great a hurry to leave Rome, or I shall commit a serious error. I shall disappoint Stella's mother.

Mrs. Eyrecourt writes to me earnestly requesting, if I return to Rome, to inform her at once about Romayne. She is eager to know whether they have made him a priest yet. I am also to discover, if I can, what are his prospects—whether he is as miserable as he deserves to be, whether he has been disappointed in his expectations and is likely to be brought back to his senses in that way—and, above all, whether Father Benwell is still at Rome with him. My idea is that Mrs. Eyrecourt has not given up her design of making Romayne acquainted with the birth of his son.

The right person to apply to for information is evidently my banker. He has been a resident in Rome for twenty years, but he is too busy a man to be approached by an idler like myself in business hours. I have asked him to dine with me to-morrow.

*2d March.*—My guest has just left me. I am afraid Mrs. Eyrecourt will be sadly disappointed when she hears what I have to tell her.

The moment I mentioned Romayne's name the banker looked at me with an expression of surprise.

"The man most talked about in Rome," he said; "I wonder you have not heard of him already."

"Is he a priest?"

"Certainly! And, what is more, the ordinary preparations for the priesthood were expressly shortened, by high authority, on his account. The Pope takes the greatest interest in him, and, as for the people, the Italians have already nicknamed him, "the young cardinal." Don't suppose, as some of your countrymen do, that he is indebted to his wealth for the high position he has already attained. His wealth is only one of the minor influences in his favor. The truth is, he unites in himself two opposite qualities, both of the greatest value to the church, which are very rarely found combined in the same man. He has already made a popular reputation here as a most eloqent and convincing preacher——"

"A preacher!" I exclaimed. "And a popular reputation! How do the Italians understand him?"

The banker looked puzzled.

"Why shouldn't they understand a man who addresses them in their own language?" he said. "Romayne could speak Italian when he came here, and since that time he has learned by constant practice to think in Italian. While our Roman season lasts he preaches alternately in Italian and English. But I was speaking of the two opposite accomplishments which this remarkable man possesses. Out of the pulpit he is capable of applying his mind successfully to the political necessities of the church. As I am told his intellect has had severe practical training, by means of historical studies, in the past years of his life. Anyhow, in one of the diplomatic difficulties here between the church and the state, he wrote a memorial on the subject which the cardinal-secretary declared to be a model of ability in applying the experience of the past to the need of the present time. If he doesn't wear himself out his Italian nickname may prove prophetically true. We may live to see the new convert Cardinal Romayne.

"Are you acquainted with him yourself?" I asked.

"No Englishman is acquainted with him," the banker answered. "There is a report of some romantic event in his life which has led to his leaving England, and which makes him recoil from intercourse with his own nation. Whether this is true or false it is certain that the English in Rome find him unapproachable. I have even heard that he refuses to receive letters from England. If you wish to see him you must do as I have done—you must go to church and look at him in the pulpit. He preaches in English—I think for the last time this season—on Thursday evening next. Shall I call here and take you to the church?"

If I had followed my inclinations I should have refused. I feel no sort of interest in Romayne; I might even say I feel a downright antipathy toward him. But I have no wish to appear insensible to the banker's kindness; and my reception at St. Germain depends greatly on the attention I show to Mrs. Eyrecourt's request. So it was arranged that I should hear the great preacher—with a mental reservation on my part which contemplated my departure from the church before the end of his sermon.

But, before I see him, I feel assured of one thing—especially after what the banker has told me. Stella's view of his character is the right one. The man who has deserted her has no heart to be touched by wife or child. They are separated forever.

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*March 3d.*—I have just seen the landlord of the hotel; he can help me to answer one of Mrs. Eyrecourt's questions. A nephew of his holds some employment at the Jesuit headquarters here, adjoining their famous church *Il Gesu.* I have requested the young man to ascertain if Father Benwell was still in Rome.

*4th March.*—Good news this time for Mrs. Eyrecourt, so far as it goes. Father Benwell has long since left Rome, and has returned to his regular duties in England. If he exercises any further influence over Romayne, it must be done by letter.

*5th March.*—I have returned from Romayne's sermon. This double renegade—has he not deserted his religion and his wife?—has failed to convince my reason. But he has so completely upset my nerves that I ordered a bottle of champagne (to the great amusement of my friend the banker) the moment we got back to the hotel.

We drove through the scantily-lighted streets of Rome to a small church in the neighborhood of the Piazzi Navona. To a more imaginative man than myself, the scene when we entered the building would have been too impressive to be described in words, though it might, perhaps, have been painted. The one light in the place glimmered mysteriously from a great wax candle, burning in front of a drapery of black cloth, and illuminating dimly a sculptured representation, in white marble, of the crucified Christ, wrought to the size of life. In front of this ghastly emblem a platform covered with black cloth. We could penetrate no further than to the space just inside the door of the church. Everywhere else the building was filled with standing, sitting and kneeling figures, shadowy and mysterious, fading away in far corners into impenetrable gloom. The only sounds were the low wailing notes of the organ, accompanied at intervals by the muffled thump of worshipers penitentially beating their breasts. On a sudden the organ ceased; the self-inflicted blows of the penitents wore heard no more. In the breathless silence that followed, a man robed in black mounted the black platform, and faced the congregation. His hair had become prematurely gray; his face was of the ghastly paleness of the great crucifix by his side. The light of the candle, falling on him as he slowly turned his head, cast shadows into the hollows of his cheeks, and glittered in his gleaming eyes. In tones, low and trembling at first, he stated the subject of his address. A week since two noteworthy persons had died in Rome on the same day. One of them was a woman of exemplary piety, whose funeral obsequies had been celebrated in that church. The other was a criminal, charged with homicide under provocation, who had died in prison, refusing the services of the priest—impenitent to the last. The sermon followed the spirit of the absolved woman to its eternal reward in heaven, and described the meeting of dear ones who had gone before, in terms so devout and touching that the women near us, and even some of the men, burst into tears. Far different was the effect produced when the preacher, filled with the same overpowering sincerity of belief which had inspired his description of the joys of heaven, traced the downward progress of the last man, from his impenitent deathbed to his doom in hell. He described the retributive voices of mother and son, bereaved of husband and father by the fatal deed, ringing incessantly in the ears of the homicide. "I, who speak to you, hear the voices," he cried. "Assassin! assassin! where are you? I see him—I see the assassin hurled into his place in the sleepless ranks of the damned—I see him, dripping with the flames that burn forever, writhing under the torments that are without respite and without end." The climax of this terrible effort of imagination was reached when he fell on his knees and prayed with sobs and cries of entreaty—prayed, pointing to the crucifix at his side—that he and all who heard him might die the death of penitent sinners, absolved in the divinely-atoning name of Christ. The hysterical shrieks of women rang through the church. I could endure it no longer. I hurried into the street, and breathed again freely when I looked up at the cloudless beauty of the night sky, bright with the peaceful radiance of the stars.

And this man was Romayne! I had last met with him among his delightful works of art; an enthusiast in literature; the hospitable master of a house, filled with comforts and luxuries to its remotest corner.

"Yes," said my companion, "the Ancient Church not only finds out the men who can best serve it, but develops qualities in those men of which they have been themselves unconscious."

I listened without making any remark. To tell the truth I was thinking of Stella.

*6th March.*—I have been to Civita Vecchia, to give a little farewell entertainment to the officers and crew before they take the yacht back to England.

In the few words I said at parting I mentioned that it was my purpose to make an offer for the purchase of the vessel, and that my guests should hear from me again on the subject. The announcement was received with enthusiasm. I really liked my crew, and I don't think it is vain in me to believe that they return the feeling, from the sailing-master to the cabin-boy. My future life, after all that has passed, is likely to be a roving life, unless——No! I may think sometimes of that happier prospect, but I had better not put my thoughts into words. I have a fine vessel; I have plenty of money, and I like the sea. These are three good reasons for buying the yacht.

Returning to Rome in the evening I found waiting for me a letter from Stella.

She writes (immediately on the receipt of my telegram) to make a similar request to the request addressed to me by her mother. Now that I am at Rome, she too wants to hear news of a Jesuit priest. He is absent on a foreign mission, and his name is Penrose. "You shall hear what obligations I owe to his kindness," she writes, "when we meet. In the meantime I will only say that he is the exact opposite of Father Benwell, and that I should be the most ungrateful of women if I did not feel the truest interest in his welfare."

This is strange, and to my mind not satisfactory. Who is Penrose, and what has he done to deserve such strong expressions of gratitude? If anybody had told me that Stella could make a friend of a Jesuit I am afraid I should have returned a rude answer. Well, I must wait for further enlightenment, and apply to the landlord's nephew once more.

*7th March.*—There is small prospect, I fear, of my being able to appreciate the merit of Mr. Penrose by personal experience. He is thousands of miles away from Europe, and he is in a situation of peril, which makes the chance of his safe return doubtful in the last degree.

The mission to which he is attached was originally destined to find its field of work in Central America. Rumors of more fighting to come, in that revolutionary part of the world, reached Rome before the missionaries had sailed from the port of Leghorn. Under these discouraging circumstances the priestly authorities changed the destination of the mission to the Territory of Arizona, bordering on New Mexico, and recently purchased by the United States. Here, in the valley of Santa Cruz, the Jesuits had first attempted the conversion of the Indian tribes two hundred years since—and had failed. Their mission-house and chapel are now a heap of ruins, and the ferocious Apache Indians keep the fertile valley a solitude by the [illegible] omened place Penrose and his companions have made their daring pilgrimage, and they are now risking their lives in the attempt to open the hearts of these bloodthirsty savages to the influence of Christianity. Nothing has yet been heard of them. At the best, no trustworthy news is expected for months to come.

What will Stella say to this? Anyhow, I begin to understand her interest in Penrose now. He is one of a company of heroes. I am already anxious to hear more of him.

To-morrow will be a memorable day in my calendar. To-morrow I leave Rome for St. Germain.

If any further information is to be gained for Mrs. Eyrecourt and her daughter, I have made the necessary arrangements for receiving it. The banker has promised to write to me if there is a change in Romayne's life and prospects. And my landlord will take care that I hear of it in the event of news reaching Rome from the mission at Arizona.

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*St. Germain, 14th March.*—I arrived yesterday. Between the fatigue of the journey and the pleasurable agitation caused by seeing Stella again, I was unfit to make the customary entry in my diary when I retired for the night.

She is more irresistibly beautiful than ever. Her figure (a little too slender as I remember it) has filled out. Her lovely face has lost its haggard, care-worn look; her complexion has recovered its delicacy; I see again in her eyes the pure serenity of expression which first fascinated me, years since. It may be due to the consoling influence of the child—assisted, perhaps, by the lapse of time and the peaceful life which she now leads—but this at least is certain, such a change for the better I never could have imagined as the change I find in Stella after a year's absence.

As for the baby, he is a bright, good-humored little fellow; and he has one great merit in my estimation—he bears no resemblance to his father. I saw his mother's features when I first took him on my knee and looked at his face, lifted to mine in grave surprise. The baby and I are sure to get on well together.

Even Mrs. Eyrecourt seems to have improved in the French air and under the French diet. She has a better surface to lay the paint on; her nimble tongue runs faster than ever, and she has so completely recovered her good spirits that Monsieur and Madam Raymond declare she must have French blood in her veins. They were all so unaffectedly glad to see me (Matilda included) that it was really like returning to one's home. As for Traveler, I must interfere (in the interests of his figure and his health) to prevent everybody in the house from feeding him with every eatable thing from plain bread to *pate de foie gras.*

My experience to-day will, as Stella tells me, be my general experience of the family life at St. Germain.

We begin the morning with the customary cup of coffee. At 11 o'clock I am summoned from my "pavilion" of three rooms to one of those delicious and artfully varied breakfasts which are only to be found in France and in Scotland. An interval of about three hours follows, during which the child takes his siesta, and his elders occupy themselves as they please. At 3 o'clock we all go out—with a pony-chaise which carries the weaker members of the household—for a ramble in the forest. At 6 o'clock we assemble at the dinner-table. At coffee-time some of the neighbors drop in for a game at cards. At 10 we all wish each other good-night.

Such is the domestic programme, varied by excursions in the country and by occasional visits to Paris. I am naturally a man of quiet, stay-at-home habits. It is only when my mind is disturbed that I get restless and feel longings for change. Surely the quiet routine of St. Germain ought to be welcome to me now! I have been looking forward to this life through a long year of travel. What more can I wish for?

Nothing more, of course.

And yet—and yet—Stella has innocently made it harder than ever to play the part of her "brother." The recovery of her beauty is a subject of congratulation to her mother and her friends. How does it affect me?

I had better not think of my hard fate. Can I help thinking of it? Can I dismiss from memory the unmerited misfortunes which have taken from me, in the prime of her charms, the woman whom I love? At least I can try.

The good old moral must be my moral: "Be content with such things as ye have."

*15th March.*—It is eight in the morning, and I scarcely know how to employ myself. Having finished my coffee I have just looked again at my diary.

It strikes me that I am falling into a bad habit of writing too much about myself. The custom of keeping a journal certainly has this drawback—it encourages egotism. Well, the remedy is easy. From this date I lock up my book, only to open it again when some event has happened which has a claim to be recorded for its own sake. As for myself and my feelings, they have made their last appearance in these pages.

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*7th June.*—The occasion for opening my diary once more has presented itself this morning.

News has reached me of Romayne, which is too important to be passed over without notice. He has been appointed one of the pope's chamberlains. It is also reported, on good authority, that he will be attached to a papal embassy when a vacancy occurs. These honors, present and to come, seem to remove him further from the possibility of a return to his wife and child.

*8th June.*—In regard to Romayne Mrs. Eyrecourt seems to be of my opinion.

Being in Paris to-day, at a morning concert, she there met with her old friend, Dr. Wybrow. The famous physician is suffering from overwork, and is on his way to Italy for a few months of rest and recreation. They took a drive together after the performance, in [illegible] freely as usual on the subject of Stella and the child. He entirely agreed (speaking in the future interests of the boy) that precious time has been lost in informing Romayne of the birth of an heir; and he has promised, no matter what obstacles may be placed in his way, to make the announcement himself, when he reaches Rome.

*9th June.*—Madam Raymond has been speaking to me confidentially on a very delicate subject.

I am pledged to discontinue writing about myself. But in these private pages I may note the substance of what my good friend said to me. If I only look back often enough at this little record I may gather the resolution to profit by her advice. In brief these were her words:

"Stella has spoken to me in confidence since she met you accidentally in the garden yesterday. She cannot be guilty of the poor affectation of concealing what you must have already discovered for yourself. But she prefers to say the words that must be said to you through me. Her husband's conduct to her is an outrage that she can never forget. She looks back with sentiments of repulsion which she dare not describe to that 'love at first sight' (as you call it in England), conceived on the day when they first met, and she remembers regretfully that other love, of years since, which was love of steadier and slower growth. To her shame she confesses that she failed to set you the example of duty and self-restraint when you two were alone. She leaves it to my discretion to tell you that you must see her for the future always in the presence of some other person. Make no reference to this when you next meet; and understand that she has only spoken to me instead of to her mother, because she fears that Mrs. Eyrecourt might use harsh words and distress you again as she once distressed you in England. If you will take my advice you will ask permission to go away again on your travels."

It matters nothing what I said in reply. Let me only relate that we were interrupted by the appearance of the nursemaid at the pavilion door.

She led the child by the hand. Among his first efforts at speaking, under his mother's instruction, had been the effort to call me Uncle Bernard. He had now got as far as the first syllable of my Christian name, and he had come to me to repeat his lesson. Resting his little hands on my knees he looked up at me, with his mother's eyes, and said: "Uncle Ber'." A trifling incident, but at that moment it cut me to the heart. I could only take the boy in my arms and look at Madam Raymond. The good woman felt for me. I saw tears in her eyes.

No! no more writing about myself. I close the book again.

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*3d July.*—A letter has reached Mrs. Eyrecourt this morning from Dr. Wybrow. It is dated, "Castel Gandolpho near Rome." Here the doctor is established during the hot months, and here he has seen Romayne, in attendance on the Holy Father, in the famous summer palace of the popes. How he obtained the interview Mrs. Eyrecourt is not informed. To a man of his celebrity doors are no doubt opened which remain closed to persons less widely known.

*6th July.*—A letter has arrived from London, addressed to Stella by Romayne's English lawyers. The income which Mrs. Romayne has refused for herself is to be legally settled on her child. Technical particulars follow which it is needless to repeat here.

By return of post Stella has answered the lawyers, declaring that so long as she lives, and has any influence over her son, he shall not touch the offered income. Mrs. Eyrecourt, Monsieur and Madam Raymond—and even Matilda—entreated her not to send the letter. To my thinking Stella had acted with becoming spirit. Though Vange Abbey is not entailed, still the estate is morally the boy's birthright—it is a cruel wrong to offer him anything else.

*11th July.*—For the second time I have proposed to leave St. Germain. The presence of the third person, whenever I am in her company, is becoming unendurable to me. She still uses her influence to deter my departure. "Nobody sympathizes with me," she said, "but you."

I am failing to keep my promise to myself, not to write about myself. But there is some little excuse this time. For the relief of my own conscience I may surely place it on record that I have tried to do right. It is not my fault if I remain at St. Germain, insensible to Madam Raymond's warning.

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*13th September.*—Terrible news from Rome of the Jesuit mission to Arizona.

The Apache Indians have made a night attack on the mission-house. The building is burnt to the ground and the missionaries have been massacred, with the exception of two priests, carried away captive. The names of the priests are not known. News of the atrocity has been delayed for months on its way [illegible] turbances in Central America.

Looking at the *Times* (which we receive regularly at St. Germain), I found this statement is confirmed in a short paragraph, but here also the names of the two prisoners failed to appear.

Our one present hope of getting any further information seems to me to depend on our English newspaper. The *Times* stands alone as the one public journal which has the whole English nation for volunteer contributors. In their troubles at home they appeal to the editor. In their travels abroad over civilized and savage regions alike, if they meet with an adventure worth mentioning, they tell it to the editor. If any of our countrymen knows anything of this dreadful massacre, I foresee with certainty where we shall find the information in print.

Soon after my arrival here Stella had told me of her memorable conversation with Penrose in the garden at Ten Acres Lodge. I was well acquainted with the nature of her obligation to the young priest, but I was not prepared for the outbreak of grief which escaped her when she had read the telegram from Rome. She actually went to the length of saying: "I shall never enjoy another happy moment till I know whether Penrose is one of the two living priests!"

The inevitable third person with us this morning was Monsieur Raymond. Sitting at the window with a book in his hand—sometimes reading, sometimes looking at the garden with the eye of a fond horticulturist—he discovered a strange cat among his flower beds. Forgetful of every other consideration, the old gentleman hobbled out to drive away the intruder, and left us together.

I spoke to Stella in words which I would now give everything I possess to recall. A detestable jealousy took possession of me. I meanly hinted that Penrose could claim no great merit for yielding to the entreaties of a beautiful woman who had fascinated him, though he might be afraid to own it. She protested against my unworthy insinuation—but she failed to make me ashamed of myself. Is a woman ever ignorant of the influence which her beauty exercises over a man? I went on, like the miserable creature that I was, from bad to worse.

"Excuse me," I said, "if I have, unintentionally, made you angry. I ought to have known that I was treading on delicate ground. Your interest in Penrose may be due to a warmer motive than a sense of obligation."

She turned away from me—sadly, not angrily—intending, as it appeared, to leave the room in silence. Arrived at the door, she altered her mind and came back.

"Even if you insult me, Bernard, I am not able to resent it," she said, very gently. "I once wronged you—I have no right to complain of your now wronging me. I will try to forget it."

She held out her hand. She raised her eyes, and looked at me.

It was not her fault; I am alone to blame. In another moment she was in my arms. I held her to my breast—I felt the quick beating of her heart on me—I poured out the wild confession of my sorrow, my shame, my love—I tasted again and again and again the sweetness of her lips. She put her arms round my neck and drew her head back with a long, low sigh. "Be merciful to my weakness," she whispered. "We must meet no more."

She put me back from her with a trembling hand and left the room.

I have broken my resolution not to write about myself; but there is no egotism, there is a sincere sense of humiliation in me when I record this confession of misconduct. I can make but one atonement—I must at once leave St. Germain. Now, when it is too late, I feel how hard for me this life of constant repression has been.

Thus far I had written when the nursemaid brought me a little note addressed in pencil. No answer was required.

The few lines were in Stella's handwriting:

"You must not leave us too suddenly or you will excite my mother's suspicions. Wait until you receive letters from England, and make them the pretext for your departure. S."

I never thought of her mother. She is right. Even if she were wrong I must obey her.

*14th September.*—The letters from England have arrived. One of them presents me with the necessary excuse for my departure, ready made. My proposal for the purchase of the yacht is accepted. The sailing-master and crew have refused all offers of engagement, and are waiting at Cowes for my orders. Here is an absolute necessity for my return to England.

The newspaper arrived with the letters. My anticipations have been realized. Yesterday's paragraph has produced another volunteer contributor. An Englishman, just returned from Central America, after traveling in Arizona, writes to the *Times*. He publishes his name and address, and he declares that he has himself seen the two captive priests.

The name of the *Times* correspondent carries its own guarantee with it. He is no less a person than Mr. Murthwaite, the well-known traveler in India, who discovered the lost diamond called "The Moonstone," set in the forehead of a Hindoo idol. He writes to the editor as follows:

"SIR—I can tell you something of the two Jesuit priests, who were the sole survivors of the massacre in the Santa Cruz valley four months since.

"I was traveling at the time in Arizona, under the protection of an Apache chief, bribed to show me his country and his nation (instead of cutting my throat and tearing off my scalp) by a present tribute of whisky and gunpowder, and by the promise of more when our association came to an end.

"About twelve miles northward of the little silver mining town of Tubac we came upon an Apache encampment. I at once discovered two white men among the Indians. These were the captive priests.

"One of them was a Frenchman named L'Herbier. The other was an Englishman, named Penrose. The Indians. Unhappy L'Herbier lost his senses under the horror of the night massacre. Insanity, as you may have heard, is a sacred thing in the estimation of the American savages—they regard this poor madman as a mysteriously inspired person. The other priest, Penrose, had been in charge of the mission medicine-chest, and had successfully treated cases of illness among the Apaches. As a 'great medicine-man,' he, too, is a privileged person—under the strong protection of their interest in their own health. The lives of the prisoners are in no danger, provided they can endure the hardship of their wandering existence among the Indians. Penrose spoke to me with the resignation of a true hero. 'I am in the hands of God,'