

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Descartes Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Schopenhauer Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Schiller Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Claudius Schilling Kralik Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Raabe Gibbon Tschechow
Gerstäcker Raabe Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Morgenstern Klee Hölty Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Puschkín Homer Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Horaz Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Machiavelli Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Nietzsche Marx Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz
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**Ordeal of Richard Feverel –
Volume 3**

George Meredith

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BOOK 3.

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XXII. INDICATES THE APPROACHES OF FEVER

XXIII. CRISIS IN THE APPLE-DISEASE

XXIV. OF THE SPRING PRIMROSE AND THE AUTUMNAL

XXV. IN WHICH THE HERO TAKES A STEP

XXVI. RECORDS THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF THE HERO

XXVII. CONTAINS AN INTERCESSION FOR THE HEROINE

CHAPTER XXI

By twelve o'clock at noon next day the inhabitants of Raynham Abbey knew that Berry, the baronet's man, had arrived post-haste from town, with orders to conduct Mr. Richard thither, and that Mr. Richard had refused to go, had sworn he would not, defied his father, and despatched Berry to the Shades. Berry was all that Benson was not. Whereas Benson hated woman, Berry admired her warmly. Second to his own stately person, woman occupied his reflections, and commanded his homage. Berry was of majestic port, and used dictionary words. Among the maids of Raynham his conscious calves produced all the discord and the frenzy those adornments seem destined to create in tender bosoms. He had, moreover, the reputation of having suffered for the sex; which assisted his object in inducing the sex to suffer for him. What with his calves, and his dictionary words, and the attractive halo of the mysterious vindictiveness of Venus surrounding him, this Adonis of the lower household was a mighty man below, and he moved as one.

On hearing the tumult that followed Berry's arrival, Adrian sent for him, and was informed of the nature of his mission, and its result.

"You should come to me first," said Adrian. "I should have imagined you were shrewd enough for that, Berry?"

"Pardon me, Mr. Adrian," Berry doubled his elbow to explain. "Pardon me, sir. Acting recipient of special injunctions I was not a free agent."

"Go to Mr. Richard again, Berry. There will be a little confusion if he holds back. Perhaps you had better throw out a hint or so of apoplexy. A slight hint will do. And here—Berry! when you return to town, you had better not mention anything—to quote Johnson—of Benson's spification."

"Certainly not, sir."

The wise youth's hint had the desired effect on Richard.

He dashed off a hasty letter by Tom to Belthorpe, and, mounting his horse, galloped to the Bellingham station.

Sir Austin was sitting down to a quiet early dinner at his hotel, when the Hope of Raynham burst into his room.

The baronet was not angry with his son. On the contrary, for he was singularly just and self-accusing while pride was not up in arms, he had been thinking all day after the receipt of Benson's letter that he was deficient in cordiality, and did not, by reason of his excessive anxiety, make himself sufficiently his son's companion: was not enough, as he strove to be, mother and father to him.; preceptor and friend; previsor and associate. He had not to ask his conscience where he had lately been to blame towards the System. He had slunk away from Raynham in the very crisis of the Magnetic Age, and this young woman of the parish (as Benson had termed sweet Lucy in his letter) was the consequence.

Yes! pride and sensitiveness were his chief foes, and he would trample on them. To begin, he embraced his son: hard upon an Englishman at any time—doubly so to one so shamefaced at emotion in cool blood, as it were. It gave him a strange pleasure, nevertheless. And the youth seemed to answer to it; he was excited. Was his love, then, beginning to correspond with his father's as in those intimate days before the Blossoming Season?

But when Richard, inarticulate at first in his haste, cried out, "My dear, dear father! You are safe! I feared—You are better, sir? Thank God!" Sir Austin stood away from him.

"Safe?" he said. "What has alarmed you?"

Instead of replying, Richard dropped into a chair, and seized his hand and kissed it.

Sir Austin took a seat, and waited for his son to explain.

"Those doctors are such fools!" Richard broke out. "I was sure they were wrong. They don't know headache from apoplexy. It's worth the ride, sir, to see you. You left Raynham so suddenly.—But you are well! It was not an attack of real apoplexy?"

His father's brows contorted, and he said, No, it was not. Richard pursued:

"If you were ill, I couldn't come too soon, though, if coroners' inquests sat on horses, those doctors would be found guilty of mare-slaughter. Cassandra'll be knocked up. I was too early for the train at Bellingham, and I wouldn't wait. She did the distance in four hours and three-quarters. Pretty good, sir, wasn't it?"

"It has given you appetite for dinner, I hope," said the baronet, not so well pleased to find that it was not simple obedience that had brought the youth to him in such haste.

"I'm ready," replied Richard. "I shall be in time to return by the last train to-night. I will leave Cassandra in your charge for a rest."

His father quietly helped him to soup, which he commenced gobbling with an eagerness that might pass for appetite.

"All well at Raynham?" said the baronet.

"Quite, sir."

"Nothing new?"

"Nothing, sir."

"The same as when I left?"

"No change whatever!"

"I shall be glad to get back to the old place," said the baronet. "My stay in town has certainly been profitable. I have made some pleasant acquaintances who may probably favour us with a visit there in the late autumn—people you may be pleased to know. They are very anxious to see Raynham."

"I love the old place," cried Richard. "I never wish to leave it."

"Why, boy, before I left you were constantly begging to see town."

"Was I, sir? How odd! Well! I don't want to remain here. I've seen enough of it."

"How did you find your way to me?"

Richard laughed, and related his bewilderment at the miles of brick, and the noise, and the troops of people, concluding, "There's no place like home!"

The baronet watched his symptomatic brilliant eyes, and favoured him with a double-dealing sentence—

"To anchor the heart by any object ere we have half traversed the world, is youth's foolishness, my son. Reverence time! A better maxim than your Horatian."

"He knows all!" thought Richard, and instantly drew away leagues from his father, and threw up fortifications round his love and himself.

Dinner over, Richard looked hurriedly at his watch, and said, with much briskness, "I shall just be in time, sir, if we walk. Will you come with me to the station?"

The baronet did not answer.

Richard was going to repeat the question, but found his father's eyes fixed on him so meaningly that he wavered, and played with his empty glass.

"I think we will have a little more claret," said the baronet.

Claret was brought, and they were left alone.

The baronet then drew within arm's-reach of his son, and began:

"I am not aware what you may have thought of me, Richard, during the years we have lived together; and indeed I have never been in a hurry to be known to you; and, if I had died before my work was done, I should not have complained at losing half my reward, in hearing you thank me. Perhaps, as it is, I never may. Everything, save selfishness, has its recompense. I shall be content if you prosper."

He fetched a breath and continued: "You had in your infancy a great loss." Father and son coloured simultaneously. "To make that good to you I chose to isolate myself from the world, and devote myself entirely to your welfare; and I think it is not vanity that tells me now that the son I have reared is one of the most hopeful of God's creatures. But for that very reason you are open to be tempted

the most, and to sink the deepest. It was the first of the angels who made the road to hell."

He paused again. Richard fingered at his watch.

"In our House, my son, there is peculiar blood. We go to wreck very easily. It sounds like superstition; I cannot but think we are tried as most men are not. I see it in us all. And you, my son, are compounded of two races. Your passions are violent. You have had a taste of revenge. You have seen, in a small way, that the pound of flesh draws rivers of blood. But there is now in you another power. You are mounting to the table-land of life, where mimic battles are changed to real ones. And you come upon it laden equally with force to create and to destroy." He deliberated to announce the intelligence, with deep meaning: "There are women in the world, my son!"

The young man's heart galloped back to Raynham.

"It is when you encounter them that you are thoroughly on trial. It is when you know them that life is either a mockery to you, or, as some find it, a gift of blessedness. They are our ordeal. Love of any human object is the soul's ordeal; and they are ours, loving them, or not."

The young man heard the whistle of the train. He saw the moon-lighted wood, and the vision of his beloved. He could barely hold himself down and listen.

"I believe," the baronet spoke with little of the cheerfulness of belief, "good women exist."

Oh, if he knew Lucy!

"But," and he gazed on Richard intently, "it is given to very few to meet them on the threshold—I may say, to none. We find them after hard buffeting, and usually, when we find the one fitted for us, our madness has misshaped our destiny, our lot is cast. For women are not the end, but the means, of life. In youth we think them the former, and thousands, who have not even the excuse of youth, select a mate—or worse—with that sole view. I believe women punish us for so perverting their uses. They punish Society."

The baronet put his hand to his brow as his mind travelled into consequences.

'Our most diligent pupil learns not so much as an earnest teacher,' says The Pilgrim's Scrip; and Sir Austin, in schooling himself to speak with moderation of women, was beginning to get a glimpse of their side of the case.

Cold Blood now touched on love to Hot Blood.

Cold Blood said, "It is a passion coming in the order of nature, the ripe fruit of our animal being."

Hot Blood felt: "It is a divinity! All that is worth living for in the world."

Cold Blood said: "It is a fever which tests our strength, and too often leads to perdition."

Hot Blood felt: "Lead whither it will, I follow it."

Cold Blood said: "It is a name men and women are much in the habit of employing to sanctify their appetites."

Hot Blood felt: "It is worship; religion; life!"

And so the two parallel lines ran on.

The baronet became more personal:

"You know my love for you, my son. The extent of it you cannot know; but you must know that it is something very deep, and—I do not wish to speak of it—but a father must sometimes petition for gratitude, since the only true expression of it is his son's moral good. If you care for my love, or love me in return, aid me with all your energies to keep you what I have made you, and guard you from the snares besetting you. It was in my hands once. It is ceasing to be so. Remember, my son, what my love is. It is different, I fear, with most fathers: but I am bound up in your welfare: what you do affects me vitally. You will take no step that is not intimate with my happiness, or my misery. And I have had great disappointments, my son."

So far it was well. Richard loved his father, and even in his frenzied state he could not without emotion hear him thus speak.

Unhappily, the baronet, who by some fatality never could see when he was winning the battle, thought proper in his wisdom to water the dryness of his sermon with a little jocoseness, on the subject of young men fancying themselves in love, and, when they were raw and green, absolutely wanting to be—that most awful thing, which the wisest and strongest of men undertake in hesitation and after self-mortification and penance— married! He sketched the Foolish Young Fellow—the object of general ridicule and covert contempt. He sketched the Woman—the strange thing made in our image, and with all our faculties—passing to the rule of one who in taking her proved that he could not rule himself, and had no knowledge of her save as a choice morsel which he would burn the whole world, and himself in the bargain, to possess. He harped upon the Foolish Young Fellow, till the foolish young fellow felt his skin tingle and was half suffocated with shame and rage.

After this, the baronet might be as wise as he pleased: he had quite undone his work. He might analyze Love and anatomize Woman. He might accord to her her due position, and paint her fair: he might be shrewd, jocose, gentle, pathetic, wonderfully wise: he spoke to deaf ears.

Closing his sermon with the question, softly uttered: "Have you anything to tell me, Richard?" and hoping for a confession, and a thorough re-establishment of confidence, the callous answer struck him cold: "I have not."

The baronet relapsed in his chair, and made diagrams of his fingers.

Richard turned his back on further dialogue by going to the window. In the section of sky over the street twinkled two or three stars; shining faintly, feeling the moon. The moon was rising: the woods were lifting up to her: his star of the woods would be there. A bed of moss set about flowers in a basket under him breathed to his nostril of the woodland keenly, and filled him with delirious longing.

A succession of hard sighs brought his father's hand on his shoulder.

"You have nothing you could say to me, my son? Tell me, Richard! Remember, there is no home for the soul where dwells a shadow of untruth!"

"Nothing at all, sir," the young man replied, meeting him with the full orbs of his eyes.

The baronet withdrew his hand, and paced the room.

At last it grew impossible for Richard to control his impatience, and he said: "Do you intend me to stay here, sir? Am I not to return to Raynham at all to-night?"

His father was again falsely jocular:

"What? and catch the train after giving it ten minutes' start?"

"Cassandra will take me," said the young man earnestly. "I needn't ride her hard, sir. Or perhaps you would lend me your Winkelried? I should be down with him in little better than three hours."

"Even then, you know, the park-gates would be locked."

"Well, I could stable him in the village. Dowling knows the horse, and would treat him properly. May I have him, sir?"

The cloud cleared off Richard's face as he asked. At least, if he missed his love that night he would be near her, breathing the same air, marking what star was above her bedchamber, hearing the hushed night-talk of the trees about her dwelling: looking on the distances that were like hope half fulfilled and a bodily presence bright as Hesper, since he knew her. There were two swallows under the eaves shadowing Lucy's chamber-windows: two swallows, mates in one nest, blissful birds, who twittered and cheep-cheeped to the sole-lying beauty in her bed. Around these birds the lover's heart revolved, he knew not why. He associated them with all his close-veiled dreams of happiness. Seldom a morning passed when he did not watch them leave the nest on their breakfast-flight, busy in the happy stillness of dawn. It seemed to him now that if he could be at Raynham to see them in to-morrow's dawn he would be compensated for his incalculable loss of to-night: he would forgive and love his father, London, the life, the world. Just to see those purple backs and white breasts flash out into the quiet morning air! He wanted no more.

The baronet's trifling had placed this enormous boon within the young man's visionary grasp.

He still went on trying the boy's temper.

"You know there would be nobody ready for you at Raynham. It is unfair to disturb the maids."

Richard overrode every objection.

"Well, then, my son," said the baronet, preserving his half-jocular air, "I must tell you that it is my wish to have you in town."

"Then you have not been ill at all, sir!" cried Richard, as in his despair he seized the whole plot.

"I have been as well as you could have desired me to be," said his father.

"Why did they lie to me?" the young man wrathfully exclaimed.

"I think, Richard, you can best answer that," rejoined Sir Austin, kindly severe.

Dread of being signalized as the Foolish Young Fellow prevented Richard from expostulating further. Sir Austin saw him grinding his passion into powder for future explosion, and thought it best to leave him for awhile.

CHAPTER XXII

For three weeks Richard had to remain in town and endure the teachings of the System in a new atmosphere. He had to sit and listen to men of science who came to renew their intimacy with his father, and whom of all men his father wished him to respect and study; practically scientific men being, in the baronet's estimation, the only minds thoroughly mated and enviable. He had to endure an introduction to the Grandisons, and meet the eyes of his kind, haunted as he was by the Foolish Young Fellow. The idea that he might by any chance be identified with him held the poor youth in silent subjection. And it was horrible. For it was a continued outrage on the fair image he had in his heart. The notion of the world laughing at him because he loved sweet Lucy stung him to momentary frenzies, and developed premature misanthropy in his spirit. Also the System desired to show him whither young women of the parish lead us, and he was dragged about at nighttime to see the sons and daughters of darkness, after the fashion prescribed to Mr. Thompson; how they danced and ogled down the high road to perdition. But from this sight possibly the teacher learnt more than his pupil, since we find him seriously asking his meditative hours, in the Note-book: "Wherefore Wild Oats are only of one gender?" a question certainly not suggested to him at Raynham; and again—"Whether men might not be attaching too rigid an importance?"...to a subject with a dotted tail apparently, for he gives it no other in the Note-book. But, as I apprehend, he had come to plead in behalf of women here, and had deduced something from positive observation. To Richard the scenes he witnessed were strange wild pictures, likely if anything to have increased his misanthropy, but for his love.

Certain sweet little notes from Lucy sustained the lover during the first two weeks of exile. They ceased; and now Richard fell into such despondency that his father in alarm had to take measures to hasten their return to Raynham. At the close of the third week Berry laid a pair of letters, bearing the Raynham post-mark, on the break-

fast-table, and, after reading one attentively, the baronet asked his son if he was inclined to quit the metropolis.

"For Raynham, air?" cried Richard, and relapsed, saying, "As you will!" aware that he had given a glimpse of the Foolish Young Fellow.

Berry accordingly received orders to make arrangements for their instant return to Raynham.

The letter Sir Austin lifted his head from to bespeak his son's wishes was a composition of the wise youth Adrian's, and ran thus:

"Benson is doggedly recovering. He requires great indemnities. Happy when a faithful fool is the main sufferer in a household! I quite agree with you that our faithful fool is the best servant of great schemes. Benson is now a piece of history. I tell him that this is indemnity enough, and that the sweet Muse usually insists upon gentlemen being half-flayed before she will condescend to notice them; but Benson, I regret to say, rejects the comfort so fine a reflection should offer, and had rather keep his skin and live opaque. Heroism seems partly a matter of training. Faithful folly is Benson's nature: the rest has been thrust upon.

"The young person has resigned the neighbourhood. I had an interview with the fair Papist myself, and also with the man Blaize. They were both sensible, though one swore and the other sighed. She is pretty. I hope she does not paint. I can affirm that her legs are strong, for she walks to Bellingham twice a week to take her Scarlet bath, when, having confessed and been made clean by the Romish unction, she walks back the brisker, of which my Protestant muscular systems is yet aware. It was on the road to Bellingham I engaged her. She is well in the matter of hair. Madam Godiva might challenge her, it would be a fair match. Has it never struck you that Woman is nearer the vegetable than Man?—Mr. Blaize intends her for his son a junction that every lover of fairy mythology must desire to see consummated. Young Tom is heir to all the agremens of the Beast. The maids of Lobourne say (I hear) that he is a very Proculus among them. Possibly the envious men say it for the maids. Beauty does not speak bad grammar—and altogether she is better out of the way."

The other letter was from Lady Blandish, a lady's letter, and said:

"I have fulfilled your commission to the best of my ability, and heartily sad it has made me. She is indeed very much above her station—pity that it is so! She is almost beautiful—quite beautiful at times, and not in any way what you have been led to fancy. The poor child had no story to tell. I have again seen her, and talked with her for an hour as kindly as I could. I could gather nothing more than we know. It is just a woman's history as it invariably commences. Richard is the god of her idolatry. She will renounce him, and sacrifice herself for his sake. Are we so bad? She asked me what she was to do. She would do whatever was imposed upon her—all but pretend to love another, and that she never would, and, I believe, never will. You know I am sentimental, and I confess we dropped a few tears together. Her uncle has sent her for the Winter to the institution where it appears she was educated, and where they are very fond of her and want to keep her, which it would be a good thing if they were to do. The man is a good sort of man. She was entrusted to him by her father, and he never interferes with her religion, and is very scrupulous about all that pertains to it, though, as he says, he is a Christian himself. In the Spring (but the poor child does not know this) she is to come back, and be married to his lout of a son. I am determined to prevent that. May I not reckon on your promise to aid me? When you see her, I am sure you will. It would be sacrilege to look on and permit such a thing. You know, they are cousins. She asked me, where in the world there was one like Richard? What could I answer? They were your own words, and spoken with a depth of conviction! I hope he is really calm. I shudder to think of him when he comes, and discovers what I have been doing. I hope I have been really doing right! A good deed, you say, never dies; but we cannot always know—I must rely on you. Yes, it is; I should think, easy to suffer martyrdom when one is sure of one's cause! but then one must be sure of it. I have done nothing lately but to repeat to myself that saying of yours, No. 54, C. 7, P.S.; and it has consoled me, I cannot say why, except that all wisdom consoles, whether it applies directly or not:

"For this reason so many fall from God, who have attained to Him; that they cling to Him with their Weakness, not with their Strength.'

"I like to know of what you are thinking when you composed this or that saying—what suggested it. May not one be admitted to inspect the machinery of wisdom? I feel curious to know how thoughts—real thoughts—are born. Not that I hope to win the secret. Here is the beginning of one (but we poor women can never put together even two of the three ideas which you say go to form a thought): 'When a wise man makes a false step, will he not go farther than a fool?' It has just flitted through me.

"I cannot get on with Gibbon, so wait your return to recommence the readings. I dislike the sneering essence of his writings. I keep referring to his face, until the dislike seems to become personal. How different is it with Wordsworth! And yet I cannot escape from the thought that he is always solemnly thinking of himself (but I do reverence him). But this is curious; Byron was a greater egoist, and yet I do not feel the same with him. He reminds me of a beast of the desert, savage and beautiful; and the former is what one would imagine a superior donkey reclaimed from the heathen to be—a very superior donkey, I mean, with great power of speech and great natural complacency, and whose stubbornness you must admire as part of his mission. The worst is that no one will imagine anything sublime in a superior donkey, so my simile is unfair and false. Is it not strange? I love Wordsworth best, and yet Byron has the greater power over me. How is that?"

("Because," Sir Austin wrote beside the query in pencil, "women are cowards, and succumb to Irony and Passion, rather than yield their hearts to Excellence and Nature's Inspiration.")

The letter pursued:

"I have finished Boiardo and have taken up Berni. The latter offends me. I suppose we women do not really care for humour. You are right in saying we have none ourselves, and 'cackle' instead of laugh. It is true (of me, at least) that 'Falstaff is only to us an incorrigible fat man.' I want to know what he illustrates. And Don Quixote—what end can be served in making a noble mind ridiculous?—I hear you say—practical. So it is. We are very narrow, I know. But we like wit—practical again! Or in your words (when I really think they generally come to my aid—perhaps it is that it is often all your