

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  
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke  
Nestroy Marie de France  
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz  
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz  
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving  
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**Ordeal of Richard Feverel –  
Volume 6**

George Meredith

# Imprint

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## **BOOK 6.**

XXXIX. THE LITTLE BIRD AND THE FALCON: A BERRY TO THE RESCUE!

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XLI. AUSTIN RETURNS

XLII. NATURE SPEAKS

XLIII. AGAIN THE MAGIAN CONFLICT

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XLV. LADY BLANDISH TO AUSTIN WENTWORTH



## CHAPTER XXXIX

At a season when the pleasant South-western Island has few attractions to other than invalids and hermits enamoured of wind and rain, the potent nobleman, Lord Mountfalcon, still lingered there to the disgust of his friends and special parasite. "Mount's in for it again," they said among themselves. "Hang the women!" was a natural sequence. For, don't you see, what a shame it was of the women to be always kindling such a very inflammable subject! All understood that Cupid had twanged his bow, and transfixed a peer of Britain for the fiftieth time: but none would perceive, though he vouched for it with his most eloquent oaths, that this was a totally different case from the antecedent ones. So it had been sworn to them too frequently before. He was as a man with mighty tidings, and no language: intensely communicative, but inarticulate. Good round oaths had formerly compassed and expounded his noble emotions. They were now quite beyond the comprehension of blasphemy, even when emphasized, and by this the poor lord divinely felt the case was different. There is something impressive in a great human hulk writhing under the unutterable torments of a mastery he cannot contend with, or account for, or explain by means of intelligible words. At first he took refuge in the depths of his contempt for women. Cupid gave him line. When he had come to vent his worst of them, the fair face now stamped on his brain beamed the more triumphantly: so the harpooned whale rose to the surface, and after a few convulsions, surrendered his huge length. My lord was in love with Richard's young wife. He gave proofs of it by burying himself beside her. To her, could she have seen it, he gave further proofs of a real devotion, in affecting, and in her presence feeling, nothing beyond a lively interest in her well-being. This wonder, that when near her he should be cool and composed, and when away from her wrapped in a tempest of desires, was matter for what powers of cogitation the heavy nobleman possessed.

The Hon. Peter, tired of his journeys to and fro, urged him to press the business. Lord Mountfalcon was wiser, or more scrupulous, than his parasite. Almost every evening he saw Lucy. The

inexperienced little wife apprehended no harm in his visits. Moreover, Richard had commended her to the care of Lord Mountfalcon, and Lady Judith. Lady Judith had left the Island for London: Lord Mountfalcon remained. There could be no harm. If she had ever thought so, she no longer did. Secretly, perhaps, she was flattered. Lord Mountfalcon was as well educated as it is the fortune of the run of titled elder sons to be: he could talk and instruct: he was a lord: and he let her understand that he was wicked, very wicked, and that she improved him. The heroine, in common with the hero, has her ambition to be of use in the world—to do some good: and the task of reclaiming a bad man is extremely seductive to good women. Dear to their tender bosoms as old china is a bad man they are mending! Lord Mountfalcon had none of the arts of a libertine: his gold, his title, and his person had hitherto preserved him from having long to sigh in vain, or sigh at all, possibly: the Hon. Peter did his villainies for him. No alarm was given to Lucy's pure instinct, as might have been the case had my lord been over-adept. It was nice in her martyrdom to have a true friend to support her, and really to be able to do something for that friend. Too simple-minded to think much of his lordship's position, she was yet a woman. "He, a great nobleman, does not scorn to acknowledge me, and think something of me," may have been one of the half-thoughts passing through her now and then, as she reflected in self-defence on the proud family she had married into.

January was watering and freezing old earth by turns, when the Hon. Peter travelled down to the sun of his purse with great news. He had no sooner broached his lordship's immediate weakness, than Mountfalcon began to plunge like a heavy dragoon in difficulties. He swore by this and that he had come across an angel for his sins, and would do her no hurt. The next moment he swore she must be his, though she cursed like a cat. His lordship's illustrations were not choice. "I haven't advanced an inch," he groaned. "Brayder! upon my soul, that little woman could do anything with me. By heaven! I'd marry her to-morrow. Here I am, seeing her every day in the week out or in, and what do you think she gets me to talk about?—history! Isn't it enough to make a fellow mad? and there am I lecturing like a prig, and by heaven! while I'm at it I feel a

pleasure in it; and when I leave the house I should feel an immense gratification in shooting somebody. What do they say in town?"

"Not much," said Brayder, significantly.

"When's that fellow – her husband – coming down?"

"I rather hope we've settled him for life, Mount."

Nobleman and parasite exchanged looks.

"How d'ye mean?"

Brayder hummed an air, and broke it to say, "He's in for Don Juan at a gallop, that's all."

"The deuce! Has Bella got him?" Mountfalcon asked with eagerness.

Brayder handed my lord a letter. It was dated from the Sussex coast, signed "Richard," and was worded thus:

"My beautiful Devil! –

"Since we're both devils together, and have found each other out, come to me at once, or I shall be going somewhere in a hurry. Come, my bright hell-star! I ran away from you, and now I ask you to come to me! You have taught me how devils love, and I can't do without you. Come an hour after you receive this."

Mountfalcon turned over the letter to see if there was any more. "Complimentary love-epistle!" he remarked, and rising from his chair and striding about, muttered, "The dog! how infamously he treats his wife!"

"Very bad," said Brayder.

"How did you get hold of this?"

"Strolled into Belle's dressing-room, waiting for her turned over her pincushion hap-hazard. You know her trick."

"By Jove! I think that girl does it on purpose. Thank heaven, I haven't written her any letters for an age. Is she going to him?"

"Not she! But it's odd, Mount! – did you ever know her refuse money before? She tore up the cheque in style, and presented me the fragments with two or three of the delicacies of language she

learnt at your Academy. I rather like to hear a woman swear. It embellishes her!"

Mountfalcon took counsel of his parasite as to the end the letter could be made to serve. Both conscientiously agreed that Richard's behaviour to his wife was infamous, and that he at least deserved no mercy. "But," said his lordship, "it won't do to show the letter. At first she'll be swearing it's false, and then she'll stick to him closer. I know the sluts."

"The rule of contrary," said Brayder, carelessly. "She must see the trahison with her eyes. They believe their eyes. There's your chance, Mount. You step in: you give her revenge and consolation—two birds at one shot. That's what they like."

"You're an ass, Brayder," the nobleman exclaimed. "You're an infernal blackguard. You talk of this little woman as if she and other women were all of a piece. I don't see anything I gain by this confounded letter. Her husband's a brute—that's clear."

"Will you leave it to me, Mount?"

"Be damned before I do!" muttered my lord.

"Thank you. Now see how this will end: You're too soft, Mount. You'll be made a fool of."

"I tell you, Brayder, there's nothing to be done. If I carry her off—I've been on the point of doing it every day—what'll come of that? She'll look—I can't stand her eyes—I shall be a fool—worse off with her than I am now."

Mountfalcon yawned despondently. "And what do you think?" he pursued. "Isn't it enough to make a fellow gnash his teeth? She's"...he mentioned something in an underbreath, and turned red as he said it.

"Hm!" Brayder put up his mouth and rapped the handle of his cane on his chin. "That's disagreeable, Mount. You don't exactly want to act in that character. You haven't got a diploma. Bother!"

"Do you think I love her a bit less?" broke out my lord in a frenzy. "By heaven! I'd read to her by her bedside, and talk that infernal history to her, if it pleased her, all day and all night."

"You're evidently graduating for a midwife, Mount."

The nobleman appeared silently to accept the imputation.

"What do they say in town?" he asked again.

Brayder said the sole question was, whether it was maid, wife, or widow.

"I'll go to her this evening," Mountfalcon resumed, after – to judge by the cast of his face – reflecting deeply. "I'll go to her this evening. She shall know what infernal torment she makes me suffer."

"Do you mean to say she don't know it?"

"Hasn't an idea – thinks me a friend. And so, by heaven! I'll be to her."

"A – hm!" went the Honourable Peter. "This way to the sign of the Green Man, ladies!"

"Do you want to be pitched out of the window, Brayder?"

"Once was enough, Mount. The Salvage Man is strong. I may have forgotten the trick of alighting on my feet. There – there! I'll be sworn she's excessively innocent, and thinks you a disinterested friend."

"I'll go to her this evening," Mountfalcon repeated. "She shall know what damned misery it is to see her in such a position. I can't hold out any longer. Deceit's horrible to such a girl as that. I'd rather have her cursing me than speaking and looking as she does. Dear little girl! – she's only a child. You haven't an idea how sensible that little woman is."

"Have you?" inquired the cunning one.

"My belief is, Brayder, that there are angels among women," said Mountfalcon, evading his parasite's eye as he spoke.

To the world, Lord Mountfalcon was the thoroughly wicked man; his parasite simply ingeniously dissipated. Full many a man of God had thought it the easier task to reclaim the Hon. Peter.

Lucy received her noble friend by firelight that evening, and sat much in the shade. She offered to have the candles brought in. He begged her to allow the room to remain as it was. "I have something to say to you," he observed with a certain solemnity.

"Yes — to me?" said Lucy, quickly.

Lord Mountfalcon knew he had a great deal to say, but how to say it, and what it exactly was, he did not know.<sup>1</sup>

"You conceal it admirably," he began, "but you must be very lonely here —

I fear, unhappy."

"I should have been lonely, but for your kindness, my lord," said Lucy.

"I am not unhappy." Her face was in shade and could not belie her.

"Is there any help that one who would really be your friend might give you, Mrs. Feverel?"

"None indeed that I know of," Lucy replied. "Who can help us to pay for our sins?"

"At least you may permit me to endeavour to pay my debts, since you have helped me to wash out some of any sins."

"Ah, my lord!" said Lucy, not displeased. It is sweet for a woman to believe she has drawn the serpent's teeth.

"I tell you the truth," Lord Mountfalcon went on. "What object could I have in deceiving you? I know you quite above flattery — so different from other women!"

"Oh, pray, do not say that," interposed Lucy.

"According to my experience, then."

"But you say you have met such — such very bad women."

"I have. And now that I meet a good one, it is my misfortune."

"Your misfortune, Lord Mountfalcon?"

"Yes, and I might say more."

His lordship held impressively mute.

"How strange men are!" thought Lucy. "He had some unhappy secret."

Tom Bakewell, who had a habit of coming into the room on various pretences during the nobleman's visits, put a stop to the revelation, if his lordship intended to make any.

When they were alone again, Lucy said, smiling: "Do you know, I am always ashamed to ask you to begin to read."

Mountfalcon stared. "To read?—oh! ha! yes!" he remembered his evening duties. "Very happy, I'm sure. Let me see. Where were we?"

"The life of the Emperor Julian. But indeed I feel quite ashamed to ask you to read, my lord. It's new to me; like a new world—hearing about Emperors, and armies, and things that really have been on the earth we walk upon. It fills my mind. But it must have ceased to interest you, and I was thinking that I would not tease you any more."

"Your pleasure is mine, Mrs. Feverel. 'Pon my honour, I'd read till I was hoarse, to hear your remarks."

"Are you laughing at me?"

"Do I look so?"

Lord Mountfalcon had fine full eyes, and by merely dropping the lids he could appear to endow them with mental expression.

"No, you are not," said Lucy. "I must thank you for your forbearance."

The nobleman went on his honour loudly.

Now it was an object of Lucy's to have him reading; for his sake, for her sake, and for somebody else's sake; which somebody else was probably considered first in the matter. When he was reading to her, he seemed to be legitimizing his presence there; and though she had no doubts or suspicions whatever, she was easier in her heart while she had him employed in that office. So she rose to fetch the book, laid it open on the table at his lordship's elbow, and quietly waited to ring for candles when he should be willing to commence.

That evening Lord Mountfalcon could not get himself up to the farce, and he felt a pity for the strangely innocent unprotected child with anguish hanging over her, that withheld the words he wanted to speak, or insinuate. He sat silent and did nothing.

"What I do not like him for," said Lucy, meditatively, "is his changing his religion. He would have been such a hero, but for that. I could have loved him."

"Who is it you could have loved, Mrs. Feverel?" Lord Mountfalcon asked.

"The Emperor Julian."

"Oh! the Emperor Julian! Well, he was an apostate but then, you know, he meant what he was about. He didn't even do it for a woman."

"For a woman!" cried Lucy. "What man would for a woman?"

"I would."

"You, Lord Mountfalcon?"

"Yes. I'd turn Catholic to-morrow."

"You make me very unhappy if you say that, my lord."

"Then I'll unsay it."

Lucy slightly shuddered. She put her hand upon the bell to ring for lights.

"Do you reject a convert, Mrs. Feverel?" said the nobleman.

"Oh yes! yes! I do. One who does not give his conscience I would not have."

"If he gives his heart and body, can he give more?"

Lucy's hand pressed the bell. She did not like the doubtful light with one who was so unscrupulous. Lord Mountfalcon had never spoken in this way before. He spoke better, too. She missed the aristocratic twang in his voice, and the hesitation for words, and the fluid lordliness with which he rolled over difficulties in speech.

Simultaneously with the sounding of the bell the door opened, and presented Tom Bakewell. There was a double knock at the same instant at the street door. Lucy delayed to give orders.

"Can it be a letter, Tom!—so late?" she said, changing colour. "Pray run and see."

"That an't powst" Tom remarked, as he obeyed his mistress.

"Are you very anxious for a letter, Mrs. Feverel?" Lord Mountfalcon inquired.

"Oh, no!—yes, I am, very." said Lucy. Her quick ear caught the tones of a voice she remembered. "That dear old thing has come to see me," she cried, starting up.

Tom ushered a bunch of black satin into the room.

"Mrs. Berry!" said Lucy, running up to her and kissing her.

"Me, my darlin'!" Mrs. Berry, breathless and rosy with her journey, returned the salute. "Me truly it is, in fault of a better, for I ain't one to stand by and give the devil his licence—roamin'! and the salt sure enough have spilte my bride-gown at the beginnin', which ain't the best sign. Bless ye!—Oh, here he is." She beheld a male figure in a chair by the half light, and swung around to address him. "You bad man!" she held aloft one of her fat fingers, "I've come on ye like a bolt, I have, and goin' to make ye do your duty, naughty boy! But your my darlin' babe," she melted, as was her custom, "and I'll never meet you and not give to ye the kiss of a mother."

Before Lord Mountfalcon could find time to expostulate the soft woman had him by the neck, and was down among his luxurious whiskers.

"Ha!" She gave a smothered shriek, and fell back. "What hair's that?"

Tom Bakewell just then illumined the transaction.

"Oh, my gracious!" Mrs. Berry breathed with horror, "I been and kiss a strange man!"

Lucy, half-laughing, but in dreadful concern, begged the noble lord to excuse the woful mistake.

"Extremely flattered, highly favoured, I'm sure," said his lordship, re-arranging his disconcerted moustache; "may I beg the pleasure of an introduction?"

"My husband's dear old nurse—Mrs. Berry," said Lucy, taking her hand to lend her countenance. "Lord Mountfalcon, Mrs. Berry."

Mrs. Berry sought grace while she performed a series of apologetic bobs, and wiped the perspiration from her forehead.

Lucy put her into a chair: Lord Mountfalcon asked for an account of her passage over to the Island; receiving distressingly full particulars, by which it was revealed that the softness of her heart was only equalled by the weakness of her stomach. The recital calmed Mrs. Berry down.

"Well, and where's my—where's Mr. Richard? yer husband, my dear?" Mrs.

Berry turned from her tale to question.

"Did you expect to see him here?" said Lucy, in a broken voice.

"And where else, my love? since he haven't been seen in London a whole fortnight."

Lucy did not speak.

"We will dismiss the Emperor Julian till to-morrow, I think," said Lord Mountfalcon, rising and bowing.

Lucy gave him her hand with mute thanks. He touched it distantly, embraced Mrs. Berry in a farewell bow, and was shown out of the house by Tom Bakewell.

The moment he was gone, Mrs. Berry threw up her arms. "Did ye ever know sich a horrid thing to go and happen to a virtuous woman!" she exclaimed. "I could cry at it, I could! To be goin' and kissin' a strange hairy man! Oh dear me! what's cornin' next, I wonder? Whiskers! thinks I—for I know the touch o' whiskers—'t ain't like other hair—what! have he growed a crop that sudden, I says to myself; and it flashed on me I been and made a awful mistake! and the lights come in, and I see that great hairy man—beggin' his par-

don—nobleman, and if I could 'a dropped through the floor out o' sight o' men, drat 'em! they're al'ays in the way, that they are!"—

"Mrs. Berry," Lucy checked her, "did you expect to find him here?"

"Askin' that solemn?" retorted Berry. "What him? your husband? O' course I did! and you got him—somewheres hid."

"I have not heard from my husband for fifteen days," said Lucy, and her tears rolled heavily off her cheeks.

"Not heer from him!—fifteen days!" Berry echoed.

"O Mrs. Berry! dear kind Mrs. Berry! have you no news? nothing to tell me! I've borne it so long. They're cruel to me, Mrs. Berry. Oh, do you know if I have offended him—my husband? While he wrote I did not complain. I could live on his letters for years. But not to hear from him! To think I have ruined him, and that he repents! Do they want to take him from me? Do they want me dead? O Mrs. Berry! I've had no one to speak out my heart to all this time, and I cannot, cannot help crying, Mrs. Berry!"

Mrs. Berry was inclined to be miserable at what she heard from Lucy's lips, and she was herself full of dire apprehension; but it was never this excellent creature's system to be miserable in company. The sight of a sorrow that was not positive, and could not refer to proof, set her resolutely the other way.

"Fiddle-faddle," she said. "I'd like to see him repent! He won't find anywheres a beauty like his own dear little wife, and he know it. Now, look you here, my dear—you blessed weepin' pet—the man that could see ye with that hair of yours there in ruins, and he backed by the law, and not rush into your arms and hold ye squeezed for life, he ain't got much man in him, I say; and no one can say that of my babe! I was sayin', look here, to comfort ye—oh, why, to be sure he've got some surprise for ye. And so've I, my lamb! Hark, now! His father've come to town, like a good reasonable man at last, to u-nite ye both, and bring your bodies together, as your hearts is, for everlastin'. Now ain't that news?"

"Oh!" cried Lucy, "that takes my last hope away. I thought he had gone to his father." She burst into fresh tears.

Mrs. Berry paused, disturbed.

"Belike he's travellin' after him," she suggested.

"Fifteen days, Mrs. Berry!"

"Ah, fifteen weeks, my dear, after sieh a man as that. He's a regular meteor, is Sir Austin Feverel, Raynham Abbey. Well, so hark you here. I says to myself, that knows him—for I did think my babe was in his natural nest—I says, the bar'net'll never write for you both to come up and beg forgiveness, so down I'll go and fetch you up. For there was your mistake, my dear, ever to leave your husband to go away from ye one hour in a young marriage. It's dangerous, it's mad, it's wrong, and it's only to be righted by your obeyin' of me, as I commands it: for I has my fits, though I am a soft 'un. Obey me, and ye'll be happy tomorrow—or the next to it."

Lucy was willing to see comfort. She was weary of her self-inflicted martyrdom, and glad to give herself up to somebody else's guidance utterly.

"But why does he not write to me, Mrs. Berry?"

"'Cause, 'cause—who can tell the why of men, my dear? But that he love ye faithful, I'll swear. Haven't he groaned in my arms that he couldn't come to ye?—weak wretch! Hasn't he swore how he loved ye to me, poor young man! But this is your fault, my sweet. Yes, it be. You should 'a followed my 'dvice at the fust—'stead o' going into your 'eroics about this and t'other." Here Mrs. Berry poured forth fresh sentences on matrimony, pointed especially at young couples. "I should 'a been a fool if I hadn't suffered myself," she confessed, "so I'll thank my Berry if I makes you wise in season."

Lucy smoothed her ruddy plump cheeks, and gazed up affectionately into the soft woman's kind brown eyes. Endearing phrases passed from mouth to mouth. And as she gazed Lucy blushed, as one who has something very secret to tell, very sweet, very strange, but cannot quite bring herself to speak it.

"Well! these's three men in my life I kissed," said Mrs. Berry, too much absorbed in her extraordinary adventure to notice the young wife's struggling bosom, "three men, and one a nobleman! He've got more whisker than my Berry, I wonder what the man thought. Ten

to one he'll think, now, I was glad o' my chance—they're that vain, whether they's lords or commons. How was I to know? I nat'ral thinks none but her husband'd sit in that chair. Ha! and in the dark? and alone with ye?" Mrs. Berry hardened her eyes, "and your husband away? What do this mean? Tell to me, child, what it mean his bein' here alone without ere a candle?"

"Lord Mountfalcon is the only friend I have here," said Lucy. "He is very kind. He comes almost every evening."

"Lord Montfalcon—that his name!" Mrs. Berry exclaimed. "I been that flurried by the man, I didn't mind it at first. He come every evenin', and your husband out o' sight! My goodness me! it's gettin' worse and worse. And what do he come for, now, ma'am? Now tell me candid what ye do together here in the dark of an evenin'."

Mrs. Berry glanced severely.

"O Mrs. Berry! please not to speak in that way—I don't like it," said Lucy, pouting.

"What do he come for, I ask?"

"Because he is kind, Mrs. Berry. He sees me very lonely, and wishes to amuse me. And he tells me of things I know nothing about and"—

"And wants to be a-teachin' some of his things, mayhap," Mrs. Berry interrupted with a ruffled breast.

"You are a very ungenerous, suspicious, naughty old woman," said Lucy, chiding her.

"And you're a silly, unsuspectin' little bird," Mrs. Berry retorted, as she returned her taps on the cheek. "You haven't told me what ye do together, and what's his excuse for comin'."

"Well, then, Mrs. Berry, almost every evening that he comes we read History, and he explains the battles, and talks to me about the great men. And he says I'm not silly, Mrs. Berry."

"That's one bit o' lime on your wings, my bird. History, indeed! History to a young married lovely woman alone in the dark! a pretty

History! Why, I know that man's name, my dear. He's a notorious living rake, that Lord Montfalcon. No woman's safe with him."

"Ah, but he hasn't deceived me, Mrs. Berry. He has not pretended he was good."

"More's his art," quoth the experienced dame. "So you read History together in the dark; my dear!"

"I was unwell to-night, Mrs. Berry. I wanted him not to see my face. Look! there's the book open ready for him when the candles come in. And

now, you dear kind darling old thing, let me kiss you for coming to me.

I do love you. Talk of other things."

"So we will," said Mrs. Berry softening to Lucy's caresses. "So let us. A nobleman, indeed, alone with a young wife in the dark, and she sich a beauty! I say this shall be put a stop to now and henceforth, on the spot it shall! He won't meneuvele Bessy Berry with his arts. There! I drop him. I'm dyin' for a cup o' tea, my dear."

Lucy got up to ring the bell, and as Mrs. Berry, incapable of quite dropping him, was continuing to say: "Let him go and boast I kiss him; he ain't nothin' to be 'shamed of in a chaste woman's kiss—unawares— which men don't get too often in their lives, I can assure 'em;"— her eye surveyed Lucy's figure.

Lo, when Lucy returned to her, Mrs. Berry surrounded her with her arms, and drew her into feminine depths. "Oh, you blessed!" she cried in most meaning tone, "you good, lovin', proper little wife, you!"

"What is it, Mrs. Berry!" lisps Lucy, opening the most innocent blue eyes.

"As if I couldn't see, you pet! It was my flurry blinded me, or I'd 'a marked ye the fast shock. Thinkin' to deceive me!"