

The background of the cover is a vibrant, stylized illustration. On the left, a woman's silhouette is shown in profile, looking towards the right. In the center, a large, multi-story Victorian house with many lit windows sits on a hill. In the bottom right, a heron stands in a body of water. The sky is filled with swirling, colorful patterns in shades of blue, green, and yellow. The overall style is reminiscent of a woodcut or a stylized painting.

THE MYSTERIES OF HERON DYKE

(VOL. 1-3) (ANNOTATED)

T. W. SPEIGHT

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The Mysteries of Heron Dyke (Vol. 1-3) (Annotated)

*In this **enriched edition**, we have carefully created added value for your reading experience.*

Enriched Edition. A Novel of Incident

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Maren
Fairbourne*

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Table of Contents

[The Mysteries of Heron Dyke \(Vol. 1-3\)](#)

[Memorable Quotes](#)

[Notes](#)

The Mysteries of Heron Dyke (Vol. 1-3)

[Main Table of Contents](#)

[Volume 1](#)

[Volume 2](#)

[Volume 3](#)

VOLUME 1

[Table of Contents](#)

Table of Contents

Chapter I. Gilbert Denison's Will
Chapter II. Mrs. Carlyon at Home
Chapter III. Captain Lennox Startled
Chapter IV. Heron Dyke and Its Inmates
Chapter V. An Unexpected Visitor
Chapter VI. One Snowy Night
Chapter VII. Coming to Dinner
Chapter VIII. At the Lilacs
Chapter IX. The Doctor's Verdict
Chapter X. A Day with Philip Cleeve
Chapter XI. A Visit from Mrs. Carlyon
Chapter XII. Farewell

CHAPTER I.

GILBERT DENISON'S WILL

[Table of Contents](#)

The First Gentleman in Europe[1] sat upon the throne of his fathers, and the Battle of Waterloo[2] was a stupendous event that still dwelt freshly in men's memories, when one bright August evening, Gilbert Denison, gentleman, of Heron Dyke, Norfolk, lay dying in his lodgings in Bloomsbury Square, London.

He was a man of sixty, and, but a few days before he had been full of life, health, and energy. As he was riding into town from Enfield, where he had been visiting some friends, his horse slipped, fell, and rolled heavily over its rider. All had been done for Gilbert Denison that surgical skill could do, but to no avail. His hours were numbered, and none knew that sad fact better than the dying man. But in that strong, rugged, resolute face could not be read any dread of the approaching end. He was a Denison, and no Denison had ever been known to fear anything.

By the bedside sat his favourite nephew and heir, whose christian name was also Gilbert. He was a young man of three or four and twenty, with a face which, allowing for the difference in their years, was, both in character and features, singularly like that of his uncle. Gilbert the younger was not, and never had been, a handsome man; but his face was instinct with power: it expressed strength of will, and a sort of high, resolute defiance of Fortune in whatever guise she might present herself. This young man carried a riding-whip in his hand; on a table near lay a pair of buckskin gloves. He wore Hessian boots with tassels, and a bottle-

green riding-coat much braided and befrogged. His vest was of striped nankin, and he carried two watches with a huge bunch of seals pendant from each of them; while over the velvet collar of his coat fell his long hair. His throat was swathed in voluminous folds of soft white muslin, tied in a huge bow, and fastened with a small brooch of brilliants. Our young gentleman evidently believed himself to be a diamond of the first water.

The August sun shone warmly into the room; through the half-open windows came the hum of traffic in the streets; a vagrant breeze, playing at hide-and-seek among the heavy hangings of the bed, brought with it a faint odour of mignonette from the boxes on the broad window-sills outside. A hand of the dying man sought a hand of his nephew, found it, and clasped it. The latter had been expressing his sorrow at finding his uncle in so sad a state, and his hopes that he would yet get over the results of his accident.

"There is no hope of that, boy," said Mr. Denison. "A few hours more, and all will be ended. But why should you be sorry? Is the heir ever really sorry when he sees the riches and power, which all his life he has been taught will one day be his, coming at last into his own grasp? Human nature's pretty much the same all the world over."

"But I am indeed heartily sorry; believe me or not, uncle, as you like."

"I will try to believe you, boy," said Mr. Denison with a faint smile, "and that, perhaps, will answer the same purpose."

There was silence for a little while, then the sick man resumed.

"Nephew, this is a sad, wild, reckless life that you have been leading in London these four years past."

"It is all that, uncle."

"Had I lived, what would the end of it have been?"

"Upon my word I don't know. Utter beggary I suppose."

"How much money are you possessed of?"

"I won a hundred guineas the other night at faro. I am not aware that I possess much beyond that."

"And your debts?"

The young man mused a moment.

"Really, I hardly know to a hundred or two. A thousand pounds would probably cover them, but I am not sure."

"A thousand pounds! And I have paid your debts twice over within the last four years!"

Gilbert the younger smiled.

"You see, uncle, the schedule I sent you each time was not a complete one. I did not care to let you know every liability."

"You did not expect me to assist you again?"

"Certainly not, sir, after the last letter you wrote to me. I knew that when you wrote in that strain you meant what you said. I should never have troubled you again."

"After your hundred guineas had gone--and they would last you but a very short time--what did you intend to do?"

"I had hardly thought seriously about it. Perhaps the fickle goddess might have smiled on me again. If not, I should have done something or other. Probably enlisted."

"Enlisted as a common soldier?"

"As a common soldier. I don't know that I'm good for much else."

"But all that is changed now. Or at least you suppose so."

"I suppose nothing of the kind, sir," said the young man, hotly.

"As the master of Heron Dyke, with an income of six thousand a year, you will be a very different personage from

a needy young rake, haunting low gaming-tables, and trying to pick up a few guineas at faro from bigger simpletons than yourself."

Gilbert the younger sprang to his feet, his lips white and quivering with passion.

"Sir, you insult me," he said, "and with your permission I will retire."

And he took up his hat and gloves.

"Sit down, sir--sit down, I say," cried the elder man, sternly. "Don't imagine that I have done with you yet."

"I have never been a frequenter of low gaming-houses; I have never cheated at cards in my life," said the young man, proudly.

"You would not have been a Denison if you had cheated at cards. But again I tell you to sit down. I have much to say to you."

Gilbert the younger did as he was told, but with something of an ill grace. In his eyes there was a cold, hard look that had not been there before.

"Nephew, if you have not yet disgraced yourself--and I don't believe that you have--you are on the high-road to do so. Has it ever entered your head to think whither such mad doings as yours must inevitably land you?"

"I suppose that other men before me have sown their wild oats," said Gilbert, sulkily. "I have heard it said that you yourself, sir----"

"Never mind me. The question we have now to consider is that of your future. When you are master of Heron Dyke--if you ever do become its master--is it your intention to make ducks and drakes of the old property, as you have made ducks and drakes of the fortune left you by your father?"

"Really, sir, that is a question that has never entered into my thoughts."

"Then it is high time that it did enter them. I said just now 'If you ever do become the master of Heron Dyke.'"

"Is that intended as a threat, sir?" asked Gilbert, a little fiercely.

"Never mind what it is intended as, but listen to me. I presume you are quite aware that it is in my power to leave Heron Dyke to anyone whom I may choose to nominate as my heir--to the greatest stranger in England if I like to do so?"

"I am of course aware that the property is not entailed," said the other, stiffly.

"And never has been entailed," said Mr. Denison with emphasis. "It has come down from heir male to heir male, for six hundred years. Providence having blessed me with no children of my own, by the unwritten law of the family the property would descend in due sequence to you. But that unwritten law is one which I have full power to abrogate if I think well to do so. Such being the case, ask yourself this question, Gilbert Denison: 'Judging from my past life for the last four years, am I a fit and proper person to become the representative of one of the oldest families in Norfolk? And would my uncle, taking into account all that he knows of me, be really justified in putting me into that position?'"

The elder man paused, the younger one hung his head.

"I think, sir, that the best thing you can do will be to let me go headlong to ruin after my own fashion," was all that he said.

"You will be good enough to remember that I have another nephew," resumed the dying man. "There is another Gilbert Denison as well as yourself."

"Aye! I'm not likely to forget him," said the other, savagely.

"So! You have met, have you? Well, from all I have heard of my brother Henry's son, he is a clever, industrious, and well-conducted young man--one not given, as some people are, to wine-bibbing and all kinds of riotous living. Had you been killed in a brawl, which seems a by no means unlikely end for you to come to, he would have stood as the next heir to Heron Dyke."

Young Gilbert writhed uneasily in his chair; the frown on his face grew darker as he listened.

"And even as matters are," resumed his uncle, blandly, "even though you have not yet come to an untimely end, it is quite competent for me to pass you over and nominate your cousin as my heir."

"Oh, sir, this is intolerable!" cried the young man, starting to his feet for the second time. "To see you as you are, uncle, grieves me to the bottom of my heart--believe me or not. But I did not come here to be preached at. No man knows my faults and follies so well as I know them myself. Leave your property as you may think well to do so; but I hope and pray, sir, that you will never mention the subject to me again."

He turned to quit the room, and had reached the door, when he heard his uncle's voice call his name faintly. Looking back, he was startled to see the change which a few seconds had wrought in the dying man. His eyes were glassy, the pallor of his face had deepened to a deathlike whiteness. Gilbert was seriously frightened: he thought the end had come. There was some brandy in a decanter on the little table. It was the work of a moment to pour some into a glass. Then, with the aid of a teaspoon, he inserted a small portion of the spirit between the teeth of the unconscious

man. This he did again and again, and in a little while he was gratified by seeing some signs of returning life. There was an Indian feather-fan on the chimney-piece. With this, having first flung the window wide open, he proceeded to fan his uncle's face. Presently Mr. Denison sighed deeply, and the light of consciousness flickered slowly back into his eyes. He stared at his nephew for a moment as though wondering whom he might be, smiled faintly, and pointed to a chair.

Gilbert took one of his uncle's clammy hands in his, chafed it gently for a little while, and then pressed it to his lips. "You are better now, sir," he said.

"Yes, I am better. 'Twas nothing but a little faintness. I shall not die before tomorrow night." He lay for a little while in silence, gazing up at the ceiling like one in deep thought. Then he said, "And now about the property, Berty."

The young man thrilled at the word. His uncle had not called him by that name since he was quite a lad. "Oh, sir, do not trouble yourself any more about the property," he cried. "Whatever you have done, you have no doubt done for the best."

"But I want to tell you what I have done, and why I have done it. To-morrow I may not have strength to do so." Young Gilbert moved uneasily in his chair. The sick man noticed it. "Impatient of control as ever," he said, with a smile. "Headstrong--wilful--obstinate; you are a true Denison. Measure me a dose out of that bottle on the chimney-piece. It will give me strength."

Gilbert did as he was bidden, and then resumed his seat by the bedside.

"It was not a likely thing, my boy, that I should leave the estate away from you," resumed Mr. Denison; and, despite all his self-control, a sudden light leapt into Gilbert's eyes as

he heard the words. "Notwithstanding all your wild ways and outrageous carryings on, I have never ceased to love you. You have been to me as my own son; as your father was to me a true brother. As for Henry, although he is dead, there was no love lost between us. We quarrelled and parted in anger, as we should quarrel and part in anger again were he still alive. I do not want to think that a son of his will ever call Heron Dyke his home."

Young Gilbert's face darkened again at the mention of his cousin's name. As between the two brothers years ago there had been a feud that nothing had ever healed, so between the two cousins there had arisen a deadly enmity which nothing in this world (so young Gilbert vowed a thousand times to himself) should ever bridge over. They were good haters, those Denisons, and never more so than when they had quarrelled with one of their own kith and kin.

"No, the old roof-tree shall be yours, Gilbert, and all that pertains to it," continued Mr. Denison, "as you will find when my will comes to be read. You will find, too, a good balance to your credit at the bank, for I have not been an improvident man. At the same time I have had expenses and losses of which you know nothing. But--there is a 'but' to everything in this world, you know--you will find in my will a certain proviso which I doubt not you will think a strange one, most probably a hard one, and which I feel sure you will at first resent almost as if I had done you a personal injury. It has not been without much thought and deliberation that the proviso I speak of has been embodied in the will, but I fully believe that twenty years hence, should you live as long, you will bless my memory for having so introduced it."

Mr. Denison lay back for a moment or two to gather breath. His nephew spake no word, but sat with his eyes

bent studiously on the floor.

"Gilbert, as a rule we Denisons are a long-lived race," resumed the dying man, "and but for this unhappy accident, I have a fancy that I should have worn for another score years at the least. If you have ever been at the trouble to read the inscriptions on the tombs of your ancestors in Nullington Church, you must have noticed how many of them lived to be seventy-five, eighty, and in some cases ninety years of age. Now, what prospect or likelihood is there of your living to be even seventy years old? Your constitution is impaired already. That dark, sunken look about the eyes, those fine-drawn lines around the mouth, what business have they there at your age? I tell you, Gilbert Denison, that if you do not change your mode of life at once and for ever, you will not live to see your thirtieth birthday. And what probability is there that you will change it? That is the question that I have asked myself, not once, but a thousand times. If this wild and reckless mode of life has such fascinations for you, that it has induced you to dissipate the fortune left you by your father, to apply to me more than once to extricate you from your difficulties, to involve you deeply with the money-lenders, and to bring you at length to contemplate I know not what as a mode of escape from your troubles, what sort of hold will it have over you when you come into the uncontrolled possession of six thousand a year? That is a problem which I, for my part, cannot answer."

Mr. Denison paused as though he expected a reply to his last question. There was silence for a little while, and then the nephew spoke in a low, constrained voice.

"I can only repeat, sir, what I said before: that you had better let me go headlong to ruin my own way."

"Not so. I have told you already that I have made you my heir. Heron Dyke, and all that pertains to it, will call you master in a few short hours. It----" but here he broke off for a moment to overcome some inward emotion. "I shall never see the old place again, and I had such schemes for the next dozen years! Well--well! we Denisons are not children that we should cry because our hopes are taken from us."

"Sir, is not this excitement too much for you?" asked the nephew.

But the other cleared his voice, and went on more firmly than before:

"Yes, Gilbert, the old roof-tree and the broad acres shall all be yours, and long may you live to enjoy them. That is now the dearest wish left me on earth."

"But the proviso, sir, of which you spoke just now?" said the young man, whose curiosity was all aflame.

"The proviso is this: That should you not live to be seventy years of age, the estate, and all pertaining to it, shall pass away from you and yours at your death, and go to your cousin, the son of my brother Henry; or to his heirs, should he not be alive at the time. But should you overpass your seventieth birthday, though it be but by twelve short hours, the estate will remain yours, to will away to whom you please, or to dispose of as you may think best."

Gilbert Denison stared into his uncle's face, with eyes which plainly said: "Are you crazy, or are you not?"

"No, Gilbert, I am not mad, however much, at this first moment, you may be inclined to think me so," said Mr. Denison with a faint smile, as he laid his fingers caressingly on the young man's arm. "I told you before, that I had not done this thing without due thought and deliberation. It is the only mode I can think of to save you from yourself, to tear you away from this terrible life of dissipation, and to

make a man of you, such as I and your father, were he now alive, would like you to become. I have given you something to live for; I have put before you the strongest inducement I can think of to reform your ways. Once on a time you had a splendid constitution, and seventy is not a great age for a Denison to reach. In due time you will probably marry and have a son. That son may be left little better off than a pauper should his father not live to see his seventieth birthday. If I cannot induce you to take care of your health for your own sake, I will try to induce you to do so for the sake of those who will come after you. Heaven only knows whether my plan will succeed. Our poor purblind schemes are but feeble makeshifts at the best."

"In case I should fall in the hunting-field, sir, or----"

"Or come to such an untimely end as I have come to, eh? Should you meet with your death by accident, and not by your own hand, the special stipulation in the will which I have just explained to you will become invalid, and of no effect. You will find this and other points duly provided for. Nothing has been forgotten."

There ensued a silence. The sick man suddenly broke it.

"Perhaps some scheme may enter your head, Gilbert, of trying to upset the will after I am dead? But you will find that a difficult matter to do."

"Now, Heaven forbid, sir," cried the young man, vehemently, "that such a thought should find harbourage in my brain for a single moment! You think me worse than I am. You do not know me: you have never understood me."

"Do we ever really understand one another in this world? We are so far removed from Heaven, that the lights burn dimly, and we see each other but as shadows walking in the dusk."

At this moment there was a ring below stairs, then a knock at the chamber door, and in came the nurse. The doctor was waiting.

"You had better go now, my boy," said Mr. Denison, pressing Gilbert's hand affectionately. "At ten tomorrow I shall expect to see you again."

Gilbert Denison stood up and took the dying man's fingers within his strong grasp; he gazed with grave, resolute eyes into the dying man's face.

"One moment, sir. As I said before--you do not know me. You have seen one side of me--the weak side--and that is all. If you think that, when I make up my mind to do so, I cannot throw off the trammels of my present life, almost as easily as I cast aside an old coat, then, sir, you are quite and entirely mistaken. That I have been weak and foolish I fully admit, but it is just possible, sir, that, young as I am, I may have had trials and temptations of which you know nothing. How many men before me have striven to find in reckless dissipation a Lethe for their troubles? Not that I wish to excuse myself: far from it. I only wish you to understand and believe, uncle, that there is a side to my character of which as yet you know nothing."

"I am willing to believe it, Gilbert," was the answering murmur: and once more the young man pressed Mr. Denison's hand to his lips.

When Gilbert Denison called in Bloomsbury Square the following morning he found his uncle much weaker and more exhausted. Mr. Denison was evidently sinking fast. Gilbert stayed with him till the end. A little while before that end came, he drew his nephew down to him and spoke in a whisper:

"Never forget the motto of your family, my boy: 'What I have, I hold.'"

And before the sun rose again, Gilbert Denison the younger was master of Heron Dyke, with an income of six thousand a year.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. CARLYON AT HOME

[Table of Contents](#)

Forty-five years, with all their manifold changes, had come and gone since Squire Denison, of Heron Dyke, died in his lodgings in Bloomsbury Square, London.

It was the height of the London season[3], and at Mrs. Carlyon's house at Bayswater a small party were assembled in honour of the twenty-first birthday of her niece, Miss Ella Winter. Mrs. Carlyon, who had been a widow for several years, was still a handsome woman, although she could count considerably more than forty summers. Her house was a good one, pleasantly situated, and well furnished. She kept her brougham[4] and half-a-dozen servants, and nothing pleased her better than to see herself surrounded by young people. Most enjoyable to her were those times when Miss Winter was allowed by her great-uncle, the present Squire Denison, of Heron Dyke, to exchange for a few weeks the quietude of the country for the gaieties of Bayswater and the delights of the London season. Such visits, however, were few and far between, and were appreciated accordingly.

To-day some ten or a dozen friends were dining with Mrs. Carlyon. One of them was little Freddy Bootle, with his little fluffy moustache, his eye-glass, and his short-cut flaxen hair parted down the middle. Freddy was universally acknowledged to be one of the best-hearted fellows in the world, and one of the most easily imposed upon. He was well connected, and was a junior partner in the great East-end brewery firm of Fownes, Bootle and Bootle. He was in

love with Miss Winter, and had proposed to her a year ago. Although unsuccessful in his suit, his feelings remained unchanged, and he was not without hope that Ella would one day look on him with more favourable eyes. Ella and he remained the best of friends. That little episode of the declaration in the conservatory, which to him had been so momentous an affair, had been to her no more than a passing vexation.

Another of the gentlemen whom it may be as well to introduce is Philip Cleeve, son of Lady Cleeve, of Homedale, near Nullington. He and Miss Winter are great friends. Philip is in love with Maria Kettle, the only daughter of the Vicar of Nullington. What a handsome fellow he is, with his brown curling hair, his laughing hazel eyes, and his ever-ready smile. Ella sometimes wonders how Maria Kettle can resist his pleasant manners and fascinating ways. There is no more general favourite anywhere than Philip Cleeve. The worst his friends could say of him was that he was given to be a little careless in money matters--and his purse was a very slender one. Between ourselves, Philip was sometimes hard up for pocket-money: though, perhaps, these same friends suspected it not.

Dinner was over, and the ladies had returned to the drawing-room, when Mrs. Carlyon was called downstairs, and a couple of minutes later Ella was sent for. A gentleman had called, Captain Lennox, bringing with him a birthday gift for Ella, from Mr. Denison, of Heron Dyke. The Captain had accidentally met Mr. Denison the day previously, and happening to mention that he was about to run up to London on a flying visit, the latter had asked him to take charge of and deliver to his niece a certain little parcel which he did not feel quite easy about entrusting to the post. This parcel the Captain now delivered into Ella's

hands. On being opened, the contents proved to be a pair of diamond and pearl ear-rings.

Mrs. Carlyon at once gave Captain Lennox a cordial invitation to join the party upstairs, which he as cordially accepted. They had never met before; but Ella had some acquaintance with the Captain and his widowed sister, who lived with him in Norfolk. The Captain and his sister had come strangers to Nullington some six months previously, and finding the place to their liking, had, after a fortnight's sojourn at an hotel, taken The Lilacs, a pretty cottage ornée. Captain Lennox was a tall, thin, fair-haired man about forty years of age. He had clear-cut aquiline features, wore a moustache and long whiskers, and was always faultlessly dressed.

"How was my uncle looking, Captain Lennox?" asked Ella, somewhat anxiously, when the ear-rings had been duly examined and admired.

"Certainly quite as well as I ever saw him look."

"I am glad of that. I had a letter from him three days ago, in which he said that he had not felt better for years. But that is a phrase he nearly always makes use of when he writes to me. He does it to satisfy me. When his health is in question, Uncle Gilbert's statements are sometimes to be taken with a grain of salt."

"Now that Captain Lennox has assured you that your uncle is no worse than usual, you can afford to give me another week at Bayswater," said Mrs. Carlyon.

Ella smiled and shook her head.

"I must go back next Monday without fail."

"You are as obstinate as the Squire himself," cried her aunt. "I have a great mind to write and tell him that he need not expect you before the twentieth."

"He will expect me back on the thirteenth," said Ella. "And I would not disappoint him for a great deal."

"Well, well, you must have your own way, I suppose. All the same, it is a great deprivation to me. But those good people upstairs will think that I am lost, so come along, both of you."

At this juncture a fresh arrival was announced. It was Mr. Conroy, special artist and correspondent for *The Illustrated Globe*, whose vivid letters from the seat of war had been so widely read of late. Mrs. Carlyon received him with warmth.

"I hope you have brought some of your sketches with you, as you so kindly promised," she said, when greetings were over.

"My portfolio is in the hall," he replied. "But you must not expect to see anything very finished. In fact, my sketches are all in the rough, just as I jotted them down immediately after the events I have attempted to portray."

"That will only serve to render them the more interesting. They will seem like veritable pulsations of that awful struggle," said Mrs. Carlyon, as she rang the bell and ordered the portfolio to be brought upstairs. Then she introduced Conroy to her niece, Miss Winter: and he gave a perceptible start.

"They have met before," thought Captain Lennox to himself. He was looking on from his seat close by, and he watched narrowly for a gleam of recognition between them. But no such look came into the eyes of either. The Captain, who had a keen nose for anything not above board, turned the matter over in his mind. "That start had a meaning in it," he mused. "There's more under the surface than shows itself at present."

Conroy never forgot the picture that stamped itself on his memory the first moment he set eyes on Ella Winter. He saw

before him a tall, slender girl, whose gait and movements were as free and stately as those of a queen. She had hair of the colour of chestnuts when at their ripest, and large luminous eyes of darkest blue. The eyebrows were thick and nearly straight, and darker in colour than her hair. Her face was a delightful one in the mingled expression of gravity and sweetness--the gravity was often near akin to melancholy--that habitually rested upon it. A forehead broad, but not very high; a straight, clear-cut nose with delicate nostrils; lips that were, perhaps, a trifle over-full, but that lacked nothing of purpose or decision; a firm, rounded chin with one dainty dimple in it: such was Ella Winter as first seen by Edward Conroy. This evening she wore a dress of rich but sober-tinted marone, relieved with lace of a creamy white.

"I have often wished to see her," muttered Conroy to himself. "Now I have seen her, and I am satisfied."

Mrs. Carlyon had the portfolio taken into her boudoir so as to be clear of the music and conversation in the larger room, and there a little group gathered round to examine and comment upon the sketches, and to listen to Conroy's few direct words of explanation whenever any such were needed.

Ella stood and looked on, listening to Mr. Conroy's remarks and to the comments of those around her, and only giving utterance to a monosyllable now and then. "This man differs, somehow, from other men," was her unspoken thought. "He is a man carved out by hand; not one of a thousand turned out by lathe, and all so much alike that you cannot tell one from another. He has individuality. He interests me."

She was taking but little apparent interest in what was going on before her; but, for all that, she lost no word that

was said. She stood, fan in hand, her arms crossed before her, her fingers interknit, her eyes, with a look of grave, sweet inquiry in them, bent on Conroy's face. "Aunt shall ask him to leave his portfolio till tomorrow," she thought, "and after these people are gone I can have his sketches all to myself."

Conroy was indeed of a different mould from those butterflies of fashion who ordinarily fluttered around Miss Winter. He was certainly not a handsome man, in the general acceptation of the term. His face was dark and somewhat rugged for a man still young, but lined with thought, and instinct with energy. He had seen his twenty-eighth birthday, but looked older. Edward Conroy had gone through much hardship and many dangers in the pursuit of his profession. Already his black hair was growing thin about the temples, and was streaked here and there with a fine line of grey. The predominant expression of his face was determination. He looked like a man not easily moved--whom, indeed, it would be almost impossible to move when once he had made up his mind to a certain course. And yet his face was one that women and children seemed to trust intuitively. At times a wonderful softness, an expression of almost feminine tenderness, would steal into his dark brown eyes. Tears had nothing to do with it: he was a man to whom tears were unknown. The sweetest springs are those which lie farthest from the surface and are the most difficult to reach. From the first, Ella felt that she had to contend against a will that was stronger than her own, From the first she could not help looking up to and deferring to Edward Conroy, as she had never deferred to any man but her uncle. Probably she liked him none the less for that.

When Conroy's sketches had been looked at and commented upon, the majority of the company went back

56 A chief-constable was a senior county police officer in England before later police titles became standard. Here, Mr. Wade holds that office and leads the local investigation.

57 A stiletto is a thin, sharply pointed dagger or stabbing blade. The doctor uses the term to describe the weapon that likely pierced Hubert Stone's heart.

58 These were literal keys used to unlock the locked green baize doors that separated the Squire's private rooms from the rest of the house. The story suggests several people each held one, allowing controlled access to the sickroom.

59 A baize-covered door was lined with a coarse woollen cloth, often used in large houses to muffle sound and mark off private areas. Here, the doors were part of the arrangement used to shut off the Squire's rooms.

60 A doctor mentioned as having attended Mr. Denison for twenty years before Dr. Jago took over. The text uses him to contrast older medical practice with newer approaches, though it does not give further biographical detail.

61 Malachite is a green mineral often used decoratively, and the phrase describes the material of the sleeve-link found by Betsy Tucker. Such a piece of jewelry would have been a distinctive personal item, useful as a clue in a crime investigation.

62 A town on the French Riviera, in the department of Var. In the 19th century it was a well-known winter resort for visitors seeking a milder climate.

63 A district in west London. It was and remains a residential area, and in the novel it marks Ella's temporary stay in the city.

64 A Latin phrase meaning "into the middle of things." It refers to beginning a narrative or explanation in the middle of the subject rather than from the start.

65 A light, horse-drawn vehicle for hire. In Victorian and Edwardian England, a fly was a common way to travel short distances, such as from a station to a house.

66 A hansom cab was a light, two-wheeled horse-drawn carriage for hire, common in 19th-century British cities. It was a standard form of urban transport before motor taxis.

67 This is the company in which Philip has invested money through Captain Lennox. The narrative later suggests the venture has failed, reflecting the speculative mining promotions common in the period.

68 Nullington is the nearby town where Edward Conroy lodges while visiting Heron Dyke. The text treats it as a local place-name rather than a major city, so modern readers may not recognize it.

69 A sleeve-link was a decorative fastener used with a shirt cuff, common in the 19th century. The description with malachite and gold indicates a jewelled gentleman's accessory, not a modern shirt button.

70 The body of hereditary nobles in Britain, such as dukes, earls, and barons. To “marry into the peerage” meant to marry someone of noble rank.

71 A place as an elected member of the House of Commons, or a hereditary or appointed seat in the House of Lords, depending on context. Here it means social and political status rather than a literal chair.

72 A flowering plant often grown in greenhouses or gardens, and also used as a decorative boutonniere or lapel flower. In this passage it refers to a flower worn in the buttonhole.

73 A local architect who is also Philip Cleeve’s employer or business associate. In the novel, he helps Lady Cleeve investigate Philip’s disappearance and later explains the financial trouble.

74 A silver-mining company in which Philip has invested money. The text says the mine has “come to grief,” meaning the venture has failed and its shares are likely worthless.

75 This means the Christmas season, traditionally the period around Christmas Day and the days immediately after it. In older usage it often referred more broadly to the whole festive season.

76 This refers to the local police force responsible for keeping order in the area. In the nineteenth century, rural districts often had their own constables or small police presence.

77 A guerdon is a reward or prize, especially one earned by effort or merit. The word is now rare and would have sounded literary or old-fashioned to many modern readers.

78 In the novel, this refers to a staged visit by a woman pretending to be a fortune-telling gypsy. Such scenes reflect a common Victorian literary stereotype, though the term itself is now considered dated.

79 This is Walter Scott's 1815 novel, well known in the nineteenth century for its character Meg Merrilies, a Highland gypsy woman. Conroy's mention shows that the characters are drawing on a familiar popular work of fiction.

80 In the novel, Philip had speculated in a dubious mining venture. The phrase would have been more immediately understood by Victorian readers as a risky investment scheme, not necessarily a literal productive mine.

81 Here "the turf" means horse-racing and betting on races, a common Victorian term. Lennox says he had "lost heavily on the turf," meaning he had gambled and incurred debts through racing speculation.

82 A country house or estate connected with the Denison family. The name sounds like an English place-name; "Priors" often appears in older place-names to indicate former monastic ownership.

83 A single lens held in the eye socket or against the eye, used before modern spectacles became common. It was a