

# **FOR LOVE AND LIFE**

**Volume 2**

BY  
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## CHAPTER I.

### Intoxication.

THERE is, perhaps, no such crisis in the life of a man as that which occurs when, for the first time, he feels the welfare and happiness of another to be involved in his own. A woman is seldom so entirely detached from ordinary ties of nature as to make this discovery suddenly, or even to be in the position when such a discovery is possible. So long as you have but yourself to think of, you may easily be pardoned for thinking very little of that self, for being careless of its advantage, and letting favourable opportunities slip through your fingers; but suppose you find out in a moment, without warning, that your interests are another's interests, that to push your own fortune is to push some one else's fortune, much dearer to you than yourself; and that, in short, you are no longer *you* at all, but the active member of a double personality—is as startling a sensation as can well be conceived. This was the idea which Edgar had received into his mind for the first time, and it was not wonderful that it excited, nay, intoxicated him, almost beyond his power of self-control. I say for the first time, though he had been on the eve of asking Gussy Thornleigh to marry him three years before, and had therefore realised, or thought he realised, what it would be to enter into such a relationship; but in those days Edgar was rich, and petted by the world, and his bride would have been only a delight and honour the more, not anything calling for sacrifice or effort on his part. He could have given her everything she desired in the world, without losing a night's rest, or disturbing a single habit. Now the case was very different. The new-born pride which had made him, to his

own surprise, so reluctant to apply to anyone for employment, and so little satisfied to dance attendance on Lord Newmarch, died at that single blow.

Dance attendance on Lord Newmarch! ask anybody, everybody for work! Yes, to be sure he would, and never think twice; for had he not now *her* to think of? A glow of exhilaration came over him. He had been careless, indifferent, sluggish, so long as it was himself only that had to be thought of. Thinking of himself did not suit Edgar; he got sick of the subject, and detested himself, and felt a hundred pricks of annoyance at the thought of being a suitor and applicant for patronage, bearing the scorns of office, and wanting as “patient merit” in a great man’s ante-room. But now! what did he care for those petty annoyances? Why should he object, like a pettish child, to ask for what he wanted? It was for her. He became himself again the moment that the strange and penetrating sweetness of this suggestion (which he declared to himself was incredible, yet believed with all his heart) stole into his soul. This had been what he wanted all along. To have some one to work for, some one to give him an object in life.

Lady Mary had not a notion what she was doing when she set light to the fire which was all ready for that touch—ready to blaze up, and carry with it her own schemes as well as her sister’s precautions. I suppose it was by reason of the fundamental difference between man and woman, that neither of these ladies divined how their hint would act upon Edgar. They thought his virtue (for which they half despised him—for women always have a secret sympathy for the selfish ardour of men in all questions of love) was so great that he might be trusted to restrain even Gussy herself in her “impetuosity,” as they called it, without considering that the young man was disposed to make a goddess of Gussy, to

take her will for law, and compass heaven and earth to procure her a gratification. Gussy, though she held herself justified in her unswerving attachment to Edgar, by the fact that, had it not been for his misfortune, she would long ago have been his wife, would, notwithstanding this consolation, have died of shame had she known how entirely her secret had been betrayed. But the betrayal was as a new life to Edgar. His heart rose with all its natural buoyancy; he seemed to himself to spurn his lowliness, his inactivity, his depressed and dejected state from him. That evening he beguiled his hosts into numberless discussions, out of sheer lightness of heart. He laughed at Lady Mary about her educational mania, boldly putting forth its comic side, and begging to know whether German lectures and the use of the globes were so much better, as means of education, than life itself, with all its many perplexities and questions, its hard lessons, its experiences, which no one can escape.

“If a demigod from the sixth form were to come down and seat himself on a bench in a dame’s school,” cried Edgar, “why, to be sure, he might learn something; but what would you think of the wisdom of the proceeding?”

“I am not a demigod from the sixth form,” said Lady Mary.

“Pardon me, but you are. You have been among the regnant class all your life, which of itself is an enormous cultivation. You have lived familiarly with people who guide the nation; you have spoken with most of those who are known to be worth speaking to, in England at least; and you have had a good share of the problems of life submitted to you. Mr. Tottenham’s whole career, for instance, which he says you decided—”

“What is that?” said Mr. Tottenham, looking up. “Whatever it is, what you say is quite true. I don’t know if it’s anything much worth calling a career; but, such as it is, it’s all her doing. You’re right there.”

“I am backed up by indisputable testimony,” said Edgar, laughing; “and in the face of all this, you can come and tell me that you want to educate your mind by means of the feeblest of lectures! Lady Mary, are you laughing at us? or are the dry lessons of grammar and such like scaffolding, really of more use in educating the mind than the far higher lessons of life?”

“How you set yourself to discourage me,” cried Lady Mary, half angry, half laughing. “That is not what you mean, Mr. Earnshaw. You mean that it is hopeless to train women to the accuracy, the exactness of thought which men are trained to. I understand you, though you put it so much more prettily.”

“I am afraid I don’t know what accuracy means,” said Edgar, “and exactness of thought suggests only Lord Newmarch to me; and Heaven deliver us from prigs, male and female! If you find, however, that the mass of young university men are so accurate, so exact, so accomplished, so trained to think well and clearly, then I envy you your eyes and perceptions—for to me they have a very different appearance; many of them, I should say, never think at all, and know a good deal less than Phil does, of whom I am the unworthy instructor—save the mark!” he added, with a laugh. “On the whole, honours have showered on my head; I have had greatness thrust upon me like Malvolio; not only to instruct Phil, but to help to educate Lady Mary Tottenham! What a frightful impostor I should feel myself if all this was my doing, and not yours.”

Lady Mary laughed too, but not without a little flush of offence. It even crossed her mind to wonder whether the young man had taken more wine than usual? for there was an exhilaration, a boldness, an *élan* about him which she had never perceived before. She looked at him with mingled suspicion and indignation—but caught such a glance from his eyes, which were full of a new warmth, life, and meaning, that Lady Mary dropped hers, confused and confounded, not knowing what to make of it. Had the porter, and the footman, and the under-gardener, who had seen Edgar kiss Lady Mary's hand, been present at that moment, they would certainly have drawn conclusions very unfavourable to Mr. Tottenham's peace of mind. But that unsuspecting personage sat engaged in his own occupation, and took no notice. He was turning over some papers which he had brought back with him from Tottenham's that very day.

“When you two have done sparring,” he said—“Time will wait for no man, and here we are within a few days of the entertainment at the shop. Earnshaw, I wish you would go in with me on Wednesday, and help me to help them in their arrangements. I have asked a few people for the first time, and it will be amusing to see the fine ladies, our customers, making themselves agreeable to my ‘assistants.’ By-the-way, that affair of Miss Lockwood gives me a great deal of uneasiness. I don't like to send her away. She seemed disposed to confide in you, my dear fellow—”

“I will go and secure her confidence,” said Edgar, with that gay readiness for everything which Lady Mary, with such amaze, had remarked already in his tone. Up to this moment he had wanted confidence in himself, and carried into everything the *insouciance* of a man who takes up with friendliness the interests of others, but has none of his own. All this was changed. He was another man,



liberated somehow from chains which she had never realised until now, when she saw they were broken. Could her conversation with him to-day have anything to do with it? Lady Mary was a very clever woman, but she groped in vain in the dark for some insight into the mind of this young man, who had seemed to her so simple. And the less she understood him, the more she respected Edgar; nay, her respect for him began to increase, from the moment when she found out that he was not so absolutely virtuous as she had taken him to be.

Next day, as soon as Phil's lessons were over, Edgar shut himself up, and, with a flush upon his face, and a certain tremor, which seemed to him to make his hand and his writing, by some curious paradox, more firm than usual, began to write letters. He wrote to Lord Newmarch, he wrote to one or two others whom he had known in his moment of prosperity, with a boldness and freedom at which he was himself astonished. He recalled to his old acquaintances, without feeling the least hesitation in doing so, the story of his past life, about which he had been, up to this moment, so proudly silent, and appealed to them to find him something to do. He wrote, not as a humble suitor does, but as one conscious of no humiliation in asking. The last time he had asked he had been conscious of humiliation; but every shadow of that self-consciousness had blown away from him now. He wondered at himself even, while he looked at those letters closed and directed on his writing-table. What was it that had taken away from him all sense of dislike to this proceeding, all his old inclination to let things go as they would? With that curious tremor which was so full of firmness and force still vibrating through him, he went out, avoiding Phil, who was lying in wait for him, and who moaned his absence like a sheep deprived of its lamb—which, I think, was

something like the parental feeling Phil experienced for his tutor—and set out for a long solitary walk across country, leaping ditches and stumbling across ploughed fields, by way of exhausting a little his own superabundant force and energy. Only a day or two since how dreary was the feeling with which he had left the house, where perhaps, for aught he knew, Gussy was at the moment thinking, with a sickening at his heart which seemed to make all nature dim, how he must never see her again, how he had pledged himself to keep out of the way, never to put himself consciously where he might have even the dreary satisfaction of a look at her. The same pledge was upon him still, and Edgar was ready to keep it to the last letter of his promise; but now it had become a simple dead letter. There was no more force, no more vital power in it, to keep the two apart, who had but one strong wish between them. He could keep it now gaily, knowing that he was in heart emancipated from it. There was nothing he could not have done on that brilliant wintry afternoon, when the sun shone upon him as if he had wanted cheering, and every pool glittered, and the sky warmed and flushed under his gaze with all the delightful sycophancy of nature for the happy. The dullest afternoon would have been just the same to Edgar. He was liberated, he was inspired, he felt himself a strong man, and with his life before him. Cold winds and dreary skies would have had no effect upon his spirits, and for this reason, I suppose, everything shone on him and flattered. To him that hath, shall be given.

He was not to get back, however, without being roused from this beatific condition to a consciousness of his humanity. As he passed through the village, chance drew Edgar's eye to the house which Lady Mary had noted as that of the doctor, and about which Miss Annetta Baker had discoursed so largely. A cab was at the

door, boxes were standing about the steps, and an animated conversation seemed to be going on between two men, one an elderly personage without a hat, who stood on the steps with the air of a man defending his door against an invader, while another and younger figure, standing in front of the cab, seemed to demand admission. "The new doctor has arrived before the old one is ready to go away," Edgar said to himself, amused by the awkwardness of the situation. He slackened his pace, that the altercation might be over before he passed, and saw the coach man surlily putting back again the boxes upon the cab. The old doctor pointed over Edgar's head to a cottage in the distance, where, he was aware, there was lodgings to be had; and as Edgar approached, the new doctor, as he supposed the stranger to be, turned reluctantly away, with a word to some one in the cab, which also began to turn slowly round to follow him. The stranger came along the broad sandy road which encircled the Green, towards Edgar, who, on his side, approached slowly. What was there in this slim tall figure which filled him with vague reminiscences? He got interested in spite of himself; was it some one he had known in his better days? who was it? The same fancy, I suppose, rose in the mind of the new-comer. When he turned round for the second time, after various communications with the inmates of the cab, and suddenly perceived Edgar, who was now within speaking distance, he gave a perceptible start. Either his reminiscences were less vague, or he was more prepared for the possibility of such a meeting. He hurried forward, holding out his hand, while Edgar stood still like one stunned. "Dr. Murray?" he said, at last, feeling for the moment as if he had been transported back to Loch Arroch. He was too bewildered to say more.

“You are very much surprised to see me,” said Charles Murray, with his half-frank, half-sidelong aspect; “and it is not wonderful. When we met last I had no thought of making any move. But circumstances changed, and a chance threw this in my way. Is it possible that we are so lucky as to find you a resident here?”

“For the moment,” said Edgar; “but indeed I am very much surprised. You are to be Dr. Frank’s successor? It is very odd that you should hit upon this village of all the world.”

“I hope it is a chance not disagreeable to either of us,” said the young doctor, with a glance of the suspicion which was natural to him; “but circumstances once more seem against us,” he added hurriedly, going back to the annoyance, which was then uppermost. “Here I have to go hunting through a strange place for lodgings at this hour,—my sister tired by a long journey. By the way, you have not seen Margaret; she is behind in the cab; all because the Franks forsooth, cannot go out of their house when they engaged to do so!”

“But the poor lady, I suppose, could not help it,” said Edgar, “according to what I have heard.”

“No, I suppose she couldn’t help it—on the whole,” he allowed, crossly. “Cabman, stop a moment—stop, I tell you! Margaret, here is some one you have often heard of—our cousin, who has been so good to the dear old granny—Edgar Earnshaw.”

Dr. Charles pronounced these last words with a sense of going further than he had ever gone before, in intimacy with Edgar. He had never ventured to call his cousin by his Christian name; and even now it was brought in by a side wind, as it were, and scarcely meant so much as a direct address. Edgar turned with some

curiosity to the cab, to see the sister whom he had seen waiting at the station for Dr. Murray some months ago. He expected to see a pretty and graceful young woman; but he was not prepared for the beauty of the face which looked at him from the carriage-window with a soft appealing smile, such as turns men's heads. She was tall, with a slight stoop (though that he could not see) and wore a hat with a long feather, which drooped with a graceful undulation somewhat similar, he thought, to the little bow she made him. She was pale, with very fine, refined features, a large pair of the softest, most pathetic blue eyes, and that smile which seemed to supplicate and implore for sympathy. There was much in Margaret's history which seemed to give special meaning to the plaintive affecting character of her face; but her face was so by nature, and looked as if its owner threw herself upon your sympathies, when indeed she had no thought of anything of the sort. A little girl of six or seven hung upon her, standing up in the carriage, and leaning closely against her mother's shoulder, in that clinging inseparable attitude, which, especially when child and mother are both exceptionally handsome, goes to the heart of the spectator. Edgar was subjugated at once; he took off his hat and went reverently to the carriage-door, as if she had been a saint.

"It is very pleasant that you should be here, and I am very glad to see you," she said, in soft Scotch accents, in which there was a plaintive, almost a complaining tone. Edgar found himself immediately voluble in his regrets as to the annoyance of their uncomfortable reception, and, ere he knew what he was doing, had volunteered to go with Dr. Charles to the lodgings, to introduce him, and see whether they were satisfactory. He could not quite understand why he had done it, and thus associated himself with a man who did not impress him favourably, as soon as he had turned

from the door of the cab, and lost sight of that beautiful face; of course he could not help it, he could not have refused his good offices to any stranger, he said to himself. He went on with his cousin to the cottage, where the landlady curtsied most deeply to the gentleman from Tottenham's, and was doubly anxious to serve people who were his friends; and before he left he had seen the beautiful new-comer, her little girl as always standing by her side leaning against her, seated on a sofa by a comfortable fire, and forgetting or seeming to forget, her fatigues. Dr. Charles could not smile so sweetly or look so interesting as his sister; he continued to inveigh against Dr. Franks, and his rashness in maintaining possession of the house.

“But the poor thing could not help it,” said Margaret, in her plaintive voice, but not without a gleam of fun (if that were possible without absolute desecration) in her eyes.

“They should not have stayed till the last moment; they should have made sure that nothing would happen,” the doctor said, hurrying in and out, and filling the little sitting-room with cloaks and wraps, and many small articles. Margaret made no attempt to help him, but she gave Edgar a look which seemed to say, “Forgive him! poor fellow, he is worried, and I am so sorry he has not a good temper.” Edgar did not know what to make of this angelical cousin. He walked away in the darkening, after he had seen them settled, with a curious feeling, which he could not explain to himself. Was he guilty of the meanness of being annoyed by the arrival of these relatives, who were in a position so different from that of his other friends? Was it possible that so paltry, so miserable a feeling could enter his mind—or what was it? Edgar could render no distinct account to himself of the sensation which oppressed him; but as he walked rapidly up the avenue in the

quickly falling darkness, he felt that something had happened, which, somehow or other, he could not tell how, was to affect his future life.

## CHAPTER II.

A youthful Solomon.

EDGAR felt so strong an inclination to say nothing about the sudden arrival of his cousins, that he thought it best to communicate at once what had happened. He told his hosts at dinner, describing the brother and sister, and Margaret's remarkable beauty, which had impressed him greatly.

“And really you did not know she was so pretty?” Lady Mary said, fixing a searching look upon him. Instant suspicion flashed up in her mind, a suspicion natural to womankind, that his evident admiration meant at least a possibility of something else. And if she had been consistent, no doubt she would have jumped at this, and felt in it an outlet for all her difficulties, and the safest of all ways of detaching Edgar from any chance of influence over her niece; but she was as inconsistent as most other people, and did not like this easy solution of the difficulty. She offered promptly to call upon the new-comers; but she did not cease to question Edgar about them with curiosity, much sharpened by suspicion. She extracted from him, in full detail, the history of the Murrays, of Margaret's early widowhood, and the special union which existed between her and her brother. Harry Thornleigh had arrived at Tottenham's that day, and the story interested him still more than it did Lady Mary. Poor Harry was glad enough to get away from his father's sole companionship; but he did not anticipate very much enjoyment of the kindred seclusion here. He grasped at Edgar as a drowning man grasps at a rope.



“I say, let’s go somewhere and smoke. I have so many things to tell you, and so many things to ask you,” he cried, when Lady Mary had gone to bed, and Mr. Tottenham, too, had departed to his private retirement, and Edgar, not knowing, any more than Harry himself did, that young Thornleigh was set over him as a sentinel, to guard him from all possibility of mischief, was but too glad to find himself with an uninstructed bystander, from whom he could have those bare “news” without consciousness or under-current of meaning, which convey so much more information than the scrap of enlightenment which well-meaning friends dole out with more and more sparing hands, in proportion as the feelings of the hearer are supposed to be more or less concerned. Harry was not so ignorant as Edgar thought him. He was not bright, but he flattered himself on being a man of the world, and was far from being uninterested in Gussy’s persistent neglect of all possible “opportunities.” “A girl don’t stand out like that without some cause for it,” Harry would have said, sagaciously; but he was too knowing to let it be perceived that he knew.

“There is a deal of difference up at home now,” he said. “I don’t mean my father—but you can’t think what changes Arden has made. Do you like to hear, or don’t you like to hear? I’ll guide myself accordingly. Very well, then I’ll speak. He’s on the right side in politics, you know, which you never were, and that’s a good thing; but he’s done everything you felt yourself bound not to do. Clare don’t like it, I don’t think. You should see the lot of new villas and houses. Arden ain’t a bit like Arden; it’s a new spick and span Yankee sort of town. I say, what would the old Squire have thought? but Arthur Arden don’t care.”

“He is right enough, Harry. He was not bound to respect anyone’s prejudices.”

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