

DESPERATE REMEDIES

A *Novel*

“Though a course of adventures which are only connected with each other by having happened to the same individual is what most frequently occurs in nature, yet the province of the romance-writer being artificial, there is more required from him than a mere compliance with the simplicity of reality.”¹

SIR W. SCOTT

IN THREE VOLUMES

Though a course of adventures which are only connected with each other by having happened to the same individual is what] Though an unconnected course of adventures is what WD] Though an unconnected course of adventure is what OM, W

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Thomas Hardy , Edited by Richard Nemesvari
Excerpt
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VOLUME 1

CHAPTER I.
THE EVENTS OF THIRTY YEARS.

1. *December and January, 1835–36.*

IN the long and intricately inwrought chain of circumstance which renders
worthy of record some experiences of Cytherea² Graye, Edward 5
Springrove, and others, the first event directly influencing the issue was
a Christmas visit.

In the above-mentioned year eighteen hundred and thirty-five, Ambrose
Graye, a young architect who had just commenced the practice of his 10
profession in the midland town of Hocbridge, went to London to spend
the Christmas holidays with a friend who lived in Bloomsbury. They had
gone up to Cambridge in the same year, and, after graduating together,
Huntway, the friend, had entered orders.

Graye was handsome, frank, and gentle. He had a volatility of thought
which, exercised on homeliness, was humour; on nature, picturesqueness; 15
on abstractions, poetry. Being, as a rule, broadcast, it was all three.

Of the wickedness of the world he was too forgetful. To discover evil in
a new friend is to most people only an additional experience: to him it was
ever a surprise.

While in London he became acquainted with a retired officer in the navy 20
named Bradleigh, who, with his wife and their daughter, lived in a small
street not far from Russell Square. Though they were in no more than
comfortable circumstances, the captain's wife came of an ancient family
whose genealogical tree was interlaced with some of the most illustrious
and well-known in the kingdom. 25

The young lady, their daughter, seemed to Graye by far the most
beautiful and queenly being he had ever beheld. She was about nineteen

1 CHAPTER I.] I OM, W 8 year eighteen hundred and thirty-five,] year, 1835, WD, OM, W
9 commenced] begun WD, OM, W
10 Hocbridge, went] Hocbridge, to the north of Christminster, went OM, W
13 entered] taken WD, OM, W 14 volatility] quality WD, OM, W
21 a small street] a street WD, OM] Dukery Street, W

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or twenty, and her name was Cytherea. In truth she was not so very unlike country girls of that type of beauty, except in one respect. She was perfect in her manner and bearing, and they were not. A mere distinguishing peculiarity, by catching the eye, is often read as the pervading characteristic, and she appeared to him no less than perfection throughout—transcending her rural rivals in very nature. Graye did a thing the blissfulness of which was only eclipsed by its hazardousness. He loved her at first sight.

His introductions had led him into contact with Cytherea and her parents two or three times on the first week of his arrival in London, and accident and a lover's contrivance brought them together as frequently the week following. The parents liked young Graye, and having few friends (for their equals in blood were their superiors in position), he was received on very generous terms. His passion for Cytherea grew not only strong, but ineffably strong: she, without positively encouraging him, tacitly assented to his schemes for being near her. Her father and mother seemed to have lost all confidence in nobility of birth, without money to give effect to its presence, and looked upon the budding consequence of the young people's reciprocal glances with placidity, if not actual favour.

Graye's whole delicious dream terminated in a sad and unaccountable episode. After passing through three weeks of sweet experience, he had arrived at the last stage—a kind of moral Gaza³—before plunging into an emotional desert. The second week in January had come round, and it was necessary for the young architect to leave town.

Throughout his acquaintanceship with the lady of his heart there had been this marked peculiarity in her love: she had delighted in his presence as a sweetheart should, yet from first to last she had repressed all recognition of the true nature of the thread which drew them together, blinding herself to its meaning and only natural tendency, and appearing to dread his announcement of them. The present seemed enough for her without cumulative hope: usually, even if love is in itself an end, it must be regarded as a beginning to be enjoyed.

In spite of evasions as an obstacle, and in consequence of them as a spur, he would put the matter off no longer. It was evening. He took her into

14 strong:] strong; HH] exalted: WD, OM, W 19 delicious] impassioned WD, OM, W
26 should] should do WD, OM, W

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a little conservatory on the landing, and there among the evergreens, by the light of a few tiny lamps, infinitely enhancing the freshness and beauty of the leaves, he made the declaration of a love as fresh and beautiful as they.

“My love—my darling, be my wife!”

“We must part now,” said she, in a voice of agony. “I will write to you.” 5
She loosened her hand and rushed away.

In a wild fever Graye went home and watched for the next morning. Who shall express his misery and wonder when a note containing these words was put into his hand?

“Good-bye; good-bye for ever. As recognised lovers something divides 10
us eternally. Forgive me—I should have told you before; but your love was sweet! Never mention me.”

That very day, and as it seemed, to put an end to a painful condition of things, daughter and parents left London to pay off a promised visit to a relative in a western county. No message or letter of entreaty could wring 15
from her any explanation. She begged him not to follow her, and the most bewildering point was that her father and mother appeared, from the tone of a letter Graye received from them, as vexed and sad as he at this sudden renunciation. One thing was plain: without admitting her reason as valid, they knew what that reason was, and did not intend to reveal it. 20

A week from that day Ambrose Graye left his friend Huntway’s house and saw no more of the Love he mourned. From time to time his friend answered any inquiry Graye made by letter respecting her. But very poor food to a lover is intelligence of a mistress filtered through a friend. Huntway could tell nothing definitely. He said he believed there had 25
been some prior flirtation between Cytherea and her cousin, an officer of the line,⁴ two or three years before Graye met her, which had suddenly been terminated by the cousin’s departure for India, and the young lady’s travelling on the continent with her parents the whole of the ensuing summer, on account of delicate health.⁵ Eventually Huntway said that 30

5 “We must part now,” said she, in a voice of agony.] She seemed like one just awakened. ‘Ah—we must part now!’ she faltered in a voice of anguish. WD] She seemed like one just awakened.
‘Ah—we must part now!’ she faltered, in a voice of anguish. OM, W
15 message or letter] letter or message HH
26 Cytherea and her cousin, an officer] Cytherea and some mysterious officer HH
28 cousin’s departure for India] vanishing of her vague military lover HH

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circumstances had rendered Graye's attachment more hopeless still. Cytherea's mother had unexpectedly inherited a large fortune and estates in the west of England by the rapid fall of some intervening lives. This had caused their removal from the small house by Gower Street, and, as it appeared, a renunciation of their old friends in that quarter.

Young Graye concluded that his Cytherea had forgotten him and his love. But he could not forget her.

2. *From 1843 to 1861.*

Eight years later, feeling lonely and depressed—a man without relatives, with many acquaintances but no friends,—Ambrose Graye met a young lady of a different kind, fairly endowed with money and good gifts. As to caring very deeply for another woman after the loss of Cytherea, it was an absolute impossibility with him. With all, the beautiful things of the earth become more dear as they elude pursuit; but with some natures utter elusion is the one special event which will make a passing love permanent for ever.

This second young lady and Graye were married. That he did not, first or last, love his wife as he should have done, was known to all; but few knew that his unmanageable heart could never be weaned from useless repining at the loss of its first idol.

His character to some extent deteriorated, as emotional constitutions will under the long sense of disappointment at having missed their imagined destiny. And thus, though naturally of a gentle and pleasant disposition, he grew to be not so tenderly regarded by his acquaintances as it is the lot of some of those persons to be. The winning and sanguine impressibility of his early life developed by degrees a moody nervousness, and when not picturing prospects drawn from baseless hope he was the victim of indescribable depression. The practical issue of such a condition was improvidence, originally almost an unconscious improvidence, for every debt incurred had been mentally paid off with a religious exactness from the

4 by Gower Street] in Bloomsbury WD, OM, W 25 impressibility] receptivity OM, W
30 a religious exactness] religious exactness HH

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treasures of expectation before mentioned. But as years revolved, the same course was continued, from the lack of spirit sufficient for shifting out of an old groove when it has been found to lead to disaster.

In the year eighteen hundred and sixty-one his wife died, leaving him a widower with two children. The elder, a son named Owen, now just 5 turned seventeen, was taken from school, and initiated as pupil to the profession of architect in his father's office. The remaining child was a daughter, and Owen's junior by a year.

Her christian name was Cytherea, and it is easy to guess why.

3. *October the twelfth, 1863.* 10

We pass over two years in order to reach the next cardinal event of the story. The scene is still the Grayes' native town of Hocbridge, but as it appeared on a Monday afternoon in the month of October.

The weather was sunny and dry, but the ancient borough was to be seen wearing one of its least attractive aspects. First on account of the time. 15 It was that stagnant hour of the twenty-four when the practical garishness of Day, having escaped from the fresh long shadows and enlivening newness of the morning, has not yet made any perceptible advance towards acquiring those mellow and soothing tones which grace its decline. Next, it was that stage in the progress of the week when business—which, carried 20 on under the gables of an old country place, is not devoid of a romantic sparkle—was well-nigh extinguished. Lastly, the town was intentionally bent upon being attractive by exhibiting to an influx of visitors the local talent for dramatic recitation, and provincial towns trying to be lively are the dullest of dull things. 25

Provincial towns are like little children in this respect, that they interest most when they are enacting native peculiarities unconscious of beholders. Discovering themselves to be watched they attempt to be entertaining by putting on an antic,⁶ and produce disagreeable caricatures which spoil them. 30

4 eighteen hundred and sixty-one] 1861 WD, OM, W
12 the story] these persons' lives WD, OM, W 26 Provincial] Little WD, OM, W
29 an antic] antics W

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The weather-stained clock face in the low church tower standing at the intersection of the three chief streets was expressing half-past two to the Town-Hall opposite, where the much talked-of reading from Shakespeare was about to be commenced. The doors were open, and those persons who

5 had already assembled within the building were noticing the entrance of the new-comers—silently criticising their dresses—questioning the genuineness of their teeth and hair—estimating their private means.

Among these later ones came an exceptional young maiden who glowed amid the dulness like a single bright-red poppy in a field of brown stubble.

10 She wore an elegant dark jacket, lavender dress, hat with grey strings and trimmings, and gloves of a colour to harmonize. She lightly walked up the side passage of the room, cast a slight glance around, and entered the seat pointed out to her.

The young girl was Cytherea Graye, her age was now about eighteen.

15 During her entry, and at various times whilst sitting in her seat and listening to the reader on the platform, her personal appearance formed an interesting subject of study for several neighbouring eyes.

Her face was exceedingly attractive, though artistically less perfect than her figure, which approached unusually near to the standard of faultlessness. But even this feature of hers yielded the palm to the gracefulness of her movement, which was fascinating and delightful to an extreme degree.

20

Indeed, motion was her speciality, whether shown on its most extended scale of bodily progression, or minutely, as in the uplifting of her eyelids, the bending of her fingers, the pouting of her lip. The carriage of her

25 head—motion within motion—a glide upon a glide—was as delicate as that of a magnetic needle. And this flexibility and elasticity had never been taught her by rule, nor even been acquired by observation, but, *nullo cultu*,⁷ had naturally developed itself with her years. In childhood, a stone or stalk in the way, which had been the inevitable occasion of a fall to her play-

30 mates, had usually left her safe and upright on her feet after the narrowest escape by oscillations and whirls for the preservation of her balance. At mixed Christmas parties, when she numbered but twelve or thirteen years, and was heartily despised on that account by lads who deemed

4 be commenced] begin WD, OM, W 6 dresses] dress WD, OM, W

28 childhood] infancy W

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themselves men, her apt lightness in the dance covered this incompleteness in her womanhood, and compelled the self-same youths in spite of resolutions to seize upon her childish figure as a partner whom they could not afford to condemn. And in later years, when the instincts of her sex had shown her this point as the best and rarest feature in her external self, she was not found wanting in attention to the cultivation of finish in its details. 5

Her hair rested gaily upon her shoulders in curls, and was of a shining corn yellow in the high lights, deepening to a definite nut brown as each curl wound round into the shade. She had eyes of a sapphire hue, though rather darker than the gem ordinarily appears; they possessed the affectionate and liquid sparkle of loyalty and good faith as distinguishable from that harder brightness which seems to express faithfulness only to the object confronting them. 10

But to attempt to gain a view of her—or indeed of any fascinating woman—from a measured category, is as difficult as to appreciate the effect of a landscape by exploring it at night with a lantern—or of a full chord of music by piping the notes in succession. Nevertheless it may readily be believed from the description here ventured, that among the many winning phases of her aspect, these were particularly striking:— 15

1. During pleasant doubt, when her eyes brightened stealthily and smiled (as eyes will smile) as distinctly as her lips, and in the space of a single instant expressed clearly the whole round of degrees of expectancy which lie over the wide expanse between Yea and Nay. 20
2. During the telling of a secret, which was involuntarily accompanied by a sudden minute start, and ecstatic pressure of the listener's arm, side, or neck, as the position and degree of intimacy dictated. 25
3. When anxiously regarding one who possessed her affections.

She suddenly assumed the last-mentioned bearing during the progress of the present entertainment. Her glance was directed out of the window.

Why the particulars of a young lady's presence at a very mediocre performance were prevented from dropping into the oblivion which their intrinsic insignificance would naturally have involved—why they 30

20 1. During] During WD, OM, W 24 2. During] During WD, OM, W
27 3. When] When WD, OM, W 28 during] in WD, OM, W

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were remembered and individualised by herself and others through after years—was simply that she unknowingly stood, as it were, upon the extreme posterior edge of a tract in her life, in which the real meaning of Taking Thought had never been known. It was the last hour of experience
5 she ever enjoyed with a mind entirely free from a knowledge of that labyrinth into which she stepped immediately afterwards—to continue a perplexed course along its mazes for the greater portion of twenty-nine subsequent months.

The Town Hall, in which Cytherea sat, was an Elizabethan building of
10 brown stone, and the windows were divided into an upper and a lower half by a transom of masonry. Through one opening of the upper half could be seen from the interior of the room the housetops and chimneys of the adjacent street, and also the upper part of a neighbouring church spire, now in course of completion under the superintendence of Miss Graye’s
15 father, the architect to the work.

That the top of this spire should be visible from her position in the room was a fact which Cytherea’s idling eyes had discovered with some interest, and she was now engaged in watching the scene that was being enacted about its airy summit. Round the conical stonework rose a cage of scaffold-
20 ing against the white sky; and upon this stood five men—four in clothes as white as the new erection close beneath their hands, the fifth in the ordinary dark suit of a gentleman.

The four working-men in white were three masons and a mason’s labourer. The fifth man was the architect, Mr. Graye. He had been giving
25 directions as it seemed, and now, retiring as far as the narrow footway allowed, stood perfectly still.

The picture thus presented to a spectator in the Town Hall was curious and striking. It was an illuminated miniature, framed in by the dark margin of the window, the keen-edged shadiness of which emphasised by contrast
30 the softness of the objects enclosed.

3 tract] track HH 9 an Elizabethan building] a building OM, W
10 stone, and the windows were divided into an upper and a lower half by a transom of masonry.
Through one opening of the upper half could be seen] stone, and through one of the windows
could be seen OM, W
20 white] blue OM, W 25 and now, retiring] and retiring WD, OM, W