

An Unpublished Short Story by George  
Meredith:  
"The Friend of an Engaged Couple"

MARGARET HARRIS

Putting into print something long unpublished invites the rebuke that the thing was best left alone. It might be alleged that such a rebuke is warranted in respect of Meredith's short story, "The Friend of an Engaged Couple,"<sup>1</sup> which is undeniably slight. However, it was written at a time of great activity in Meredith's career — the manuscript is dated 1862 — and has connections with his other work at the time. Moreover, it appears that Samuel Lucas, editor of *Once a Week*, saw sufficient merit in the piece to accept it for publication, if a pencilled "Yes. S.L." on the first page of the manuscript can be assumed to be Lucas' note.<sup>2</sup> But the story did not come out in *Once a Week*, perhaps because Lucas would not accommodate Meredith's requests for a generous rate of payment.<sup>3</sup>

Meredith in the early 1860s was more than usually pressed for money. His career as a man of letters had by no means been securely established by the appearance of *Poems* (1851), *The Shaving of Shagpat* (1856), and *Farina* (1857). Paradoxically, however, the emotional turmoil consequent on his being deserted by his wife Mary Ellen in 1857, and her death in 1861, generated two of his finest works, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859) and the poem sequence *Modern Love* (1862). It might even be suggested that the deception about a love affair in "The Friend of an Engaged Couple" has some relation to Mary Ellen's desertion of Meredith. In any case, by 1860 he was turning his hand to whatever he could to earn enough to support himself and his young son Arthur (born 1853). He tried strenuously to make *Evan Harrington* popular, turned out a number

- 1 The manuscript is in the Altschul Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. I am indebted to the University Librarian for permission to publish it.
- 2 Samuel Lucas (1818-68) was a journalist, associated for a long period with *The Times*, for which he wrote a discerning review of Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (14 October 1859). He was the first editor of *Once a Week* which began publication in 1859. Meredith had a number of poems published in the journal in that and subsequent years to 1863, and his novel *Evan Harrington* appeared as a serial in 1860. Meredith also had short stories published anonymously in *Once a Week* on 24 December 1859 and 23 February 1861, possibly on other occasions as well — so it is highly likely that "The Friend of an Engaged Couple" should have been offered to Lucas. See *The Letters of George Meredith*, ed. C.L. Cline (1970), pp. 35n. and 71 and n.
- 3 Cf. *Letters*, p. 71. Lionel Stevenson, *The Ordeal of George Meredith* (1953), p. 119, simply remarks that "for some reason it ["The Friend..."] was not printed." Cline, *Letters*, p. 71n., conjectures about some of Meredith's *Once a Week* publications, but agrees "The Friend..." was unpublished.

of poems and stories, and took on positions as publisher's reader for Chapman and Hall and as editorial writer for the *Ipswich Journal*. In 1861 he was already at work on *Emilia in England* (published 1864), *Rhoda Fleming* (1865) and "The House on the Beach" (1877).<sup>4</sup> His surviving notebooks and miscellaneous papers include various lists of projects, some of which date from this time, and also bizarre anecdotes similar to the plot of "The Friend of an Engaged Couple." Most of these were not worked up into stories, though many reveal the same fascination with unusual, often tragic, love relationships.

Perhaps the most noteworthy feature of "The Friend of an Engaged Couple" is that it is one of only two instances in Meredith's prose where he uses a female first person narrator.<sup>5</sup> The other is in an apparently incomplete tale, "The Gentleman of Fifty and the Damsel of Nineteen," probably written in the late 1860s or early 1870s,<sup>6</sup> where Meredith alternates the narrative point of view between "He," the gentleman Mr Pollingray, and "She," the damsel Alice. This story is obviously experimental, and is perhaps to be associated with Meredith's working on plays (he began "The Sentimentalists" in 1862) and his varieties of dramatic technique in *The Egoist* (1879). It provides a good instance of Meredith's developing, in the characters' utterances, feelings and attitudes of which they are not explicitly aware, a feature it has in common with Goody's monologue in "The Friend of an Engaged Couple."

Such merit as "The Friend of an Engaged Couple" has derives I think from the characterization of Goody, though I do not mean to imply that the portrayal is profound. Meredith's prose in the story is uncharacteristically clear and simple, adapted to the speaker and the market. Goody's utterances however are not quite transparent, and there are hints of sexual jealousies underlying her self-righteousness. The subject of the tale is really her perception and misrepresentation, rather than Laura's scheme of deception and its climax on the train.<sup>7</sup> The situation in which the narrating voice is in some respects unsympathetic, and has to be judged in the light of the story

4 *Letters*, pp. 75 and n., 80-1.

5 Some of the poems have female *personae*. Interpolated letters and such in the novels are of course in the first person feminine, and very frequently — in large sections of *Diana of the Crossways*, for example — Meredith is representing a woman's state of mind or processes of thought by more oblique narrative means.

6 First published in the Memorial Edition of Meredith's works (vol. xxii, 1910). The manuscript at Yale, is in Meredith's fine early hand, and is probably later than "The Friend..."

7 Another aspect of Meredith's attempt to woo a popular readership is the setting on the train, which exploits the relative novelty of the railway as a fact of British life. Compare the almost contemporaneous disfiguring in a railway accident of the heroine of Mrs Henry Wood's *East Lynne* (1861); or Hardy's use of train timetables as an important plot device in love situations in *Desperate Remedies* (1871), and again in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873). There are of course many other responses to the railway age in Victorian fiction: well known ones occur in Dickens' *Dombey and Son* (1848) and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872), especially chapter 56.

unfolded, has some affinity with *Modern Love*, though the story is almost a parody of the poem's theme of love betrayed and soured.

What led Samuel Lucas to accept, but not to use, "The Friend of an Engaged Couple" we do not know. But with the advantage over Lucas of knowing more of what Meredith was writing at about the same time, and was to write subsequently, we can perhaps appreciate the survival of the minor story for the gleam it casts on the career of a great novelist.

### *The Friend of an Engaged Couple*

I was the friend of an engaged couple. I have never seen a more lovely young woman than Laura Manners. We had been schoolfellows, and the gratitude I felt to her for noticing me among so many girls, though I was her elder, saved me, I suppose, from the wickedness of jealousy, both then and afterwards. We continued our intimacy, corresponding faithfully, and occasionally spending weeks at one another's houses, till, one morning I received a letter from Laura telling me she was engaged. She had spoken once or twice of a Mr Mostyn — quite indifferently. I had no idea of anything serious. For some time I could not imagine what made me so vexed at the thought of her being engaged. I was angry with everything. The reason, of course, was that I knew Laura had no heart in the engagement. Her want of principle offended me. My silence produced another letter, asking me peremptorily for my immediate congratulations. I was now called upon to speak openly to her, and I did. I entreated her to tell me that, on her conscience, she loved Mr Mostyn: in which case, I said, I could most sincerely congratulate her. Otherwise not. In reply Laura accused me of a number of evil passions. This is human nature. Confirmed in the purity of my feelings of friendship to Laura, I pursued our correspondence, totally abstaining from the mention of Mr Mostyn's name. In fact this was her fifth offer, and notwithstanding what she had said, I lived in full belief that I should soon cease to hear any more of him — as was the case. Our residences were in neighbouring counties, and our parents were in the habit of taking us annually to London, to enjoy a month of the season. This was generally a time of much reckless gaiety to us, and, I confess, the vanities of the world had their attractions for me, at that period. Laura had communicated the particular intelligence to me in the winter. The spring came and we met in London. Laura was more lovely than ever, and, if possible, giddier. She rattled upon every imaginable subject save the one I most earnestly wished to hear of. At last, I said to her: "And Mr Mostyn, Laura?"

She stared and answered: "Oh, do let me forget the man for five little minutes — please, Goody!"

"Perhaps," I said, "it is another, by this time."

She pretended that it was necessary to chide me: her ways were certainly pretty, and taking — if only one could have been positive of her sincerity.

"Without principle, Laura," I said to her, "you cannot hope for ultimate happiness."

"Nor without pence, Goody," she retorted. "Mr Mostyn supplies both — that's why I accepted him, and now I'm convinced I am justified in your eyes, and am going to be praised, and petted, and made much of."

She was fond of acting the child to you; but it was always the malicious naughty child that played pranks, and had to be forgiven.

Before many days passed, I was introduced to Mr Mostyn. I liked him. He proved truly good, but of his weakness there could not be a doubt. He never knew his own mind two minutes together. I must except one thing, and that was his undoubted pride in Laura. This, to a certain extent, I shared. Hence a sympathy between us. After I quitted London, I was in the habit of receiving letters from him — all upon one subject, I need not say. The marriage was arranged to take place in the spring of the ensuing year. Seeing that I corresponded with Mr Mostyn, it may be ascribed to other feelings than the true ones, that I earnestly desired to retard the marriage. The more I saw of Laura, the more certain I was that it could not be happy. One day, in answer to my urgent entreaties for a plain confession, she distinctly told me that she did not love him. Two days later Mr Mostyn was at our house, where Laura was then staying. I had simply warned him not to expect too devoted an affection, bidding him remember how frivolous *beauties* generally are. He arrived in a state of frenzy, and rushing to Laura, became so impetuous and utterly wild, that this girl, who had absolutely told me herself that he was one of the sort of men she never could love, now gave him to understand that she idolized him! Such, at least, Mr Mostyn declared to me — reproachfully, as I thought. I was grievously hurt: more at the absence of manliness in Mr Mostyn, than by Laura's foolish false accusations. I now perceived the onerous responsibility of my situation, as the friend of an engaged couple. Laura did *not* love him: Mr Mostyn worshipped her. My esteem for both prevented me from remaining a quiet spectator of conduct which in my heart I thought wicked: but if I adjured her to be candid and truthful, she bade me examine myself — as if it had not been my constant habit from girlhood so to do! and if I attempted to

moderate his ardour by calm advice, I could see clearly that I fell in his regard, and was classed among the back biters.

It was impossible to do other than I did. Mr Mostyn's life, as he told me, depended upon accurate information of her doings, and sayings, and thinkings. I transcribed them, according to my impressions. I could not, in my loving analysis of her character, proclaim her an angel, and, as I might have expected, he was dissatisfied. I could not tell Laura that I presumed she was going to be happy with Mr Mostyn, and, just as naturally, she attributed the utterance of my doubts to things I never dreamed of. Between them I was wretched. Worse than all, Laura was now *acting* love for him. She admitted it to me without any reserve.

"I find it amusing," she said. "Besides, it pleases Reginald, and you like to see me make him happy, don't you Goody?"

"Yes," I replied, "but not with counterfeit coin."

"He doesn't see any difference," said Laura. "Besides, I like the fun for a little time. When I'm married, I dare say I shall find it distressing."

"Such language, Laura, is highly so to me," I said.

She laughed, and called Mr Mostyn and myself a pair.

To know that she was acting love for a worthy man; to see Mr Mostyn's unfeigned, almost childish, pleasure in her, was a position that was only rendered bearable by the effort to modify the evil I could not arrest. I continued their confidante. They had various out-breaks in which Mr Mostyn conducted himself in a way that nothing but love could excuse. Then the spring came, and Laura deferred their union till the summer. Summer came, and she pleaded illness. Indeed she was not well; so it was decided that she should go to the sea. I joined her with her family at a little town on the Sussex coast. Hither also Mr Mostyn made all haste to present himself. I witnessed their meeting. They had previously quarrelled, and Laura had just been telling me that he had grown quite insufferable to her. He entered the room, and as he advanced, I murmured a prayer to her to be civil, at least. She covered her face, and appeared convulsed with emotion. Mr Mostyn dropped on his knees. "Oh, why did I fail to send a messenger to prepare her for my approach!" he cried, and began to exclaim that she would die of the shock. I have a suspicion to this day that she was laughing. However, when she disclosed her face, she was smiling sadly, and her eyes were moist. She patted him on the head, smoothed the parting of his hair, and addressed him as an infant. Then I saw the corners of her lips working, and suddenly she looked up at me and burst into laughter. She knew that this

manner of love-making always made me feel indignant — to say nothing of the deception I saw practised. Mr Mostyn, who, I will do him the credit to say, was properly sensitive, started to his feet.

“For heaven’s sake, call it hysterics!” Laura whispered in my ear.

I went so far as to say to Mr Mostyn, “Remember she is very weak,” and at these words he at once replaced his hat upon the floor, and resumed his posture. There she kept him a whole hour, though she knew what I must suffer to behold any man whom I esteemed, in an attitude so undignified.

“Laura,” I said to her, when we were alone, “if only in self-respect, behave better to your future husband. If you can accept him without loving him—”

“Love!” she cried, in a pet.

“Yes, love!” I continued. “Are you not bound by the ordinances of the Church?”

She begged me to repeat them, and I did, to impress her. Instead of producing the effect I hoped for, the repetition of the holy words of the ceremony, served but to increase her frivolity. She accused me of studying them nightly for my own gratification!

“The feelings of your heart, Laura?” I said, “Have you none there?”

“Love is nonsense!” she exclaimed.

“Take care that you are not undeceived too late,” I answered, little knowing what a warning I uttered.

In our walks on the beach we had been joined by a young military officer, invalided from India. He was introduced to me by Laura as a friend of her brother’s, who had saved her brother’s life. Laura made him repeat the incident to me. I must say he was certainly modest in narrating his own heroism. Without Laura’s assistance he never could have come to an end. But on other topics he was extremely voluble. I thought him light and, what I call butterfly, but remembering his deeds and the character of military men generally, I excused him. Mr Mostyn made severe inquiries of me concerning this gentleman. He did so in a manner that induced me to speak warmly of his courage.

“Then it is true?” said Mr Mostyn, brightening up.

Attaching no importance to his enigmatic looks, I replied: “Oh, yes! it is undoubtedly true. And,” I added, “nothing to be ashamed of.” For I am by nature penetrative, and I thought I saw a smallness — a jealousy of Captain Herbert in Mr Mostyn.

“Ashamed of!” said he. “Not at all! If you are satisfied, I am.”

“I am quite satisfied,” I said. “But some men are so constituted that

they cannot hear without jealousy—”

“Don’t for one moment think I can possibly feel that,” interrupted Mr Mostyn. “I love Laura entirely, and rejoice in the happiness of her friends.”

I smiled and praised his goodness. His talk, I must admit, grew unintelligible to me; and when Laura met us, my keen insight told me at once that she scrutinized us curiously. Captain Herbert became discreetly assiduous in his attentions to me. We walked together, but Mr Mostyn’s tone of mind was more to my taste, and Laura, who had, I will do her the justice to say, some penetration of her own, decided that engaged people ought not to be always walking together. She left Mr Mostyn’s side one day, as she said this, and commanded me to take her place. I assented cheerfully, and, not to be outdone by the merriment of the couple behind us, Mr Mostyn made himself highly agreeable.

I said to him that he must be dissembling. He must feel the change.

“Why should I feel it more than you do?” he asked.

“Nay,” I answered, “to me it is a relief.”

He sighed heavily, pressed my hand, and said he was sure Captain Herbert was a very worthy fellow.

Glad to find that the demon of jealousy had quite left him, I again praised Captain Herbert, and Mr Mostyn told me I made him very happy.

“To do that,” I said, “is my utmost desire.”

He sighed again. “But you,” he replied, “will set yourself to accomplish your duty, first of all.”

I declared to him that I hoped so.

Laura was at first much benefited by the sea air; but after a time she relapsed. She cared neither to walk with Captain Herbert nor her intended. She would come to me and sit with me for hours.

“Talk about that solemn stiff old-fashioned Love of yours,” she would say. — Love in a surplice, she called *my* idea of Love.

I was pleased to hear her speak so. My penetration read the fact that she was beginning to warm to Mr Mostyn.

“I suppose that must be the case,” said Laura. “It can’t be anything else.”

“It is no disgrace,” I said, seeing her shrugging her shoulders, as if affecting to make light of it.

“Not in the slightest! — an honour! a glory!” she burst out, in one of her excited moods.

I related these very words to Mr Mostyn, to delight him. There was

no doubt about the pleasure he felt, but all he did was to press my hand and say that it was exceedingly noble of *me*. But that I never allowed myself to be mystified, I should have found his words strange. He added, "What you sacrifice for my happiness, I pray may be repaid to you." This explained it. He saw something of what I had to go through as the friend of an engaged couple.

Laura's behaviour was peculiar. She took again to walking with Captain Herbert. I thought it incumbent on me to suggest to Mr Mostyn the propriety of his *sometimes* assuming his rightful place. "She is occupied in a good work," he said, smiling, as I conceived, oddly at me. Of course, I had nothing more to say.

In the meantime, my bridesmaid's dress was not improving. All my best apparel was in a damp country house, and I was naturally anxious. But Laura would not listen to reason. She would be married in the autumn, she said. Well, the autumn came, and then she was full of the charms of a winter wedding. Mr Mostyn was beautifully patient; but his words were enigmas.

"For your sake," he said, "I bring myself to wait."

Why for my sake? I pondered over his speech. I was beginning to be slightly perplexed. He knew also that Laura and Captain Herbert corresponded; he knew that they had met twice in London, and yet the man — passionate and headstrong where Laura was concerned — sanctioned it! He seemed to look upon it as a cause for admiration of Laura. *That* I could not see. As a consequence, he coolly informed me that I was far more wordly-minded than Laura. I thanked him. Which was the wordly-minded one of the two, *I* did not require to be told.

Things were in this state when Laura wrote for me to come to her. I went. Her father had speculated and was ruined.

"And now," she said, "I must be married," and fell on my shoulder weeping.

"Must be married!" I answered. "Have you never looked upon this fact seriously before, Laura?"

She said that she never had!

Mr Mostyn was not long in coming to consult with her father on his affairs. And then began a train of circumstances which defied my penetration. Captain Herbert was discovered to be in the neighbourhood — he was seen by Mr Mostyn and myself in Laura's company, and Mr Mostyn — capable of the maddest frenzies as I had known him to be — not only uttered no complaint, but plainly said it was owing to my cruelty! I rely too much on my penetration to ask the clue to mysteries, but this one did baffle me. What had my cruelty to

do with their most improper meeting?

But the marriage was now fixed, and I must say that from this day Laura's conduct was exemplary. She used to laugh at Mr Mostyn: now she listened to him with the gentle attentiveness of a child. "I suppose I'm beginning to love him," she said. We started for London to buy jewelry, dresses etc. Laura was under my charge. Everything that a young woman could wish for, was bought and paid for by Mr Mostyn. I told her how happy she ought to be in possessing such a man.

"Oh! so happy!" cried Laura, lifting up her eyes.

"You love him now?" I said.

"The darlindest old money-bag!" she replied.

Though I objected to this mode of expression, I took it to be her way, and was satisfied.

We had to return home by a night train. At the station Mr Mostyn joined us. Just as we were going to enter the carriage, whom should I see but Captain Herbert. Laura's eyes met mine. "Tell him to go," she whispered hurriedly. I turned and walked up to him.

"Captain Herbert," I said, "I have commands for you not to intrude where your presence can only cause unpleasantness."

"How can you be so cruel?" he answered.

Mr Mostyn was behind me, and had heard him.

"Come down with us, Herbert," he said. "A dose of country-house will alter the case, perhaps."

Captain Herbert bowed. To my astonishment, he went and procured a ticket, and in less than two minutes we were flying along in the train together. I was much pleased to observe that Laura gave him no encouragement. As for me, I showed that I felt offended. Seeing this, Mr Mostyn rallied me. I found it impossible to comprehend him, but he was evidently in the best of moods — he had been dining.

"I drank to your luck this evening, Herbert," he said.

Captain Herbert bowed, and looked at Laura. She sat with her arms folded and her eyes closed.

Which had the secret, and who was being fooled? I was utterly at a loss.

Mr Mostyn talked for us all. Occasionally Captain Herbert answered. Once I perceived Laura's eyes open. She frowned at him, and inclined her head towards me. The Captain followed her indication, and began to say something. Not hearing him, I stooped my head, and he whispered unintelligibly.

“Eh?” I said, rather loud.

A shriek of laughter burst from Laura. Mr Mostyn also laughed — almost rudely. When I could hear the Captain, he seemed to say that he thought the landscape must look fine when covered with snow. I had been smelling fire for sometime, and naturally kept sniffing. This, for some reason, sent Laura into fits of laughter. Mr Mostyn was beside himself.

“We two old married folks find these young ones amusing, Laura, don’t we?” he said.

“Excessively,” she replied, wiping her eyes, and added: “Reginald, have you washed the children and put them to bed?”

I was still conscious of that smell of burning, and turned to appeal to Captain Herbert for a corroboration. He was deadly pale, with his eyes fixed on Laura.

“Then you smell it, too?” I said.

Laura gave me an amazed look. I thought she would have gone into hysterics. The two engaged ones laughed for a space of three minutes, uninterruptedly.

“But there *is* a smell of burning,” I persisted. “I am sure I smell fire. Look at those sparks.

“Fire, my dear young lady, is the chief element in the production of steam,” said Mr Mostyn.

But now Laura had begun to sniff.

“My goodness!” she cried, “I hope the train’s not on fire.”

Captain Herbert put his head out of the window. We waited for his report in deep suspense. It seemed an age before he drew his head back again, and said: “It’s nothing — don’t be alarmed.”

But we were alarmed, and the Captain’s affectation of gaiety did not relieve us. I caught the two gentlemen interchanging glances, and determined to look for myself. After a slight struggle with Captain Herbert I looked out. I saw flames in the carriage immediately in front of us. I cannot describe my sensations.

“Laura, I said, “prepare for your last hour. We shall be roasted.”

Never was conduct so singular as her’s [sic]! Folding her arms, leaning back stiffly, and gazing at Captain Herbert, she said: “Perhaps it’s preferable to being boiled.”

She looked as she spoke, as if she had said something exceedingly sorrowful. She would not take her eyes off Captain Herbert. I forgot our situation — a dreadful suspicion seized me that their feet were touching. Mr Mostyn alone displayed want of nerve. Even now I can see the shrug of contempt which Laura gave when she beheld him

stretching half way out of the window, shouting for the guard. As if any soul could hear us! We reckoned that it would be better than half an hour before the train stopped at a station. Mr Mostyn asked Captain Herbert what we were to do. He answered that he would climb out on the roof and endeavour to make his way on to the guard. He rose, but Laura cried "No" and catching his arm, repeated imperiously, "No." Mr Mostyn then said he would go. I felt that I could not permit it. Unaware of what I was doing, I grasped both his hands.

"What does this mean?" he said.

"Let Captain Herbert go," was all I could utter.

He called me a noble woman — self-sacrificing to the last. I could not understand him.

Never shall I forget the sight that met our eyes as we turned round. Laura's head was on Captain Herbert's breast, and his arms were round her.

"I love him! I love him!" she almost shrieked. "Yes, Reginald! I have deceived you. We are to die. I will die with him."

A sheet of fire passed before the carriage window. Though it made me sick to see, my whole feeling was for Mr Mostyn. He beheld his bride in the arms of another man!

"Spare this lady, if you cannot spare me," he said, in a deep harsh voice.

"Oh! when Death is so close. — fool!" cried Laura. I believe she did not know what she was saying. "We have played with you, Reginald. Comfort her, and let us be."

I was shocked. Not if I had been surrounded by the flames would I have confessed what she evidently pointed at! I fell back staring helplessly at Mr Mostyn. His features were terrible now.

"Her deceit I could bear," he said: "but yours is insufferable."

Mine! I could only gasp faintly.

Again the flames passed before us; but the indecorum of Laura's behaviour exceeded all bounds. Her lips were joined to Captain Herbert's! It is true that she believed her last moments come, but a lady — at least in my opinion — should never forget herself. My heart bled for Mr Mostyn wiping his forehead with his handkerchief. I looked out of the window. The flames appeared to be miraculously extinguished on that side. I pushed Captain Herbert, and looked out on the other. It was quite dark.

"We are saved!" I exclaimed, and in my joy I could not avoid clutching Mr Mostyn's arm.

“Madam!” he said, recoiling as from a serpent, “You seem fond of your life.”

It was my turn now to recoil. Laura opened her eyes and asked where we were. Captain Herbert, who had been bending over her, returned to his seat. We were all silent. Then we felt the train slacken. It stopped. Of course I could not remain facing Mr Mostyn any more. I got out and looked into the burning carriage. It was occupied by a young lady and gentleman, of whom the lady, seeing me under the light, called out my name. I recognized Matilda Day, a newly-married acquaintance living in Laura’s neighbourhood. Before I could ask whether they had been on fire, Matilda said: “You were in the next carriage? Did we alarm you?”

“What, what were you doing?” I asked.

What do you think she and her young husband had been doing, of all the things in life? Just returning from their honeymoon trip, it happened that they had each got their desks in London, and coming to talk of their other previous old loves, agreed on the spot to burn the letters, after laughing over them! These reckless people burned them and launched them into the air, and this and nothing but this had caused us the alarm! This had ruined me in Mr Mostyn’s esteem! This had thrown the bride of one man into the arms of another! But what really angered me was, that when I told them what they had done, they absolutely rejoiced.

“Didn’t we light Hymen’s torch, and bring out the true love, and extinguish the false?” said Mr Day, Matilda’s husband.

He has been odious to me ever since.

To conclude, my penetration taught me that Mr Mostyn could exonerate Captain Herbert. Fearing that a duel would result, I resolutely watched Mr Mostyn for the space of one year. I believe that I rescued him from his peril. Ingratitude cannot be helped. But I certainly did not expect him ever to say that he married at last in order to escape my persecutions. Such were the words reported to me. Laura is now an Indian widow with three children. Mr Mostyn has seven. If I scarcely present the appearance desirable on festive meetings it is owing to the fact of my having been the friend of an engaged couple.