



THE WOMAN
IN WHITE
WILKIE COLLINS



EPOCH THREE
**The Story Continued by Isidor Ottavio Baldassare Fosco:
The Count's Narrative**

THE STORY CONTINUED BY ISIDOR OTTAVIO BALDASSARE FOSCO

(Count of the Holy Roman Empire, Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Brazen Crown, Perpetual Arch-Master of the Rosicrucian Masons of Mesopotamia; Attached (in Honorary Capacities) to Societies Musical, Societies Medical, Societies Philosophical, and Societies General Benevolent, throughout Europe; etc. etc. etc.)

THE COUNT'S NARRATIVE

In the summer of eighteen hundred and fifty I arrived in England, charged with a delicate political mission from abroad. Confidential persons were semi-officially connected with me, whose exertions I was authorised to direct, Monsieur and Madame Rubelle being among the number. Some weeks of spare time were at my disposal, before I entered on my functions by establishing myself in the suburbs of London. Curiosity may stop here to ask for some explanation of those functions on my part. I entirely sympathise with the request. I also regret that diplomatic reserve forbids me to comply with it.

I arranged to pass the preliminary period of repose, to which I have just referred, in the superb mansion of my late lamented friend, Sir Percival Glyde. HE arrived from the Continent with his wife. I arrived from the Continent with MINE. England is the land of domestic happiness—how appropriately we entered it under these domestic circumstances!

The bond of friendship which united Percival and myself was strengthened, on this occasion, by a touching similarity in the pecuniary position on his side and on mine. We both wanted money. Immense necessity! Universal want! Is there a civilised human being who does not feel for us? How insensible must that man be! Or how rich!

I enter into no sordid particulars, in discussing this part of the subject. My mind recoils from them. With a Roman austerity, I show my empty purse and Percival's to

the shrinking public gaze. Let us allow the deplorable fact to assert itself, once for all, in that manner, and pass on.

We were received at the mansion by the magnificent creature who is inscribed on my heart as “Marian,” who is known in the colder atmosphere of society as “Miss Halcombe.”

Just Heaven! with what inconceivable rapidity I learnt to adore that woman. At sixty, I worshipped her with the volcanic ardour of eighteen. All the gold of my rich nature was poured hopelessly at her feet. My wife—poor angel!—my wife, who adores me, got nothing but the shillings and the pennies. Such is the World, such Man, such Love. What are we (I ask) but puppets in a show-box? Oh, omnipotent Destiny, pull our strings gently! Dance us mercifully off our miserable little stage!

The preceding lines, rightly understood, express an entire system of philosophy. It is mine.

I resume.

The domestic position at the commencement of our residence at Blackwater Park has been drawn with amazing accuracy, with profound mental insight, by the hand of Marian herself. (Pass me the intoxicating familiarity of mentioning this sublime creature by her Christian name.) Accurate knowledge of the contents of her journal—to which I obtained access by clandestine means, unspeakably precious to me in the remembrance—warns my eager pen from topics which this essentially exhaustive woman has already made her own.

The interests—interests, breathless and immense!—with which I am here concerned, begin with the deplorable calamity of Marian’s illness.

The situation at this period was emphatically a serious one. Large sums of money, due at a certain time, were wanted by Percival (I say nothing of the modicum equally necessary to myself), and the one source to look to for supplying them was the fortune of his wife, of which not one farthing was at his disposal until her death. Bad so far, and worse still farther on. My lamented friend had private troubles of his own, into which the delicacy of my disinterested attachment to him forbade me from inquiring too curiously. I knew nothing but that a woman, named Anne Catherick, was hidden in the neighbourhood, that she was in communication with Lady Glyde, and that the disclosure of a secret, which would be the certain ruin of Percival, might be the result. He had told me himself that he was a lost man, unless his wife was silenced, and unless Anne Catherick was found. If he was a lost man, what would become of our pecuniary interests? Courageous as I am by nature, I absolutely trembled at the idea!

The whole force of my intelligence was now directed to the finding of Anne Catherick. Our money affairs, important as they were, admitted of delay—but the necessity of discovering the woman admitted of none. I only knew her by description, as presenting an extraordinary personal resemblance to Lady Glyde. The statement of this curious fact—intended merely to assist me in identifying the person of whom we were in search—when coupled with the additional information that Anne Catherick had escaped from a mad-house, started the first immense conception in my mind, which subsequently led to such amazing results. That conception involved nothing less than the complete transformation of two separate identities. Lady Glyde and Anne Catherick were to change names, places, and destinies, the one with the other—the prodigious consequences contemplated by the change being the gain of thirty thousand pounds, and the eternal preservation of Sir Percival’s secret.

My instincts (which seldom err) suggested to me, on reviewing the circumstances, that our invisible Anne would, sooner or later, return to the boat-house at the Blackwater lake. There I posted myself, previously mentioning to Mrs. Michelson, the housekeeper, that I might be found when wanted, immersed in study, in that solitary place. It is my rule never to make unnecessary mysteries, and never to set people suspecting me for want of a little seasonable candour on my part. Mrs. Michelson believed in me from first to last. This ladylike person (widow of a Protestant priest) overflowed with faith. Touched by such superfluity of simple confidence in a woman of her mature years, I opened the ample reservoirs of my nature and absorbed it all.

I was rewarded for posting myself sentinel at the lake by the appearance—not of Anne Catherick herself, but of the person in charge of her. This individual also overflowed with simple faith, which I absorbed in myself, as in the case already mentioned. I leave her to describe the circumstances (if she has not done so already) under which she introduced me to the object of her maternal care. When I first saw Anne Catherick she was asleep. I was electrified by the likeness between this unhappy woman and Lady Glyde. The details of the grand scheme which had suggested themselves in outline only, up to that period, occurred to me, in all their masterly combination, at the sight of the sleeping face. At the same time, my heart, always accessible to tender influences, dissolved in tears at the spectacle of suffering before me. I instantly set myself to impart relief. In other words, I provided the necessary stimulant for strengthening Anne Catherick to perform the journey to London.

The best years of my life have been passed in the ardent study of medical and chemical science. Chemistry especially has always had irresistible attractions for

me from the enormous, the illimitable power which the knowledge of it confers. Chemists—I assert it emphatically—might sway, if they pleased, the destinies of humanity. Let me explain this before I go further.

Mind, they say, rules the world. But what rules the mind? The body (follow me closely here) lies at the mercy of the most omnipotent of all potentates—the Chemist. Give me—Fosco—chemistry; and when Shakespeare has conceived Hamlet, and sits down to execute the conception—with a few grains of powder dropped into his daily food, I will reduce his mind, by the action of his body, till his pen pours out the most abject drivel that has ever degraded paper. Under similar circumstances, revive me the illustrious Newton. I guarantee that when he sees the apple fall he shall EAT IT, instead of discovering the principle of gravitation. Nero’s dinner shall transform Nero into the mildest of men before he has done digesting it, and the morning draught of Alexander the Great shall make Alexander run for his life at the first sight of the enemy the same afternoon. On my sacred word of honour it is lucky for Society that modern chemists are, by incomprehensible good fortune, the most harmless of mankind. The mass are worthy fathers of families, who keep shops. The few are philosophers besotted with admiration for the sound of their own lecturing voices, visionaries who waste their lives on fantastic impossibilities, or quacks whose ambition soars no higher than our corns. Thus Society escapes, and the illimitable power of Chemistry remains the slave of the most superficial and the most insignificant ends.

Why this outburst? Why this withering eloquence?

Because my conduct has been misrepresented, because my motives have been misunderstood. It has been assumed that I used my vast chemical resources against Anne Catherick, and that I would have used them if I could against the magnificent Marian herself. Odious insinuations both! All my interests were concerned (as will be seen presently) in the preservation of Anne Catherick’s life. All my anxieties were concentrated on Marian’s rescue from the hands of the licensed imbecile who attended her, and who found my advice confirmed from first to last by the physician from London. On two occasions only—both equally harmless to the individual on whom I practised—did I summon to myself the assistance of chemical knowledge. On the first of the two, after following Marian to the inn at Blackwater (studying, behind a convenient waggon which hid me from her, the poetry of motion, as embodied in her walk), I availed myself of the services of my invaluable wife, to copy one and to intercept the other of two letters which my adored enemy had entrusted to a discarded maid. In this case, the letters being in the bosom of the girl’s dress, Madame Fosco

could only open them, read them, perform her instructions, seal them, and put them back again by scientific assistance—which assistance I rendered in a half-ounce bottle. The second occasion, when the same means were employed, was the occasion (to which I shall soon refer) of Lady Glyde's arrival in London. Never at any other time was I indebted to my Art as distinguished from myself. To all other emergencies and complications my natural capacity for grappling, single-handed, with circumstances, was invariably equal. I affirm the all-pervading intelligence of that capacity. At the expense of the Chemist I vindicate the Man.

Respect this outburst of generous indignation. It has inexpressibly relieved me. En route! Let us proceed.

Having suggested to Mrs. Clement (or Clements, I am not sure which) that the best method of keeping Anne out of Percival's reach was to remove her to London—having found that my proposal was eagerly received, and having appointed a day to meet the travellers at the station and to see them leave it, I was at liberty to return to the house and to confront the difficulties which still remained to be met.

My first proceeding was to avail myself of the sublime devotion of my wife. I had arranged with Mrs. Clements that she should communicate her London address, in Anne's interests, to Lady Glyde. But this was not enough. Designing persons in my absence might shake the simple confidence of Mrs. Clements, and she might not write after all. Who could I find capable of travelling to London by the train she travelled by, and of privately seeing her home? I asked myself this question. The conjugal part of me immediately answered—Madame Fosco.

After deciding on my wife's mission to London, I arranged that the journey should serve a double purpose. A nurse for the suffering Marian, equally devoted to the patient and to myself, was a necessity of my position. One of the most eminently confidential and capable women in existence was by good fortune at my disposal. I refer to that respectable matron, Madame Rubelle, to whom I addressed a letter, at her residence in London, by the hands of my wife.

On the appointed day Mrs. Clements and Anne Catherick met me at the station. I politely saw them off, I politely saw Madame Fosco off by the same train. The last thing at night my wife returned to Blackwater, having followed her instructions with the most unimpeachable accuracy. She was accompanied by Madame Rubelle, and she brought me the London address of Mrs. Clements. After- events proved this last precaution to have been unnecessary. Mrs. Clements punctually informed Lady Glyde of her place of abode. With a wary eye on future emergencies, I kept the letter.

The same day I had a brief interview with the doctor, at which I protested, in the sacred interests of humanity, against his treatment of Marian's case. He was insolent, as all ignorant people are. I showed no resentment, I deferred quarrelling with him till it was necessary to quarrel to some purpose. My next proceeding was to leave Blackwater myself. I had my London residence to take in anticipation of coming events. I had also a little business of the domestic sort to transact with Mr. Frederick Fairlie. I found the house I wanted in St. John's Wood. I found Mr. Fairlie at Limmeridge, Cumberland.

My own private familiarity with the nature of Marian's correspondence had previously informed me that she had written to Mr. Fairlie, proposing, as a relief to Lady Glyde's matrimonial embarrassments, to take her on a visit to her uncle in Cumberland. This letter I had wisely allowed to reach its destination, feeling at the time that it could do no harm, and might do good. I now presented myself before Mr. Fairlie to support Marian's own proposal—with certain modifications which, happily for the success of my plans, were rendered really inevitable by her illness. It was necessary that Lady Glyde should leave Blackwater alone, by her uncle's invitation, and that she should rest a night on the journey at her aunt's house (the house I had in St. John's Wood) by her uncle's express advice. To achieve these results, and to secure a note of invitation which could be shown to Lady Glyde, were the objects of my visit to Mr. Fairlie. When I have mentioned that this gentleman was equally feeble in mind and body, and that I let loose the whole force of my character on him, I have said enough. I came, saw, and conquered Fairlie.

On my return to Blackwater Park (with the letter of invitation) I found that the doctor's imbecile treatment of Marian's case had led to the most alarming results. The fever had turned to typhus. Lady Glyde, on the day of my return, tried to force herself into the room to nurse her sister. She and I had no affinities of sympathy—she had committed the unpardonable outrage on my sensibilities of calling me a spy—she was a stumbling-block in my way and in Percival's—but, for all that, my magnanimity forbade me to put her in danger of infection with my own hand. At the same time I offered no hindrance to her putting herself in danger. If she had succeeded in doing so, the intricate knot which I was slowly and patiently operating on might perhaps have been cut by circumstances. As it was, the doctor interfered and she was kept out of the room.

I had myself previously recommended sending for advice to London. This course had been now taken. The physician, on his arrival, confirmed my view of the case. The crisis was serious. But we had hope of our charming patient on the fifth day

from the appearance of the typhus. I was only once absent from Blackwater at this time—when I went to London by the morning train to make the final arrangements at my house in St. John’s Wood, to assure myself by private inquiry that Mrs. Clements had not moved, and to settle one or two little preliminary matters with the husband of Madame Rubelle. I returned at night. Five days afterwards the physician pronounced our interesting Marian to be out of all danger, and to be in need of nothing but careful nursing. This was the time I had waited for. Now that medical attendance was no longer indispensable, I played the first move in the game by asserting myself against the doctor. He was one among many witnesses in my way whom it was necessary to remove. A lively altercation between us (in which Percival, previously instructed by me, refused to interfere) served the purpose in view. I descended on the miserable man in an irresistible avalanche of indignation, and swept him from the house.

The servants were the next encumbrances to get rid of. Again I instructed Percival (whose moral courage required perpetual stimulants), and Mrs. Michelson was amazed, one day, by hearing from her master that the establishment was to be broken up. We cleared the house of all the servants but one, who was kept for domestic purposes, and whose lumpish stupidity we could trust to make no embarrassing discoveries. When they were gone, nothing remained but to relieve ourselves of Mrs. Michelson—a result which was easily achieved by sending this amiable lady to find lodgings for her mistress at the sea-side.

The circumstances were now exactly what they were required to be. Lady Glyde was confined to her room by nervous illness, and the lumpish housemaid (I forget her name) was shut up there at night in attendance on her mistress. Marian, though fast recovering, still kept her bed, with Mrs. Rubelle for nurse. No other living creatures but my wife, myself, and Percival were in the house. With all the chances thus in our favour I confronted the next emergency, and played the second move in the game.

The object of the second move was to induce Lady Glyde to leave Blackwater unaccompanied by her sister. Unless we could persuade her that Marian had gone on to Cumberland first, there was no chance of removing her, of her own free will, from the house. To produce this necessary operation in her mind, we concealed our interesting invalid in one of the uninhabited bedrooms at Blackwater. At the dead of night Madame Fosco, Madame Rubelle, and myself (Percival not being cool enough to be trusted) accomplished the concealment. The scene was picturesque, mysterious, dramatic in the highest degree. By my directions the bed had been made, in the morning, on a strong movable framework of wood. We had only to lift the framework gently at the head and



foot, and to transport our patient where we pleased, without disturbing herself or her bed. No chemical assistance was needed or used in this case. Our interesting Marian lay in the deep repose of convalescence. We placed the candles and opened the doors beforehand. I, in right of my great personal strength, took the head of the framework—my wife and Madame Rubelle took the foot. I bore my share of that inestimably precious burden with a manly tenderness, with a fatherly care. Where is the modern Rembrandt who could depict our midnight procession? Alas for the Arts! alas for this most pictorial of subjects! The modern Rembrandt is nowhere to be found.

The next morning my wife and I started for London, leaving Marian secluded, in the uninhabited middle of the house, under care of Madame Rubelle, who kindly consented to imprison herself with her patient for two or three days. Before taking our departure I gave Percival Mr. Fairlie's letter of invitation to his niece (instructing her to sleep on the journey to Cumberland at her aunt's house), with directions to show it to Lady Glyde on hearing from me. I also obtained from him the address of the Asylum in which Anne Catherick had been confined, and a letter to the proprietor, announcing to that gentleman the return of his runaway patient to medical care.

I had arranged, at my last visit to the metropolis, to have our modest domestic establishment ready to receive us when we arrived in London by the early train. In consequence of this wise precaution, we were enabled that same day to play the third move in the game—the getting possession of Anne Catherick.

Dates are of importance here. I combine in myself the opposite characteristics of a Man of Sentiment and a Man of Business. I have all the dates at my fingers' ends.

On Wednesday, the 24th of July 1850, I sent my wife in a cab to clear Mrs. Clements out of the way, in the first place. A supposed message from Lady Glyde in London was sufficient to obtain this result. Mrs. Clements was taken away in the cab, and was left in the cab, while my wife (on pretence of purchasing something at a shop) gave her the slip, and returned to receive her expected visitor at our house in St. John's Wood. It is hardly necessary to add that the visitor had been described to the servants as "Lady Glyde."

In the meanwhile I had followed in another cab, with a note for Anne Catherick, merely mentioning that Lady Glyde intended to keep Mrs. Clements to spend the day with her, and that she was to join them under care of the good gentleman waiting outside, who had already saved her from discovery in Hampshire by Sir Percival. The "good gentleman" sent in this note by a street boy, and paused for results a door or two farther on. At the moment when Anne appeared at the house door and closed it this



excellent man had the cab door open ready for her, absorbed her into the vehicle, and drove off.

(Pass me, here, one exclamation in parenthesis. How interesting this is!)

On the way to Forest Road my companion showed no fear. I can be paternal—no man more so—when I please, and I was intensely paternal on this occasion. What titles I had to her confidence! I had compounded the medicine which had done her good—I had warned her of her danger from Sir Percival. Perhaps I trusted too implicitly to these titles—perhaps I underrated the keenness of the lower instincts in persons of weak intellect—it is certain that I neglected to prepare her sufficiently for a disappointment on entering my house. When I took her into the drawing-room—when she saw no one present but Madame Fosco, who was a stranger to her—she exhibited the most violent agitation; if she had scented danger in the air, as a dog scents the presence of some creature unseen, her alarm could not have displayed itself more suddenly and more causelessly. I interposed in vain. The fear from which she was suffering I might have soothed, but the serious heart-disease, under which she laboured, was beyond the reach of all moral palliatives. To my unspeakable horror she was seized with convulsions—a shock to the system, in her condition, which might have laid her dead at any moment at our feet.

The nearest doctor was sent for, and was told that “Lady Glyde” required his immediate services. To my infinite relief, he was a capable man. I represented my visitor to him as a person of weak intellect, and subject to delusions, and I arranged that no nurse but my wife should watch in the sick-room. The unhappy woman was too ill, however, to cause any anxiety about what she might say. The one dread which now oppressed me was the dread that the false Lady Glyde might die before the true Lady Glyde arrived in London.

I had written a note in the morning to Madame Rubelle, telling her to join me at her husband’s house on the evening of Friday the 26th, with another note to Percival, warning him to show his wife her uncle’s letter of invitation, to assert that Marian had gone on before her, and to despatch her to town by the midday train, on the 26th, also. On reflection I had felt the necessity, in Anne Catherick’s state of health, of precipitating events, and of having Lady Glyde at my disposal earlier than I had originally contemplated. What fresh directions, in the terrible uncertainty of my position, could I now issue? I could do nothing but trust to chance and the doctor. My emotions expressed themselves in pathetic apostrophes, which I was just self-possessed

enough to couple, in the hearing of other people, with the name of “Lady Glyde.” In all other respects Fosco, on that memorable day, was Fosco shrouded in total eclipse.

She passed a bad night, she awoke worn out, but later in the day she revived amazingly. My elastic spirits revived with her. I could receive no answers from Percival and Madame Rubelle till the morning of the next day, the 26th. In anticipation of their following my directions, which, accident apart, I knew they would do, I went to secure a fly to fetch Lady Glyde from the railway, directing it to be at my house on the 26th, at two o’clock. After seeing the order entered in the book, I went on to arrange matters with Monsieur Rubelle. I also procured the services of two gentlemen who could furnish me with the necessary certificates of lunacy. One of them I knew personally—the other was known to Monsieur Rubelle. Both were men whose vigorous minds soared superior to narrow scruples—both were labouring under temporary embarrassments—both believed in ME.

It was past five o’clock in the afternoon before I returned from the performance of these duties. When I got back Anne Catherick was dead. Dead on the 25th, and Lady Glyde was not to arrive in London till the 26th!

I was stunned. Meditate on that. Fosco stunned!

It was too late to retrace our steps. Before my return the doctor had officiously undertaken to save me all trouble by registering the death, on the date when it happened, with his own hand. My grand scheme, unassailable hitherto, had its weak place now—no efforts on my part could alter the fatal event of the 25th. I turned manfully to the future. Percival’s interests and mine being still at stake, nothing was left but to play the game through to the end. I recalled my impenetrable calm—and played it.

On the morning of the 26th Percival’s letter reached me, announcing his wife’s arrival by the midday train. Madame Rubelle also wrote to say she would follow in the evening. I started in the fly, leaving the false Lady Glyde dead in the house, to receive the true Lady Glyde on her arrival by the railway at three o’clock. Hidden under the seat of the carriage, I carried with me all the clothes Anne Catherick had worn on coming into my house— they were destined to assist the resurrection of the woman who was dead in the person of the woman who was living. What a situation! I suggest it to the rising romance writers of England. I offer it, as totally new, to the worn-out dramatists of France.

Lady Glyde was at the station. There was great crowding and confusion, and more delay than I liked (in case any of her friends had happened to be on the spot), in

reclaiming her luggage. Her first questions, as we drove off, implored me to tell her news of her sister. I invented news of the most pacifying kind, assuring her that she was about to see her sister at my house. My house, on this occasion only, was in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square, and was in the occupation of Monsieur Rubelle, who received us in the hall.

I took my visitor upstairs into a back room, the two medical gentlemen being there in waiting on the floor beneath to see the patient, and to give me their certificates. After quieting Lady Glyde by the necessary assurances about her sister, I introduced my friends separately to her presence. They performed the formalities of the occasion briefly, intelligently, conscientiously. I entered the room again as soon as they had left it, and at once precipitated events by a reference of the alarming kind to “Miss Halcombe’s” state of health.

Results followed as I had anticipated. Lady Glyde became frightened, and turned faint. For the second time, and the last, I called Science to my assistance. A medicated glass of water and a medicated bottle of smelling-salts relieved her of all further embarrassment and alarm. Additional applications later in the evening procured her the inestimable blessing of a good night’s rest. Madame Rubelle arrived in time to preside at Lady Glyde’s toilet. Her own clothes were taken away from her at night, and Anne Catherick’s were put on her in the morning, with the strictest regard to propriety, by the matronly hands of the good Rubelle. Throughout the day I kept our patient in a state of partially-suspended consciousness, until the dexterous assistance of my medical friends enabled me to procure the necessary order rather earlier than I had ventured to hope. That evening (the evening of the 27th) Madame Rubelle and I took our revived “Anne Catherick” to the Asylum. She was received with great surprise, but without suspicion, thanks to the order and certificates, to Percival’s letter, to the likeness, to the clothes, and to the patient’s own confused mental condition at the time. I returned at once to assist Madame Fosco in the preparations for the burial of the False “Lady Glyde,” having the clothes and luggage of the true “Lady Glyde” in my possession. They were afterwards sent to Cumberland by the conveyance which was used for the funeral. I attended the funeral, with becoming dignity, attired in the deepest mourning.

My narrative of these remarkable events, written under equally remarkable circumstances, closes here. The minor precautions which I observed in communicating with Limmeridge House are already known, so is the magnificent success of my enterprise, so are the solid pecuniary results which followed it. I have to assert, with the whole force of my conviction, that the one weak place in my scheme would never

have been found out if the one weak place in my heart had not been discovered first. Nothing but my fatal admiration for Marian restrained me from stepping in to my own rescue when she effected her sister's escape. I ran the risk, and trusted in the complete destruction of Lady Glyde's identity. If either Marian or Mr. Hartright attempted to assert that identity, they would publicly expose themselves to the imputation of sustaining a rank deception, they would be distrusted and discredited accordingly, and they would therefore be powerless to place my interests or Percival's secret in jeopardy. I committed one error in trusting myself to such a blindfold calculation of chances as this. I committed another when Percival had paid the penalty of his own obstinacy and violence, by granting Lady Glyde a second reprieve from the mad-house, and allowing Mr. Hartright a second chance of escaping me. In brief, Fosco, at this serious crisis, was untrue to himself. Deplorable and uncharacteristic fault! Behold the cause, in my heart—behold, in the image of Marian Halcombe, the first and last weakness of Fosco's life!

At the ripe age of sixty, I make this unparalleled confession. Youths! I invoke your sympathy. Maidens! I claim your tears.

A word more, and the attention of the reader (concentrated breathlessly on myself) shall be released.

My own mental insight informs me that three inevitable questions will be asked here by persons of inquiring minds. They shall be stated—they shall be answered.

First question. What is the secret of Madame Fosco's unhesitating devotion of herself to the fulfilment of my boldest wishes, to the furtherance of my deepest plans? I might answer this by simply referring to my own character, and by asking, in my turn, Where, in the history of the world, has a man of my order ever been found without a woman in the background self-immolated on the altar of his life? But I remember that I am writing in England, I remember that I was married in England, and I ask if a woman's marriage obligations in this country provide for her private opinion of her husband's principles? No! They charge her unreservedly to love, honour, and obey him. That is exactly what my wife has done. I stand here on a supreme moral elevation, and I loftily assert her accurate performance of her conjugal duties. Silence, Calumny! Your sympathy, Wives of England, for Madame Fosco!

Second question. If Anne Catherick had not died when she did, what should I have done? I should, in that case, have assisted worn-out Nature in finding permanent repose. I should have opened the doors of the Prison of Life, and have extended to the captive (incurably afflicted in mind and body both) a happy release.



Third question. On a calm revision of all the circumstances—Is my conduct worthy of any serious blame? Most emphatically, No! Have I not carefully avoided exposing myself to the odium of committing unnecessary crime? With my vast resources in chemistry, I might have taken Lady Glyde's life. At immense personal sacrifice I followed the dictates of my own ingenuity, my own humanity, my own caution, and took her identity instead. Judge me by what I might have done. How comparatively innocent! how indirectly virtuous I appear in what I really did!

I announced on beginning it that this narrative would be a remarkable document. It has entirely answered my expectations. Receive these fervid lines—my last legacy to the country I leave for ever. They are worthy of the occasion, and worthy of
FOSCO.

