

## Session 4 - Wives and Daughters *and* Middlemarch

### Wives and Daughters

1. What do these extracts tell us about courtship and female behaviour?
2. In what ways do you find the presentation of these ideas similar, or in what ways are they different?
3. How might the difference in age between Rosamond and Hyacinth make a difference. Thinking back to *Wives and Daughters*, how might the characters of Rosamond and Cynthia be compared?
4. From your understanding of Cynthia, some extracts below, how does she compare with Rosamond?

### Chapter 9

Mrs. Kirkpatrick was only too happy to accept Lady Cumnor's invitation. It was what she had been hoping for, but hardly daring to expect, as she believed that the family were settled in London for some time to come. The Towers was a pleasant and luxurious house in which to pass her holidays; and though she was not one to make deep plans, or to look far ahead, she was quite aware of the prestige which her being able to say she had been staying with "dear Lady Cumnor" at the Towers, was likely to give her and her school in the eyes of a good many people; so she gladly prepared to join her ladyship on the 17th. Her wardrobe did not require much arrangement; if it had done, the poor lady would not have had much money to appropriate to the purpose. She was very pretty and graceful; and that goes a great way towards carrying off shabby clothes; and it was her taste more than any depth of feeling, that had made her persevere in wearing all the delicate tints—the violets and grays—which, with a certain admixture of black, constitute half-mourning. This style of becoming dress she was supposed to wear in memory of Mr. Kirkpatrick; in reality because it was both lady-like and economical. Her beautiful hair was of that rich auburn that hardly ever turns gray; and partly out of consciousness of its beauty, and partly because the washing of caps is expensive, she did not wear anything on her head; her complexion had the vivid tints that often accompany the kind of hair which has once been red; and the only injury her skin had received from advancing years was that the colouring was rather more brilliant than delicate, and varied less with every passing emotion. She could no longer blush; and at eighteen she had been very proud of her blushes. Her eyes were soft, large, and china-blue in colour; they had not much expression or shadow about them, which was perhaps owing to the flaxen colour of her eyelashes. Her figure was a little fuller than it used to be, but her movements were as soft and sinuous as ever. Altogether, she looked much younger than her age, which was not far short of forty. She had a very pleasant voice, and read aloud well and distinctly, which Lady Cumnor liked. Indeed, for some inexplicable reason, she was a greater, more positive favourite with Lady Cumnor than with any of the rest of the family, though they all liked her up to a certain point, and found it agreeably useful to have any one in the house who was so well acquainted with their ways and habits; so ready to talk, when a little trickle of conversation was required; so willing to listen, and to listen with tolerable intelligence, if the subjects spoken about did not refer to serious solid literature, or science, or politics, or social economy. About novels and poetry, travels and gossip, personal details, or anecdotes of any kind, she always made exactly the remarks which are expected from an agreeable listener; and she had sense enough to confine herself to those short expressions of wonder, admiration, and astonishment, which may mean anything, when more recondite things were talked about.

It was a very pleasant change to a poor unsuccessful schoolmistress to leave her own house, full of battered and shabby furniture (she had taken the good-will and furniture of her predecessor at a valuation, two or three years before), where the look-out was as gloomy, and the surrounding as squalid, as is often the case in the smaller streets of a country town, and to come bowling through the Towers Park in the luxurious carriage sent to meet her; to alight, and feel secure that the well-trained servants would see after her bags, and umbrella, and parasol, and cloak, without her loading herself with all these portable articles, as she had had to do while following the wheelbarrow containing her luggage in going to the Ashcombe coach-office that morning; to pass up the deep-piled carpets of the broad shallow stairs into my lady's own room, cool and deliciously fresh, even on this sultry day, and fragrant with great bowls of freshly gathered roses of every shade of colour. There were two or three new novels lying uncut on the table; the daily papers, the magazines. Every chair was an easy-chair of some kind or other; and all covered with French chintz that mimicked the real flowers in the garden below.

She was familiar with the bedroom called hers, to which she was soon ushered by Lady Cumnor's maid. It seemed to her far more like home than the dingy place she had left that morning; it was so natural to her to like dainty draperies, and harmonious colouring, and fine linen, and soft raiment. She sat down in the arm-chair by the bed-side, and wondered over her fate something in this fashion—

“One would think it was an easy enough thing to deck a looking-glass like that with muslin and pink ribbons; and yet how hard it is to keep it up! People don't know how hard it is till they've tried as I have. I made my own glass just as pretty when I first went to Ashcombe; but the muslin got dirty, and the pink ribbons faded, and it is so difficult to earn money to renew them; and when one has got the money one hasn't the heart to spend it all at once. One thinks and one thinks how one can get the most good out of it; and a new gown, or a day's pleasure, or some hot-house fruit, or some piece of elegance that can be seen and noticed in one's drawing-room, carries the day, and good-bye to prettily decked looking-glasses. Now here, money is like the air they breathe. No one even asks or knows how much the washing costs, or what pink ribbon is a yard. Ah! it would be different if they had to earn every penny as I have! They would have to calculate, like me, how to get the most pleasure out of it. I wonder if I am to go on all my life toiling and moiling for money? It's not natural. Marriage is the natural thing; then the husband has all that kind of dirty work to do, and his wife sits in the drawing-room like a lady. I did, when poor Kirkpatrick was alive. Heigho! it's a sad thing to be a widow.”

## Chapter 10

Mrs. Kirkpatrick had been reading aloud till Lady Cumnor fell asleep, the book rested on her knee, just kept from falling by her hold. She was looking out of the window, not seeing the trees in the park, nor the glimpses of the hills beyond, but thinking how pleasant it would be to have a husband once more;—some one who would work while she sat at her elegant ease in a prettily-furnished drawing-room; and she was rapidly investing this imaginary breadwinner with the form and features of the country surgeon, when there was a slight tap at the door, and almost before she could rise, the object of her thoughts came in. She felt herself blush, and she was not displeased at the consciousness. She advanced to meet him, making a sign towards her sleeping ladyship.

“Very good,” said he, in a low voice, casting a professional eye on the slumbering figure; “can I speak to you for a minute or two in the library?”

“Is he going to offer?” thought she, with a sudden palpitation, and a conviction of her willingness to accept a man whom an hour before she had simply looked upon as one of the category of unmarried men to whom matrimony was possible.

He was only going to make one or two medical inquiries; she found that out very speedily, and considered the conversation as rather flat to her, though it might be instructive to him. She was not aware that he finally made up his mind to propose, during the time that she was speaking—answering his questions in many words, but he was accustomed to winnow the chaff from the corn; and her voice was so soft, her accent so pleasant, that it struck him as particularly agreeable after the broad country accent he was perpetually hearing. Then the harmonious colours of her dress, and her slow and graceful movements, had something of the same soothing effect upon his nerves that a cat's purring has upon some people's. He began to think that he should be fortunate if he could win her, for his own sake. Yesterday he had looked upon her more as a possible stepmother for Molly; to-day he thought more of her as a wife for himself. The remembrance of Lord Cumnor's letter gave her a very becoming consciousness; she wished to attract, and hoped that she was succeeding. Still they only talked of the countess's state for some time: then a lucky shower came on. Mr. Gibson did not care a jot for rain, but just now it gave him an excuse for lingering. . . .

“Is he going to offer? Is he?» she wondered; and she began to tremble in the suspense before he next spoke.

“Could you love her as your daughter? Will you try? Will you give me the right of introducing you to her as her future mother; as my wife?”

There! he had done it—whether it was wise or foolish—he had done it! but he was aware that the question as to its wisdom came into his mind the instant that the words were said past recall.

She hid her face in her hands.

“Oh! Mr. Gibson,” she said; and then, a little to his surprise, and a great deal to her own, she burst into hysterical tears: it was such a wonderful relief to feel that she need not struggle any more for a livelihood.

“My dear—my dearest,” said he, trying to soothe her with word and caress; but, just at the moment, uncertain what name he ought to use. After her sobbing had abated a little, she said herself, as if understanding

his difficulty,—

“Call me Hyacinth—your own Hyacinth. I can't bear ‘Clare,’ it does so remind me of being a governess, and those days are all past now.”

“Yes; but surely no one can have been more valued, more beloved than you have been in this family at least.”  
“Oh, yes! they have been very good. But still one has always had to remember one's position.”

“We ought to tell Lady Cumnor,” said he, thinking, perhaps, more of the various duties which lay before him in consequence of the step he had just taken, than of what his future bride was saying.

“You'll tell her, won't you?” said she, looking up in his face with beseeching eyes. “I always like other people to tell her things, and then I can see how she takes them.”

“Certainly! I will do whatever you wish. Shall we go and see if she is awake now?”

“No! I think not. I had better prepare her. You will come to-morrow, won't you? and you will tell her then.”

“Yes; that will be best. I ought to tell Molly first. She has the right to know. I do hope you and she will love each other dearly.”

“Oh, yes! I'm sure we shall. Then you'll come to-morrow and tell Lady Cumnor? And I'll prepare her.”

“I don't see what preparation is necessary; but you know best, my dear. When can we arrange for you and Molly to meet?”

### *Some extracts on Cynthia*

Molly had allowed her fancy to dwell much on the idea of Cynthia's coming; and in the short time since they had met, Cynthia's unconscious power of fascination had been exercised upon her. Some people have this power. Of course, its effects are only manifested in the susceptible. A school-girl may be found in every school who attracts and influences all the others, not by her virtues, nor her beauty, nor her sweetness, nor her cleverness, but by something that can neither be described nor reasoned upon. It is the something alluded to in the old lines:—

Love me not for comely grace,  
For my pleasing eye and face;  
No, nor for my constant heart,—  
For these may change, and turn to ill,  
And thus true love may sever.  
But love me on, and know not why,  
So hast thou the same reason still  
To dote upon me ever.

A woman will have this charm, not only over men but over her own sex; it cannot be defined, or rather it is so delicate a mixture of many gifts and qualities that it is impossible to decide on the proportions of each. Perhaps it is incompatible with very high principle; as its essence seems to consist in the most exquisite power of adaptation to varying people and still more various moods; “being all things to all men.” At any rate, Molly might soon have been aware that Cynthia was not remarkable for unflinching morality; but the glamour thrown over her would have prevented Molly from any attempt at penetrating into and judging her companion's character, even had such processes been the least in accordance with her own disposition.

I have a fine instinct for reading the thoughts of others when they refer to me. I almost hate the idea of Roger judging me by his own standard, which wasn't made for me, and graciously forgiving me at last.»

I never set up for what I am not, and I know I'm not constant. I've told Mr.

Henderson so—” She stopped, blushing and smiling at the recollection.

“You have! and what did he say?”

“That he liked me just as I was; so you see he's fairly warned.

Oh, how good you are, Molly! I wonder, if I had been brought up like you, whether I should have been as good.

*Continues...*

# Middlemarch

## Chapter 11

Rosamond Vincy, who had excellent taste in costume, with that nymph-like figure and pure blondness which give the largest range to choice in the flow and color of drapery. But these things made only part of her charm. She was admitted to be the flower of Mrs. Lemon's school, the chief school in the county, where the teaching included all that was demanded in the accomplished female—even to extras, such as the getting in and out of a carriage. Mrs. Lemon herself had always held up Miss Vincy as an example: no pupil, she said, exceeded that young lady for mental acquisition and propriety of speech, while her musical execution was quite exceptional. We cannot help the way in which people speak of us, and probably if Mrs. Lemon had undertaken to describe Juliet or Imogen, these heroines would not have seemed poetical. The first vision of Rosamond would have been enough with most judges to dispel any prejudice excited by Mrs. Lemon's praise.

"Oh, my dear, you must allow for young men. Be thankful if they have good hearts. A woman must learn to put up with little things. You will be married some day."

## Chapter 12

Miss Vincy was alone, and blushed so deeply when Lydgate came in that he felt a corresponding embarrassment, and instead of any playfulness, he began at once to speak of his reason for calling, and to beg her, almost formally, to deliver the message to her father. Rosamond, who at the first moment felt as if her happiness were returning, was keenly hurt by Lydgate's manner; her blush had departed, and she assented coldly, without adding an unnecessary word, some trivial chain-work which she had in her hands enabling her to avoid looking at Lydgate higher than his chin. In all failures, the beginning is certainly the half of the whole. After sitting two long moments while he moved his whip and could say nothing, Lydgate rose to go, and Rosamond, made nervous by her struggle between mortification and the wish not to betray it, dropped her chain as if startled, and rose too, mechanically. Lydgate instantaneously stooped to pick up the chain. When he rose he was very near to a lovely little face set on a fair long neck which he had been used to see turning about under the most perfect management of self-contented grace. But as he raised his eyes now he saw a certain helpless quivering which touched him quite newly, and made him look at Rosamond with a questioning flash. At this moment she was as natural as she had ever been when she was five years old: she felt that her tears had risen, and it was no use to try to do anything else than let them stay like water on a blue flower or let them fall over her cheeks, even as they would.

That moment of naturalness was the crystallizing feather-touch: it shook flirtation into love. Remember that the ambitious man who was looking at those Forget-me-nots under the water was very warm-hearted and rash. He did not know where the chain went; an idea had thrilled through the recesses within him which had a miraculous effect in raising the power of passionate love lying buried there in no sealed sepulchre, but under the lightest, easily pierced mould. His words were quite abrupt and awkward; but the tone made them sound like an ardent, appealing avowal.

"What is the matter? you are distressed. Tell me, pray."

Rosamond had never been spoken to in such tones before. I am not sure that she knew what the words were: but she looked at Lydgate and the tears fell over her cheeks. There could have been no more complete answer than that silence, and Lydgate, forgetting everything else, completely mastered by the outrush of tenderness at the sudden belief that this sweet young creature depended on him for her joy, actually put his arms round her, folding her gently and protectingly—he was used to being gentle with the weak and suffering—and kissed each of the two large tears. This was a strange way of arriving at an understanding, but it was a short way. Rosamond was not angry, but she moved backward a little in timid happiness, and Lydgate could now sit near her and speak less incompletely. Rosamond had to make her little confession, and he poured out words of gratitude and tenderness with impulsive lavishness. In half an hour he left the house an engaged man, whose soul was not his own, but the woman's to whom he had bound himself.

... "I feel that papa is not quite pleased about our engagement," Rosamond continued, almost in a whisper; "and he said last night that he should certainly speak to you and say it must be given up."

"Will you give it up?" said Lydgate, with quick energy—almost angrily.

"I never give up anything that I choose to do," said Rosamond, recovering her calmness at the touching of this chord.

"God bless you!" said Lydgate, kissing her again. This constancy of purpose in the right place was adorable.

He went on:—

“It is too late now for your father to say that our engagement must be given up. You are of age, and I claim you as mine. If anything is done to make you unhappy,—that is a reason for hastening our marriage.”

An unmistakable delight shone forth from the blue eyes that met his, and the radiance seemed to light up all his future with mild sunshine. Ideal happiness (of the kind known in the Arabian Nights, in which you are invited to step from the labor and discord of the street into a paradise where everything is given to you and nothing claimed) seemed to be an affair of a few weeks’ waiting, more or less.

“Why should we defer it?” he said, with ardent insistence. “I have taken the house now: everything else can soon be got ready—can it not? You will not mind about new clothes. Those can be bought afterwards.”

“What original notions you clever men have!” said Rosamond, dimpling with more thorough laughter than usual at this humorous incongruity. “This is the first time I ever heard of wedding-clothes being bought after marriage.”

“But you don’t mean to say you would insist on my waiting months for the sake of clothes?” said Lydgate, half thinking that Rosamond was tormenting him prettily, and half fearing that she really shrank from speedy marriage. “Remember, we are looking forward to a better sort of happiness even than this—being continually together, independent of others, and ordering our lives as we will. Come, dear, tell me how soon you can be altogether mine.”

There was a serious pleading in Lydgate’s tone, as if he felt that she would be injuring him by any fantastic delays. Rosamond became serious too, and slightly meditative; in fact, she was going through many intricacies of lace-edging and hosiery and petticoat-tucking, in order to give an answer that would at least be approximative.

“Six weeks would be ample—say so, Rosamond,” insisted Lydgate, releasing her hands to put his arm gently round her.

One little hand immediately went to pat her hair, while she gave her neck a meditative turn, and then said seriously—

“There would be the house-linen and the furniture to be prepared. Still, mamma could see to those while we were away.”

“Yes, to be sure. We must be away a week or so.”

“Oh, more than that!” said Rosamond, earnestly. She was thinking of her evening dresses for the visit to Sir Godwin Lydgate’s, which she had long been secretly hoping for as a delightful employment of at least one quarter of the honeymoon, even if she deferred her introduction to the uncle who was a doctor of divinity (also a pleasing though sober kind of rank, when sustained by blood). She looked at her lover with some wondering remonstrance as she spoke, and he readily understood that she might wish to lengthen the sweet time of double solitude.

“Whatever you wish, my darling, when the day is fixed. But let us take a decided course, and put an end to any discomfort you may be suffering. Six weeks!—I am sure they would be ample.”

## **Middlemarch –Dorothea and Casaubon**

- 1. This is Eliot’s dark vision of marriage. How does she make it so dark?**
- 2. What are the reasons for Dorothea choice? What is Eliot trying to get across here and does she succeed?**
- 3. In what ways are Gaskell’s aims similar to or different from Eliot’s?**
- 4. Does Gaskell every present such a dark vision in her writing? If so where and does her vision match up to Eliot’s?**
- 5. Is Eliot’s general vision of marriage darker that Gaskell’s? If so, can you suggest why?**

### *Chapter 1*

And how should Dorothea not marry?—a girl so handsome and with such prospects? Nothing could hinder it but her love of extremes, and her insistence on regulating life according to notions which might cause a wary man to hesitate before he made her an offer, or even might lead her at last to refuse all offers. A young lady of some birth and fortune, who knelt suddenly down on a brick floor by the side of a sick laborer and

prayed fervidly as if she thought herself living in the time of the Apostles—who had strange whims of fasting like a Papist, and of sitting up at night to read old theological books! Such a wife might awaken you some fine morning with a new scheme for the application of her income which would interfere with political economy and the keeping of saddle-horses: a man would naturally think twice before he risked himself in such fellowship. Women were expected to have weak opinions; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on. Sane people did what their neighbors did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them.

### *Chapter 3*

If it had really occurred to Mr. Casaubon to think of Miss Brooke as a suitable wife for him, the reasons that might induce her to accept him were already planted in her mind, and by the evening of the next day the reasons had budded and bloomed. For they had had a long conversation in the morning, while Celia, who did not like the company of Mr. Casaubon's moles and sallowness, had escaped to the vicarage to play with the curate's ill-shod but merry children.

Dorothea by this time had looked deep into the ungauged reservoir of Mr. Casaubon's mind, seeing reflected there in vague labyrinthine extension every quality she herself brought; had opened much of her own experience to him, and had understood from him the scope of his great work, also of attractively labyrinthine extent. For he had been as instructive as Milton's "affable archangel;" and with something of the archangelic manner he told her how he had undertaken to show (what indeed had been attempted before, but not with that thoroughness, justice of comparison, and effectiveness of arrangement at which Mr. Casaubon aimed) that all the mythical systems or erratic mythical fragments in the world were corruptions of a tradition originally revealed. Having once mastered the true position and taken a firm footing there, the vast field of mythical constructions became intelligible, nay, luminous with the reflected light of correspondences. But to gather in this great harvest of truth was no light or speedy work. His notes already made a formidable range of volumes, but the crowning task would be to condense these voluminous still-accumulating results and bring them, like the earlier vintage of Hippocratic books, to fit a little shelf. In explaining this to Dorothea, Mr. Casaubon expressed himself nearly as he would have done to a fellow-student, for he had not two styles of talking at command: it is true that when he used a Greek or Latin phrase he always gave the English with scrupulous care, but he would probably have done this in any case. A learned provincial clergyman is accustomed to think of his acquaintances as of "lords, knyghtes, and other noble and worthi men, that conne Latyn but lytille."

Dorothea was altogether captivated by the wide embrace of this conception. Here was something beyond the shallows of ladies' school literature: here was a living Bossuet, whose work would reconcile complete knowledge with devoted piety; here was a modern Augustine who united the glories of doctor and saint....

It was not many days before Mr. Casaubon paid a morning visit, on which he was invited again for the following week to dine and stay the night. Thus Dorothea had three more conversations with him, and was convinced that her first impressions had been just. He was all she had at first imagined him to be: almost everything he had said seemed like a specimen from a mine, or the inscription on the door of a museum which might open on the treasures of past ages; and this trust in his mental wealth was all the deeper and more effective on her inclination because it was now obvious that his visits were made for her sake. This accomplished man condescended to think of a young girl, and take the pains to talk to her, not with absurd compliment, but with an appeal to her understanding, and sometimes with instructive correction. What delightful companionship! Mr. Casaubon seemed even unconscious that trivialities existed, and never handed round that small-talk of heavy men which is as acceptable as stale bride-cake brought forth with an odor of cupboard. He talked of what he was interested in, or else he was silent and bowed with sad civility. To Dorothea this was adorable genuineness, and religious abstinence from that artificiality which uses up the soul in the efforts of pretence. For she looked as reverently at Mr. Casaubon's religious elevation above herself as she did at his intellect and learning. He assented to her expressions of devout feeling, and usually with an appropriate quotation; he allowed himself to say that he had gone through some spiritual conflicts in his youth; in short, Dorothea saw that here she might reckon on understanding, sympathy, and guidance. On one—only one—of her favorite themes she was disappointed. Mr. Casaubon apparently did not care about building cottages, and diverted the talk to the extremely narrow accommodation which was to be had in the dwellings of the ancient Egyptians, as if to check a too high standard. After he was gone, Dorothea dwelt with some agitation on this indifference of his; and her mind was much exercised with arguments drawn from the varying conditions of climate which modify human needs, and from the admitted wickedness of pagan despots. Should she not urge these arguments on

Mr. Casaubon when he came again? But further reflection told her that she was presumptuous in demanding his attention to such a subject; he would not disapprove of her occupying herself with it in leisure moments, as other women expected to occupy themselves with their dress and embroidery—would not forbid it when—Dorothea felt rather ashamed as she detected herself in these speculations. But her uncle had been invited to go to Lowick to stay a couple of days: was it reasonable to suppose that Mr. Casaubon delighted in Mr. Brooke's society for its own sake, either with or without documents?...

## Chapter 5

MY DEAR MISS BROOKE,—I have your guardian's permission to address you on a subject than which I have none more at heart. I am not, I trust, mistaken in the recognition of some deeper correspondence than that of date in the fact that a consciousness of need in my own life had arisen contemporaneously with the possibility of my becoming acquainted with you. For in the first hour of meeting you, I had an impression of your eminent and perhaps exclusive fitness to supply that need (connected, I may say, with such activity of the affections as even the preoccupations of a work too special to be abdicated could not uninterruptedly dissimulate); and each succeeding opportunity for observation has given the impression an added depth by convincing me more emphatically of that fitness which I had preconceived, and thus evoking more decisively those affections to which I have but now referred. Our conversations have, I think, made sufficiently clear to you the tenor of my life and purposes: a tenor unsuited, I am aware, to the commoner order of minds. But I have discerned in you an elevation of thought and a capability of devotedness, which I had hitherto not conceived to be compatible either with the early bloom of youth or with those graces of sex that may be said at once to win and to confer distinction when combined, as they notably are in you, with the mental qualities above indicated. It was, I confess, beyond my hope to meet with this rare combination of elements both solid and attractive, adapted to supply aid in graver labors and to cast a charm over vacant hours; and but for the event of my introduction to you (which, let me again say, I trust not to be superficially coincident with foreshadowing needs, but providentially related thereto as stages towards the completion of a life's plan), I should presumably have gone on to the last without any attempt to lighten my solitariness by a matrimonial union.

Such, my dear Miss Brooke, is the accurate statement of my feelings; and I rely on your kind indulgence in venturing now to ask you how far your own are of a nature to confirm my happy presentiment. To be accepted by you as your husband and the earthly guardian of your welfare, I should regard as the highest of providential gifts. In return I can at least offer you an affection hitherto unwasted, and the faithful consecration of a life which, however short in the sequel, has no backward pages whereon, if you choose to turn them, you will find records such as might justly cause you either bitterness or shame. I await the expression of your sentiments with an anxiety which it would be the part of wisdom (were it possible) to divert by a more arduous labor than usual. But in this order of experience I am still young, and in looking forward to an unfavorable possibility I cannot but feel that resignation to solitude will be more difficult after the temporary illumination of hope.

In any case, I shall remain,  
Yours with sincere devotion,  
EDWARD CASAUBON.

Dorothea trembled while she read this letter; then she fell on her knees, buried her face, and sobbed. She could not pray: under the rush of solemn emotion in which thoughts became vague and images floated uncertainly, she could but cast herself, with a childlike sense of reclining, in the lap of a divine consciousness which sustained her own. She remained in that attitude till it was time to dress for dinner.

How could it occur to her to examine the letter, to look at it critically as a profession of love? Her whole soul was possessed by the fact that a fuller life was opening before her: she was a neophyte about to enter on a higher grade of initiation. She was going to have room for the energies which stirred uneasily under the dimness and pressure of her own ignorance and the petty peremptoriness of the world's habits.

Now she would be able to devote herself to large yet definite duties; now she would be allowed to live continually in the light of a mind that she could reverence. This hope was not unmixed with the glow of proud delight—the joyous maiden surprise that she was chosen by the man whom her admiration had chosen. All

Dorothea's passion was transfused through a mind struggling towards an ideal life; the radiance of her transfigured girlhood fell on the first object that came within its level. The impetus with which inclination became resolution was heightened by those little events of the day which had roused her discontent with the actual conditions of her life.

## *Chapter 20*

However, Dorothea was crying, and if she had been required to state the cause, she could only have done so in some such general words as I have already used: to have been driven to be more particular would have been like trying to give a history of the lights and shadows, for that new real future which was replacing the imaginary drew its material from the endless minutiae by which her view of Mr. Casaubon and her wifely relation, now that she was married to him, was gradually changing with the secret motion of a watch-hand from what it had been in her maiden dream. It was too early yet for her fully to recognize or at least admit the change, still more for her to have readjusted that devotedness which was so necessary a part of her mental life that she was almost sure sooner or later to recover it. Permanent rebellion, the disorder of a life without some loving reverent resolve, was not possible to her; but she was now in an interval when the very force of her nature heightened its confusion. In this way, the early months of marriage often are times of critical tumult—whether that of a shrimp-pool or of deeper waters—which afterwards subsides into cheerful peace.

But was not Mr. Casaubon just as learned as before? Had his forms of expression changed, or his sentiments become less laudable? Oh waywardness of womanhood! did his chronology fail him, or his ability to state not only a theory but the names of those who held it; or his provision for giving the heads of any subject on demand? And was not Rome the place in all the world to give free play to such accomplishments? Besides, had not Dorothea's enthusiasm especially dwelt on the prospect of relieving the weight and perhaps the sadness with which great tasks lie on him who has to achieve them?— And that such weight pressed on Mr. Casaubon was only plainer than before.