

Text I - LOVE AND MARRIAGE

"Oh, dear!" she¹ cried at last, "I'm very unhappy!"

"A pity," observed I, "you're hard to please -- so many friends and so few cares, and can't make yourself, content!"

"Nelly, will you keep a secret for me?" she pursued, kneeling down by me, and lifting her winsome² eyes to my face with that sort of look which turns off bad temper, even, when one has all the right in the world to indulge it.

"Is it worth keeping?" I inquired less, sulkily³

"Yes, and it worries me, and I must let it out! I want to know what I should do -To-day, Edgar Linton has asked me to marry him, and I've given him an answer -- Now, before I tell you whether it was a consent, or denial - you tell me which it ought to have been."

"Really, Miss Catherine, how can I know?" I replied. "To be sure, considering the exhibition you performed in his presence, this afternoon, I might say it would be wise to be hopelessly stupid, or a venturesome⁴ fool."

"If you talk so, I won't tell you any more," she returned, peevishly⁵, rising to her feet. "I accepted him, Nelly; be quick, and say whether I was wrong!"

"You accepted him? then, what good is it discussing the matter? You have pledged⁶ your word, and cannot retract."

"But, say whether I should have done so -- do!" she exclaimed in an irritated tone; chafing her hands together, and frowning⁷.

"There are many things to be considered, before that question can be answered properly," I said sententiously, "First and foremost, do you love Mr Edgar?"

"Who can help it? Of course I do," she answered.

Then I put her through the following catechism - for a girl of twenty-two it was not injudicious.

"Why do you love him, Miss Cathy?"

"Nonsense, I do--that's sufficient."

"By no means; you must say why?"

"Well, because he is handsome, and pleasant to be with."

"Bad," was my commentary.

"And because he is young and cheerful."

"Bad, still."

"And, because he loves me."

"Indifferent, coming there."

"And he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband."

"Worst of all! And, now, say how you love him?"

"As everybody loves - You're silly, Nelly."

"Not at all -- Answer."

"I love the ground under his feet, and the air over his love all his looks, and all his actions, and him entirely, and altogether. There now!"

"And why?"

"Nay - you are making a jest⁸ of it; it is exceedingly ill-natured! It's no jest to me!" said the young lady scowling, and turning her face to the fire.

"I'm very far from jesting, Miss Catherine," I replied, "you love Mr Edgar, because he is handsome, and young, and cheerful, and rich, and loves you. The last, however, goes for nothing - You would love him without that, probably, and with it, you wouldn't unless he possessed the four former attractions."

"No, to be sure not - I should only pity him - hate him, perhaps, if he were ugly, and a clown."

¹ she: Catherine

² winsome: charming

³ sulkily: in a bad temper

⁴ venturesome: adventurous

⁵ peevishly: in a bad temper

⁶ pledged your word: promised

⁷ frowning: with an angry expression

⁸ Jest: joke

"But, there are several other handsome, rich young men in the world; handsomer, possibly, and richer than he is -- What should hinder⁹ you from loving them?"

"If there be any, they are out of my way - I've seen none like Edgar."

"You may see some; and he won't always be handsome, and young, and may not always be rich."

"He is now; and I have only to do with the present -- I wish you would speak rationally."

"Well, that settles¹⁰ it - if you have only to do with the present, marry Mr Linton."

"I don't want your permission for that - I *shall* marry him; and yet, you have not told me whether I'm right."

"Perfectly right; if people be right to marry only for the present. And now, let us hear what you are unhappy about. Your brother will be pleased... The old lady and gentleman will not object, I think -- you will escape from a disorderly, comfortless home into a wealthy you. All seems smooth and easy - where is the obstacle?"

"*Here!*, and *here!*" replied Catherine, striking one hand on her forehead, and the other on her breast. "In whichever place the soul lives -- in my soul, and in my heart, I'm convinced I'm wrong!"

From Chapter IX, Wuthering Heights (1847) by **Emily Brontë** (1818-1848)

http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/fiction_u/brontee_wh/wh_ch9.html

⁹ hinder: impede

¹⁰ settles: ends the argument