

**GRIFFITH GAUNT:
OR, JEALOUSY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649462858

Griffith Gaunt: Or, Jealousy by Charles Reade

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

CHARLES READE

**GRIFFITH GAUNT:
OR, JEALOUSY**



"Miss Peyton relapsed into the transatlantic."

GRIFFITH GAUNT;

OR,

JEALOUSY.

BY

CHARLES READE,

AUTHOR OF

"HARD CASH," "PEG WOFFINGTON," "CHRISTIE JOHNSTONE," "NEVER TOO LATE
TO MEND," "LOVE ME LITTLE, LOVE ME LONG," &c.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS
FRANKLIN SQUARE.


1873.

CHARLES READE'S NOVELS.

POPULAR EDITION.

-
- A SIMPLETON. (*Now in course of publication in HARPER'S MAGAZINE.*)
- THE WANDERING HEIR. Illustrated. 8vo, Paper, 25 cents; Cloth, 60 cents.
- A TERRIBLE TEMPTATION. Illustrated. 8vo, Paper, 50 cents.
- PUT YOURSELF IN HIS PLACE. Illustrated. 8vo, Paper, 75 cents; Cloth, \$1 25;
12mo, Cloth, \$1 00.
- HARD CASH. A Matter-of-Fact Romance. Illustrated. 8vo, Paper, 50 cents.
- GRIFFITH GAUNT; or, Jealousy. Illustrated. 8vo, Paper, 25 cents.
- NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND. 8vo, Paper, 50 cents.
- LOVE ME LITTLE, LOVE ME LONG. 8vo, Paper, 50 cents.
- FOUL PLAY. 8vo, Paper, 25 cents.
- WHITE LIES. 8vo, Paper, 50 cents.
- CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH; or, Maid, Wife, and Widow. 8vo, Paper, 50 cents.
- PEG WOFFINGTON, CHRISTIE JOHNSTONE, and Other Stories. 8vo, Paper, 50 cents.

PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK.

 Sent by mail, postage prepaid, to any part of the United States, on receipt of the price.

GRIFFITH GAUNT; OR, JEALOUSY.

CHAPTER I.

"THEN I say, once for all, that priest shall never darken my doors again."

"Then I say they are my doors, and not yours, and that holy man shall brighten them whenever he will."

The gentleman and lady who faced each other pale and furious, and interchanged this bitter defiance, were man and wife, and had loved each other well.

Miss Catharine Peyton was a young lady of ancient family in Cumberland, and the most striking, but least popular, beauty in the county. She was very tall and straight, and carried herself a little too imperiously; yet she would sometimes relax and all but dissolve that haughty figure, and hang sweetly drooping over her favorites; then the contrast was delicious, and the woman fascinating.

Her hair was golden and glossy, her eyes a lovely gray; and she had a way of turning them on slowly and full, so that their victim could not fail to observe two things: first, that they were grand and beautiful orbs; secondly, that they were thoughtfully overlooking him, instead of looking at him.

So contemplated by glorious eyes, a man feels small and bitter.

Catharine was apt to receive the blunt compliments of the Cumberland squires with this sweet, celestial, superior gaze, and for this and other imperial charms was more admired than liked.

The family estate was entailed on her brother; her father spent every farthing he could; so she had no money, and no expectations, except from a distant cousin—Mr. Charlton, of Hemslow Castle and Bolton Hall.

Even these soon dwindled. Mr. Charlton took a fancy to his late wife's relation, Griffith Gaunt, and had him into his house, and treated him as his heir. This disheartened two admirers who had hitherto sustained Catharine Peyton's gaze, and they retired. Comely girls, girls long-nosed, but rich, girls snub-nosed, but winning, married on all sides of her; but the imperial beauty remained Miss Peyton at two-and-twenty.

She was rather kind to the poor; would give them money out of her slender purse, and would even make clothes for the women, and sometimes read to them: very few of them could read to themselves in that day. All she required in return was that they should be Roman Catholics like herself, or at least pretend they might be brought to that faith by little and little.

She was a high-minded girl, and could be a womanly one—whenever she chose.

She hunted about twice a week in the season, and was at home in the saddle, for she had ridden from a child; but so ingrained was her char-

acter, that this sport which more or less unsexes most women, had no perceptible effect on her mind, nor even on her manners. The scarlet riding-habit and little purple cap, and the great white, bony horse she rode, were often seen in a good place at the end of a long run; but, for all that, the lady was a most ungodial fox-huntress. She never spoke a word but to her acquaintances, and wore a settled air of dreamy indifference, except when the hounds happened to be in full cry, and she galloping at their heels. Worse than that, when the dogs were running into the fox, and his fate certain, she had been known to rein in her struggling horse, and pace thoughtfully home, instead of coming in at the death, and claiming the brush.

One day, being complimented at the end of a hard run by the gentleman who kept the hounds, she turned her celestial orbs on him, and said,

"Nay, Sir Ralph, I love to gallop; and this sorry business gives me an excuse."

It was full a hundred years ago. The country teemed with foxes; but it abounded in still covert, and a knowing fox was sure to run from one to another; and then came wearisome efforts to dislodge him; and then Miss Peyton's gray eyes used to explore vacancy, and ignore her companions, biped and quadruped.

But one day they drew Yewtree Brow, and found a stray fox. At Claylad's first note he broke cover, and went away for home across the open country. A hedger saw him steal out, and gave a view halloo; the riders came round helter-skelter; the dogs in cover one by one threw up their noses and voices; the horns blew, the canine music swelled to a strong chorus, and away they swept across country—dogs, horses, men; and the Deuce take the hindmost!

It was a gallant chase, and our dreamy virgin's blood got up. Erect, but lithe and vigorous, and one with her great white gelding, she came flying behind the foremost riders, and took leap for leap with them. One glossy, golden curl streamed back in the rushing air; her gray eyes glowed with earthly fire; and two red spots on the upper part of her cheeks showed she was much excited, without a grain of fear. Yet in the first ten minutes one gentleman was unhorsed before her eyes, and one came to grief along with his animal, and a thorough-bred chestnut was galloping and snorting beside her with empty saddle. Presently young Featherstone, who led her by about fifteen yards, crashed through a high hedge, and was seen no more, but heard wallowing in the deep, unsuspected ditch beyond. There was no time to draw bridle. "Lie still, sir, if you please," said Catharine, with cool civility; then up rein, in spur, and she cleared the ditch and its muddy contents, alive and dead, and away without looking behind her.

On, on, on, till all the pinks and buckskins, erst so smart, were splashed with clay and dirt of every hue, and all the horses' late glossy coats were bathed with sweat and lathered with foam, and their gaping nostrils blowing and glowing red; and then it was that Harrowden Brook, swollen wide and deep by the late rains, came right between the fox and Dogmore Underwood, for which he was making.

The hunt sweeping down a hill-side caught sight of Reynard running for the brook. They made sure of him now. But he lapped a drop, and then rearing round on the other side, and made feebly for the covert, weighted with wet fur.

At sight of him the hunt hallooed and trumpeted, and came tearing on with fresh vigor.

But when they came near the brook, lo, it was twenty feet wide, and running fast and brown. Some riders skirted it, looking for a narrow part. Two horses, being spurred at it, came to the bank, and then went rearing round on their heels, depositing one hat and another rider in the current. One gallant steed planted his feet like a tower, and snorted down at the water. One flopped gravely in, and had to swim, and be dragged out. Another leaped, and landed with his feet on the other bank, his hunches in the water, and his rider curled round his neck, and glaring out between his retroverted ears.

But Miss Peyton encouraged her horse with spur and voice, set her teeth, turned rather pale this time, and went at the brook with a rush, and cleared it like a deer. She and the huntsman were almost alone together on the other side, and were as close to the dogs as the dogs were to poor Pug, when he slipped through a run in a quickest hedge, and, reducing the dogs to single file, glided into Dogmore Underwood, a stiff hazel coppice of five years' growth.

The other riders soon straggled up, and then the thing was to get him out again. There were a few narrow roads out in the underwood; and up and down these the huntsman and whipper-in went trotting, and encouraged the staunch hounds, and whipped the skulkers back into covert. Others galloped uselessly about, pounding the earth, for daisy-cutters were few in those days; and Miss Peyton relapsed into the transcendental. She sat in one place, with her elbow on her knee, and her fair chin supported by two fingers, as undisturbed by the fracas of horns and voices as an equestrian statue of Diana.

She sat so still and so long at a corner of the underwood that at last the harassed fox stole out close to her with lolling tongue and eye askant, and took the open field again. She thrilled at first sight of him, and her cheeks burned; but her quick eye took in all the signs of his distress, and she sat quiet, and watched him coolly. Not so her horse. He plunged, and then trembled all over, and planted his fore feet together at this angle, and parted his hind legs a little, and so stood quivering, with cocked ears, and peeped over a low paling at the retiring quadruped, and fretted and sweated in anticipation of the gallop his long head told him was to follow. He looked a deal more statuesque than any three statues in England, and all about a creature not up to his knee. And, by-the-by, the gentlemen who carve horses in our native isle, did they ever see one—out of an omnibus? The whipper-in came by,

and found him in this gallant attitude, and suspected the truth, but, observing the rider's tranquil position, thought the fox had only popped out and then in again. However, he fell in with the huntsman, and told him Miss Peyton's gray had seen something. The hounds appeared puzzled; and so the huntsman rode round to Miss Peyton, and, touching his cap, asked her if she had seen nothing of the fox.

She looked him dreamily in the face.

"The fox?" she said; "he broke cover ten minutes ago."

The man blew his horn lustily, and then asked her reproachfully why she had not tally-hoed him, or winded her horn: with that he blew his own impatiently.

Miss Peyton replied, very slowly and pensively, that the fox had come out soiled and fatigued, and trailing his brush. "I looked at him," said she, "and I pitied him. He was one, and we are many; he was so little, and we are so big; he had given us a good gallop, and so I made up my mind he should live to run another day."

The huntsman stared stupidly at her for a moment, then burst into a torrent of oaths, then blew his horn till it was hoarse, then cursed and swore till he was hoarse himself, then to his horn again, and dogs and men came rushing to the sound.

"Come up, and go home to supper," said Miss Peyton, quietly. "The fox is half way to Gallowstree Gorse; and you won't get him out of that this afternoon, I promise you."

As she said this, she touched her horse with the spur, leaped the low hedge in front of her, and cantered slowly home across the country. She was one that seldom troubled the hard road, go where she would.

She had ridden about a mile, when she heard a horse's feet behind her. She smiled, and her color rose a little; but she cantored on.

"Halt, in the king's name!" shouted a mellow voice; and a gentleman galloped up to her side, and reined in his mare.

"What! have they killed?" inquired Catharine, demurely.

"Not they; he is in the middle of Gallowstree Gorse by now."

"And this is the way to Gallowstree Gorse?"

"Nay, mistress," said the young man; "but when the fox heads one way and the deer another, what is a poor hunter to do?"

"Follow the slower, it seems."

"Say the lovelier and the dearer, sweet Kate."

"Now, Griffith, you know I hate flattery," said Kate; and the next moment came a soft smile, and belied this unsocial sentiment.

"Flattery?" said the lover. "I have no tongue to speak half your praises. I think the people in this country are as blind as bats, or they'd—"

"All except Mr. Griffith Gaunt; he has found a paragon, where wiser people see a wayward, capricious girl."

"Then he is the man for you. Don't you see that, mistress?"

"No, I don't quite see that," said the lady, dryly.

This cavalier reply caused a dismay the speaker never intended. The fact is, Mr. George Neville, young, handsome, and rich, had lately settled in the neighborhood, and had been greatly

smitten with Kate. The county was talking about it, and Griffith had been secretly on thorns for some days past. And now he could hide his uneasiness no longer; he cried out, in a sharp, trembling voice,

"Why, Kate, my dear Kate! what! could you love any man but me? Could you be so cruel? could you? There, let me get off my horse, and lie down on this stubble, and you ride over me, and trample me to death. I would rather have you trample on my ribs than on my heart, with loving any one but me."

"Why, what now?" said Catharine, drawing herself up; "I must scold you handsomely;" and she drew rein and turned full upon him; but by this means she saw his face was full of real distress; so, instead of reprimanding him, she said, gently, "Why, Griffith, what is to do? Are you not my servant? Do not I send you word whenever I dine from home?"

"Yes, dearest; and then I call at that house, and stick there till they guess what I would be at, and ask me too."

Catharine smiled, and proceeded to remind him that thrice a week she permitted him to ride over from Bolton (a distance of fifteen miles) to see her.

"Yes," replied Griffith, "and I must say you always come, wet or dry, to the shrubby-gate, and put your head in mine a minute. And, Kate," said he, piteously, "at the bare thought of your putting that same dear hand in another man's, my heart turns sick within me, and my skin burns and trembles on me."

"But you have no cause," said Catharine, soothingly. "Nobody, except yourself, doubts my affection for you. You are often thrown in my teeth, Griffith—and" (clenching her own) "I like you all the better, of course."

Griffith replied with a burst of gratitude; and then, as men will, proceeded to encroach.

"Ah!" said he, "if you would but pluck up courage, and take the matrimonial fence with me at once."

Miss Peyton sighed at that, and drooped a little upon her saddle. After a pause, she enumerated the "just impediments." She reminded him that neither of them had means to marry on.

He made light of that; he should have plenty; Mr. Charlton has as good as told him he was to have Bolton Hall and Grange: "Six hundred acres, Kate, besides the park and paddocks."

In his warmth he forgot that Catharine was to have been Mr. Charlton's heir. Catharine was too high-minded to bear Griffith any grudge; but she colored a little, and said she was averse to come to him a penniless bride.

"Why, what matters it which of us has the dross, so that there is enough for both?" said Griffith, with an air of astonishment.

Catharine smiled approbation, and tacitly yielded that point. But then she objected the difference in their faith.

"Oh, honest folk get to heaven by different roads," said Griffith, carelessly.

"I have been taught otherwise," replied Catharine, gravely.

"Then give me your hand and I'll give you my soul," said Griffith Gaunt, impetuously. "I'll go to heaven your way, if you can't go

mine. Any thing sooner than be parted in this world or the next."

She looked at him in silence; and it was in a faint, half apologetic tone she objected that all her kinsfolk were set against it.

"It is not their business—it is ours," was the prompt reply.

"Well, then," said Catharine, sadly, "I suppose I must tell you the true reason: I feel I should not make you happy; I do not love you quite as you want to be loved—as you deserve to be loved. You need not look so; nothing in flesh and blood is your rival. But my heart bleeds for the Church; I think of her ancient glory in this kingdom, and, when I see her present condition, I long to devote myself to her service. I am very fit to be an abbess or a nun—most unfit to be a wife. No, no—I must not, ought not, dare not, marry a Protestant. Take the advice of one who esteems you dearly; leave me—fly from me—forget me—do every thing but hate me. Nay, do not hate me; you little know the struggle in my mind. Farewell; the saints, whom you scorn, watch over and protect you! Farewell!"

And with this she sighed, and struck her spur into the gray, and he darted off at a gallop.

Griffith, little able to cope with such a character as this, sat petrified, and would have been rooted to the spot if he had happened to be on foot. But his mare set off after her companion, and a chase of a novel kind commenced. Catharine's horse was fresher than Griffith's mare, and the latter, not being urged by her petrified master, lost ground.

But when she drew near to her father's gate, Catharine relaxed her speed, and Griffith rejoined her.

She had already half relented, and only wanted a warm and resolute wooer to bring her round. But Griffith was too sore, and too little versed in woman. Full of suspicion and bitterness, he paced gloomy and silent by her side till they reached the great avenue that led to her father's house.

And while he rides alongside the capricious creature in sulky silence, I may as well reveal a certain foible in his own character.

This Griffith Gaunt was by no means deficient in physical courage; but he was instinctively disposed to run away from mental pain the moment he lost hope of driving it away from him. For instance, if Catharine had been ill and her life in danger, he would have ridden day and night to save her—would have begged himself to save her; but if she had died, he would either have killed himself, or else fled the country, and so escaped the sight of every object that was associated with her and could agonize him. I do not think he could have attended the funeral of one he loved.

The mind, as well as the body, has its self-protecting instincts. This of Griffith's was, after all, an instinct of that class, and, under certain circumstances, is true wisdom. But Griffith, I think, carried the instinct to excess; and that is why I call it his foible.

"Catharine," said he, resolutely, "let me ride by your side to the house for once; for I read your advice my own way, and I mean to follow it: after to-day you will be troubled with me no more. I have loved you these three years, I

have courted you these two years, and I am none the nearer; I see I am not the man you mean to marry; so I shall do as my father did, ride down to the coast, and sell my horse, and ship for foreign parts."

"Oh, as you will," said Catharine, haughtily: she quite forgot she had just recommended him to do something of this very kind.

Presently she stole a look. His fine ruddy cheek was pale; his manly brown eyes were moist; yet a gloomy and resolute expression on his tight-drawn lips. She looked at him side-long, and thought how often he had ridden thirty miles on that very mare to get a word with her at the shrubbery-gate. And now the mare to be sold! The man to go broken-hearted to sea—perhaps to his death! Her good heart began to yearn.

"Griffith," said she, softly, "it is not as if I were going to wed any body else. Is it nothing to be preferred by her you say you love? If I were you, I would do nothing rash. Why not give me a little time? In truth, I hardly know my own mind about it two days together."

"Kate," said the young man, firmly, "I am courting you this two years. If I wait two years more, it will be but to see the right man come and carry you in a month; for so girls are won, when they are won at all. Your sister that is married and dead, she held Josh Pitt in hand for years; and what is the upshot? Why, he wears the willow for her to this day; and her husband married again, before her grave was green. Nay, I have done all an honest man can to woo you; so take me now, or let me go."

At this, Kate began to waver secretly, and ask herself whether it would not be better to yield, since he was so abominably resolute.

But the unlucky fellow did not leave well alone. He went on to say,

"Once out of sight of this place, I may cure myself of my fancy. Here I never could."

"Oh," said Catharine, directly, "if you are so bent on being cured, it would not become me to say nay."

Griffith Gaunt bit his lip and hung his head, and made no reply.

The patience with which he received her hard speech was more apparent than real; but it told, Catharine, receiving no fresh provocation, repented again of her own accord, and, after a considerable silence, whispered, softly,

"Think how we should all miss you."

Here was an overture to reconciliation. But, unfortunately, it brought out what had long been rankling in Griffith's mind, and was, in fact, the real cause of the misunderstanding.

"Oh," said he, "those I care for will soon find another to take my place! Soon? quotha. They have not waited till I was gone for that."

"Ah, indeed!" said Catharine, with some surprise; then, like the quick-witted girl she was, "so this is what all the coil is about."

She then, with a charming smile, begged him to inform her who was his destined successor in her esteem. Griffith colored purple at her cool hypocrisy (for such he considered it), and replied, almost fiercely,

"Who but that young black-and-viséd George Neville, that you have been coquetting with this month past—and danced all night with him at Lady Munster's ball, you didid."

Catharine blushed, and said, deprecatingly, "You were not there, Griffith, or to be sure I had not danced with him."

"And he toasts you by name, wherever he goes."

"Can I help that? Wait till I toast him, before you make yourself ridiculous, and me very angry—about nothing."

Griffith, sticking to his one idea, replied, doggedly,

"Miss Alice Peyton shilly-shallied with her true lover for years, till Richard Hilton came, that was not fit to tie his shoes; and then—"

Catharine cut him short, "Affront me, if nothing less will serve; but spare my sister in her grave."

She began the sentence angrily, but concluded it in a broken voice. Griffith was half disarmed; but only half. He answered, sullenly,

"She did not die till she had jilted an honest gentleman and broken his heart, and married a sot, to her cost. And you are of her breed, when all is done; and now that young coxcomb has come, like Dick Hilton, between you and me."

"But I do not encourage him."

"You do not discourage him," retorted Griffith, "or he would not be so hot after you. Were you over the woman to say, 'I have a servant already that loves me dear?' That one frank word had sent him packing."

Miss Peyton colored, and the water came into her eyes.

"I may have been imprudent," she murmured.

"The young gentleman made me smile with his extravagance. I never thought to be misunderstood by him, far less by you." Then, suddenly, as bold as brass, "It's all your fault; if he had the power to make you uneasy, why did you not check me before?"

"Ay, forsooth, and have it cast in my teeth I was a jealous monster, and played the tyrant before my time. A poor fellow scarce knows what to be at that loves a coquette."

"Coquette I am none," replied the lady, briding magnificently.

Griffith took no notice of this interruption. He proceeded to say that he had hitherto endured this intrusion of a rival in silence, though with a sore heart, hoping his patience might touch her, or the fire go out of itself. But at last, unable to bear it any longer in silence, he had shown his wound to one he knew could feel for him, his poor friend Pitt. Pitt had then let him know that his own mistake had been over-confidence in Alice Peyton's constancy.

"He said to me, 'Watch your Kate close, and, at the first blush of a rival, say you to her, I part with him, or part with me.'"

Catharine pinned him directly.

"And this is how you take Joshua Pitt's advice—by offering to run away from this sorry rival."

The shrewd reply, and a curl of the lip, half arch, half contemptuous, that accompanied the thrust, staggered the less ready Griffith. He got puzzled, and showed it.

"Well, but," stammered he at last, "your spirit is high; I was mostly afraid to put it so plump to you. So I thought I would go about a bit. However, it comes to the same thing; for this I do know—that, if you refuse me your hand