

CHAPTER VII. -Crome yellow

At Crome, the heritage of beds from the time of Sir Ferdinando to his late eighteenth-century namesake offered a magnificence unparalleled, embodying eras and aesthetics in their grand designs. The crown of these beds belonged to Anne, a masterpiece from early-seicento Venice, its body a sarcophagus of art, gilded roses, and cherubs drifting amidst floral carvings, under which Anne found her repose, engrossed in a book deemed "second-rate" by Mary, who had donned mauve pyjamas for her nightly visit.

The conversation, initiated under the pretext of saying goodnight, swiftly veered towards Mary's fears of "repressions," specifically of a sexual nature, which she dramatically feared could lead to nymphomania. Anne, though indulgent, could scarcely offer a remedy for such afflictions beyond her company and conversation.

Mary, armed with a logic that would have made Socrates proud, aimed to dissect the quandary of overcoming repressions through the experience of love, a journey from ignorance to knowledge deemed necessary. Yet, the stumbling block was not the philosophical conclusion but the absence of a subject for her affections. Despite identifying potential suitors in Gombauld and Denis, her concerns circled back to intellectual parity and respect—qualities she deemed rare and non-negotiable.

This intellectual trade-off, seeking someone who respected women and shared her intellectual ventures, narrowed her options to the unattached men at Crome, specifically Gombauld and Denis, as Mr. Scogan was promptly excluded for antiquity's sake. Anne's reassurance of their availability only led to further speculation on who among them would be the suitable candidate for Mary's endeavor to evade the wells of her dreams through a liaison founded on intellectual and emotional compatibility.

Thus, the chapter closes on Mary's determined yet cautious venture into the complexities of attraction, measured against the backdrop of intellectualism and respect, with both Anne and Mary treading lightly around the nuances of choice and preference in the twilight of their conversation.

