

## CHAPTER XIX. -Crome yellow

It's longer, but safer. And now goodbye!" They embraced. "Goodbye!" In another minute he had disappeared through the trap door; she heard his feet descending within the house. Mary was alone. She looked at the feather in her hand, twirled it, gazing at its changing lusters in the growing light. The day was broadening, the clouds lifting, flushed with the morning's youth. She looked out towards Ivor's tower. The flag was stirring slightly. A breeze was blowing, freshening. She looked back at the feather, spinning it faster between her fingers. Below, the world was waking. Cocks crowed; from the farmyard came the sound of voices, of doors opening and shutting; dogs barked; wheels began to rumble. But here above the world, on her high tower, Mary stood apart, feeling the first cool breaths of the morning stirring her blood, touching her cheeks. The feather spun and glittered. She breathed deeply, the feather poised lightly between her fingers, looking eastward to the sun, feeling as though this moment held within its frame of cool air and rising light something of enormous potential, a beginning, a birth.

Ivor's experiment with danger, his midnight walk along the roof-ridge, had brought to light the hidden intensity in George's visit to Crome, and seen through the antics of the midnight feast, the deeper veins of life surging into light. Underneath the conversations, the routines, lay the pulse of living hearts, the inarticulate desires, the unfulfilled quests. George's longing for Georgiana, her covert hunger for life beneath a guise of ethereality, and the farcical revelation of their fleshly appetites in secrecy, juxtaposed the human comedy and tragedy. The narrative wove through the absurd, the comic, and glimpses into the tender vulnerabilities of its characters.

With the dawn, a clarity settled on Mary, buffeted by the night's revelations, by the tangible proof of wings in her hand, and the fleeting closeness with Ivor. In the parallel awakening of the day and her own senses, there lingered a promise, an inkling of the profound, couched in the simplicity of a feather, of daylight, and a shared solitude that did not call for words, for even in silence, everything was spoken.

