

Shadow of Love – Second Extract Thackeray and Charlotte

THACKERAY: You are writing again, I see. How wonderful. You know I am your greatest admirer.

CHARLOTTE: You are my greatest flatterer. And, no doubt, you would like me to tell you how greatly I admire you.

THACKERAY: People constantly tell me how much in awe of me they are. But to hear **your** opinion...

CHARLOTTE: Last evening, when all the world wished to shake you by the hand, you sought me out to hear my judgement. It was your moment of triumph. And yet there is in you an inquisitive restlessness, an absence of what I must call self-control. Was it not enough that they cheered you to the rafters? Why should you care what I, or anybody else, thinks at such a moment?

THACKERAY: Are you angry with me, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE: How perceptive of you to notice.

THACKERAY: Why, exactly? – apart from my irritating **vanity**, a criticism I accept as **fair**.

CHARLOTTE: Is everything a joke to you? Have you no sense of the hurt you caused me in informing the entire room of my identity?

THACKERAY: Hurt? You should be flattered. Why, within moments of your departure last night, I was approached by the Earl of Carlisle, by Monckton Milnes, the Member of Parliament, and by one of our most eminent Harley Street doctors, all soliciting me to arrange an introduction to you.

CHARLOTTE: We are not all like you, happy to be the constant centre of attention in society. Those who wish to know me other than through true friendship must satisfy themselves with reading my books. I do not choose to parade myself to the world. Why do you suppose I chose to write under a pseudonym?

THACKERAY: Because you are a woman. Because you were uncertain how your work would be received. But now that you are lauded throughout the nation...

CHARLOTTE: I still wish to preserve my anonymity.

THACKERAY: But not from all. Not from your fellow writers.

CHARLOTTE: It would be agreeable if I had some choice in the matter.

You, who revel in the company of empty-headed, adoring, society women, have no notion of what a real woman truly feels – no-one has the audacity to face up to you and tell you anything other than what you want to hear.

THACKERAY: You are wrong to imagine my understanding of women to be quite so limited. You could never imagine how wrong. But what of that? I came here to continue a friendship. I have not deserved this.

CHARLOTTE: Nor did I deserve the embarrassment you caused me last evening.

THACKERAY: Indeed. You have made your opinions felt quite forcibly, Miss Bronte. I consider it might be best if we do not meet for some time – if at all. Good day.