

J O Y C E

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CHAPTER XVII

COLONEL HAYWARD's house was at Richmond, in one of the most beautiful spots that could be imagined. It stood on the slope of the hill, and commanded a view of the winding of the river upward towards Twickenham: and the grounds about it were exquisite, stretching down to the Thames, with a long if somewhat narrow sweep of lawn descending to the very water's edge. Nothing could be more warm and sheltered, more perfect in greenness and shade, nothing more bright and sunny than the combination of fine trees and blossoming undergrowth and elastic velvet turf, the turf of age, which had been dressed and tended like a child from before the memory of man, and never put to any rude use. The perfection of the place was in this lawn and the gardens and

grounds, which were the Colonel's hobby, and to which he gave all his attention. But the house was also a very pretty house.

It was not large, and it was rather low : a verandah, almost invisible under the weight of climbing roses, clematis, honeysuckle, and every kind of flowering thing, went round the front ; and here, looking over the river, were the summer quarters of the family. Wicker-chairs, some of Indian origin, little tables of all convenient kinds, Indian rugs in all their subdued wealth of colour, like moss under the feet, made this open-air apartment delightful. It combined two kinds of luxury with the daintiest yet most simple success. If there was a drawback it was only in bad weather, when the pretty drawing-room behind was by reason of this verandah a little wanting in light ; but no one could think of that in the June weather, when the sunshine touched everything with pleasantness.

Mrs. Hayward was as proud of the house as the Colonel was of the garden. After India it cannot be described how delightful it was to them, both very insular people, to get back to the greenness and comfort of

this English home; and they both watched for the effect it would have upon Joyce, with highly raised expectations. To bring a girl out of a Scotch cottage to such a place as this, to open to her all at once, from Peter Matheson's kitchen, in which the broth was made and the oat-cakes baked, the glories of that drawing-room, which Mrs. Hayward could scarcely leave to be tended by a mere housemaid, which she herself pervaded every morning, giving loving touches everywhere, arranging draperies, altering the positions of the furniture, laying out those lovely pieces of oriental stuff and Indian embroideries which, always put carefully away at night, adorned the sofas and chairs. Though she did not love 'the girl,' she yet looked forward to the moment when all this splendour should dawn upon Joyce, with a feeling half sympathetic, realising the awe and admiration with which for the first time her untutored eyes must contemplate the beautiful room, and all the luxury of the place, which to her must look like splendour. Mrs. Hayward did not pretend that it was splendid—'our little place,' she called it,

with proud humility ; but she knew that it was more perfect than anything about, and in itself without comparison, a sight to see. That Joyce would be dazzled, almost overwhelmed, by her sudden introduction into such a home, she had no manner of doubt. And this anticipation softened her, and gave her a certain interest in Joyce. She talked to her husband at night, after their arrival, about his daughter in a more friendly tone than she had yet employed.

‘ I thought of giving her the little west room for herself. She will want a place to herself to be untidy in—all girls do : a place where she can keep her work—if she works—or her books : or—whatever she is fond of.’ Mrs. Hayward had a distinct vision in her eye of a little old-fashioned box—the ark of the relics which the Colonel had recognised—and made up her mind that it should be at once endued with a chintz cover, so that it might be recognisable no more.

‘ There is nobody like you, Elizabeth, for kind thoughts,’ he said gratefully. Then with the same expectation that had softened her, he went on—‘ She has never been used

to anything of the kind. I shouldn't wonder if it was too much for her feelings—for she feels strongly, or else I am mistaken; and she is a girl who—if you once bind her to you by love and kindness——' The Colonel's own voice quivered a little. He was himself touched by that thought.

'Don't speak nonsense, Henry—we know nothing about the girl, neither you nor I. The thing in her favour is, that all those Scotch friends of yours thought very well of her: but then the Scotch stick to each other so—— She has a spirit—and a temper too, I shouldn't wonder.'

'No, my dear, it was only a flash, because she thought—because she was taken by surprise.'

'I think none the worse of her for having a little temper; I have one myself,' said Mrs. Hayward with candour. 'People like that are far safer than the sweet yielding ones who show nothing. And another thing—we shall have to account for her. I don't know if you have thought of that.'

'Account for her?'

'Yes, to be sure. People will be calling

—and they will wonder how it was they never heard of your daughter before. One of the hardest things in life is, that whenever you are in any society you must explain. That was one advantage of being in none.'

'I never liked it, Elizabeth. I always thought you were too particular—as the event has proved, my dear, as the event has proved!'

Mrs. Hayward withdrew a little from him and his congratulations. Now that her position was beyond question, she was unwilling in her impatient soul that any reference should be made to the doubt which had shadowed her life before. That was all over. She would have had it forgotten for ever, and in her heart resented his recollection of it. She resumed the previous subject without taking any notice of this.

'Fortunately, we don't know the people here so well that we need go into it from the beginning and tell everything. I have been thinking it over, and this is what I shall say—I shall say, Your daughter has been brought up by some old relations in Scotland, but that we both felt it was time she should come

home. If they say, "O! we did not know Colonel Hayward had any family," I shall answer, "Did I never tell you?" as if it had been quite an accidental oversight. Now don't go and contradict me, Henry, and say more than there is any occasion for. Let us both be in one tale.'

'My dear,' he said, 'to think that you should have settled all that while I was thinking about nothing; but why should we be in a tale at all? Why shouldn't I just say simply——'

'It is such a simple story, isn't it?' she cried, 'that you should have had a child—an only child, as you said in Bellendean——'

There was a tone of exasperation in this which made Colonel Hayward look up. He said, 'But it was quite true, Elizabeth. Providence has not thought meet to give us——'

'As if I did not know that!' cried the woman whom Providence—that synonym of all that goes against the wishes of humanity—had not permitted to be a mother. 'But,' she added quickly, taking up the thread again, 'you will see, if you think of it, that we can't

go into all that story. There would be so much to explain. And besides, it's nobody's business.'

'Then why say anything at all, my dear?' the Colonel said.

'Why know anybody at all, you mean? As if we could avoid explaining a thing which is a very strange thing, however you take it! Unless you have anything better to suggest, that is what I shall say. Brought up by some old relations in Scotland—you can say her mother's relations if you please; but that we felt it was not right to leave her there any longer, now we are quite settled and she is grown up. Don't contradict me just when I am in the middle of my story, Henry. Back me up about the relations—unless you have anything better to suggest.'

Colonel Hayward, however, had nothing to suggest, though he was much embarrassed by having a story to tell. 'I'll forget what it is you want me to say—or I'll go too far—or I'll—make a muddle of it one way or other,' he said. 'I shall feel as if there was something wrong about it, Elizabeth: and there is nothing wrong—nothing, nothing! all the time.'

‘Go to bed,’ said Mrs. Hayward; ‘you are too tired to begin to think at this hour. You know the railway always upsets you. Go to bed, my dear—go to bed.’

‘Well, perhaps it will be the best thing,’ the Colonel said.

They both got up next morning with one pleasant thought in their minds, that of dazzling Joyce. It took away the line even from Mrs. Hayward’s brow. It was pleasant to anticipate the astonishment, the admiration, the deep impression which all these unaccustomed splendours would make. Poor girl! it would be almost too much for her; and they both wondered what she would say—whether she would break down altogether in amazement and rapture—whether it would be by words or tears that she would show her sense of this wonderful change in her life.

Alas! Joyce had awoke with a pang of disappointment almost as keen as that which seized her when she was first told that Colonel Hayward was her father. She woke in a pretty room all dainty and fresh, with pretty paper, pretty furniture, everything that was most suitable and becoming for the character

and dimensions of the place ; and she hurried to the window and looked out eagerly upon the pretty English lawn so trim and well cared for, the trees that formed two long lines down to the river, shutting it out from other enclosures on either side, the brilliant flower-beds near the house, the clustering climbers that surrounded her window. And the cottage girl felt her high-vaulting thoughts go down, down, with a disappointment which made her giddy. Was ever anything so foolish, so wicked, so thankless ? From the little garret in the cottage to this room filled with convenient and pretty things, of some of which she did not even understand the use—from the village street of Bellendean, seen through the open door or greenish bad glass of the cottage windows, to this warm luxurious landscape, and the silver Thames, and the noble trees ! And yet Joyce was disappointed beyond what words could say.

She had no knowledge of this limited comfortable luxurious littleness ; all that she knew was the cottage life—and Bellendean. There were, to be sure, the farmers' houses, and the manse ; but neither of these types resembled

this, nor was either consistent with the image of Colonel Hayward, the Captain's colonel, the 'distinguished soldier,' with whose name Joyce had begun to flatter herself everybody was acquainted. She stood half dressed and gazed out upon the long but confined stretch of lawn, and the low gable which was within sight from the window, with dismay. A chill struck to her heart. She thought of Bellen-dean, not half so daintily cared for as this little demesne, with its groups of great trees, its wide stretches of park, its careless size and greatness. Poor Joyce! had she been the minister's daughter at the manse, she might have been dazzled and delighted, as was expected from her. But she understood nothing of this. She knew the poor and their ways, and she knew the great people—the great houses and big parks, the cottages with a but and a ben and a little kailyard. The one was all-familiar to her—the other was her ideal, the natural alternative of poverty: but this she knew nothing about—nothing at all.

She did not understand it. The toil and care which made that lawn like velvet, per-

fect, without a weed, elastic, springing under the foot, soft as moss, and green as constant waterings and mowings could make it, was totally lost upon Joyce. She saw the two lines of trees and flowering shrubs, elaborately masking all more arbitrary lines of limitation on each side, shutting it off—and the sight of those green bonds made her heart turn back upon herself. Her father had recovered in her mind the greatness necessary for her ideal: he was a distinguished soldier—what could be better? He was finer in his fame (she said to herself) than if he had been a prince or a duke. But his house! She retired from her window and covered her face with her hands, and went back into the secret citadel of herself with a dismayed heart. She had never calculated upon this. To be just one among a crowd, to be nobody in particular, to have suffered this convulsion in her life and rending asunder of her being, for nothing—to be nobody. And all the time these two good people were forestalling each other in their anticipations, making pictures to themselves of Joyce's transport and delight!

How she got through the ordeal will be

best seen in the long letters which she wrote that evening to her old home.

‘ My dearest old Granny, my own real true Mother—I wonder how you are, and how the day has passed, and how grandfather is, and even the cat, and everything at home. Oh what a thing it is to go away from your home, to be taken from the true place you belong to! You will never know how I felt when it all melted away into the sky, and Bellendean was a thing I could see no more. Oh my bonnie little Bellendean, where I’ve lived all my life, and the old ash-tree, and the rose-bushes, and my garret-window where I could see the Firth, and our kindly table where we ate our porridge and where I could see *you*! O Granny, my own Granny, that’s all gone away into the skies, and the place that has known me knows me no more: and here I am in a strange place, and I cannot tell whether I’m Joyce still, or if I’m like the woman in the old song, “and this is no’ me.”

‘ Dear Granny, the journey was well enough: it was the best of all. I got a paper full of pictures (the *Graphic*, you know

it), and they just talked their own talks, and did not ask me much : and then the country span along past the carriage-window, towns and castles, and rivers, and fields of corn, and all the people going about their business and knowing nothing at all of a poor lassie carried quick, quick away from her home. I pictured to myself that I might be going away for a governess to make some money for my grandfather and you—but that would not have been so bad, for I would have gone back again when I got the money : and then I tried to think I might be going to take care of somebody, perhaps a brother I might have had that was ill, and that you would be anxious at home—very anxious—but not like the present : for he would have begun to get better as soon as I was there to nurse him, and every day the time would have come nearer for taking him home. And I tried a great many other things, but none was bad enough—till I just came back to the truth, that here I was flying far away to a new life and a new name, and to try and be content and live with new people that I never saw, and leave all my

own behind. Oh, Granny, I am ungrateful to say this, for they're very good to me, and my father is kind and sweet and a real true gentleman: and would be that, as grandfather is, if he were a ploughman like grandfather: and what could you say more if you were Shakespeare's self and had all the words in the world at your command?

‘We stopped in London, but I could not see at all what like it was, except just hundreds of railway lines all running into each other, and trains running this way and that way as if they were mad—but never any harm seemed to be done, so far as I could see: and then we took another train, and, after a little while, came here. To tell you about it is very difficult, for it is so different from anything that ever was before. Do you remember, Granny, the place where Argyle took Jeanie Deans after she had spoken to the Queen?—where she said it would be fine feeding for the cows, and he just laughed—for it was the finest view and the most beautiful landscape, with the Thames running between green banks and big beautiful trees, and boats upon the river,

and the woods all like billows of green leaves upon the brae? You will cry out when I tell you that this is *here*, and that the house is on that very brae, and that I'm looking out over the river, and see it running into the mist and the distance, going away north—or rather coming down from the north—where my heart can follow, but farther, farther away. And it is a very beautiful landscape: you never saw anything to compare to it; but oh, Granny, I never knew so well before what Sir Walter is and how he knew the hearts of men, for I'm always thinking what Jeanie said, "I like just as well to look at the craigs o' Arthur's Seat, and the sea coming in ayont them." For me, I think of Bellendean and the Firth, and the hills drawing close round St. Margaret's Hope; but chiefly because you are there, Granny, and all I care for most.

'I will tell you one thing: my father's house is not, as we were fond to think, like Bellendean. The houses here are not great houses like that. I think they wonder I am not an enthusiast, as Mrs. Bellendean always said I was, for the things they have here.

All the policy,¹ and everything in the house, is taken care of—as you used to take care of me. I can't think of any other image. They are always at them. Mrs. Hayward puts on the things upon the chairs and the tables with her own hands. The things I mean are pieces of beautiful silk, sometimes woven in flowers like Mrs. Bellendean's grandest gown, sometimes all worked with the needle as they do in India, fine, fine. I would like to copy some of them: but what would be the use? for they have them all from India itself, and what I did would be but an imitation. I am afraid to sit down upon the chairs for fear there should be some dust upon my gown, and I think I ought to take off my shoes before I go upon the carpet. You would like to go round and round as if you were in a collection, and look at everything. It will sometimes be ivory carving, and sometimes china that is very old and precious, and sometimes embroidery work, and sometimes silk with gold and silver woven in. And what you will laugh at, Granny, Mrs. Hayward has plates hung up

¹ Grounds of a country-house.

instead of pictures—china plates like what you eat your dinner from, only painted in beautiful colours—and an ashet¹ she has which is blue, and very like what we have at home. All these things are very pretty—very pretty: but not to me like a room to live in. Of the three—this house, and Bel-lendean, and our own little housie at home—I would rather, of course, have Bellendean, I will not deny it, Granny; but next I would rather have our own little place, with my table at the back window, and you aye moving about whatever there was to do. They are more natural; but I try to look delighted with everything, for to Mrs. Hayward it is the apple of her eye.

‘She has never had any children.

‘My father is just as fond of his policy and his gardens—(but it’s too little for a policy, and it’s more than a garden). The gardeners are never done. They are mowing, or they are watering, or they are sweeping, or they are weeding, all the long day. And it’s all very bonnie—very bonnie—grass that is like velvet, and rose-bushes not

¹ Large oval dish.

like our roses at home, but upon a long stalk, what they call standards, and trees and flowers of kinds that I cannot name. I will find out about them and I will tell you after. But oh, Granny, the grand trees are like a hedge to a field ; they are separating us from the garden next door. It is very, very strange—you could not think how strange—to be in a fine place that is not a place at all, but just a house with houses next door—not like Bellendean, oh, not like Bellendean—and not like any kind of dwelling I have seen, so pretty and so well kept, and yet neither one thing nor another, not poor like us—oh, far from that ! and yet not great. I am praising it all, and saying everything I can think—and indeed it's very pretty, far finer than anything I ever saw : but I think she sees that I am not doing it from my heart. I wish I could ; but oh, Granny dear, how can I think so much of any place that takes me away from my real home ?

‘ My dear, dear love to my grandfather, and tell him I never forget his bowed head going through the corn, as I saw him last when he did not see me. To think his good

gray head should be bowed because of Joyce, that never got anything but good from him and you, all her life! Tell me what they are all saying, and who is to get the school, and if the minister was angry. What a good thing it was the vacation, and all the bairns away! You must not be unhappy about me, Granny, for I will do my best, and you can't be very miserable when you do that; and perhaps I will get used to it in time.

‘Good night, and good night, and God be with us all, if not joy, as the song says.—Always your own and grandfather’s

‘JOYCE.’

She wrote at the same time her first letter to Halliday, lingering with the pen in her hand as if unwilling to begin. She was a little excited by what she had just written, her outpouring of her heart to her foster-mother. And this was different. But at last she made the plunge. She dried her eyes, and gave herself a little shake together, as if to dismiss the lingering emotion, and began, ‘Dear Andrew’; but then came to

another pause. What was in Joyce's thoughts? There was a spot of ink on the page, an innocent little blot. She removed the sheet hastily from the other paper, and thrust it below the leaves of her blotting-book. Then she took a steel pen, instead of the quill with which she had been hurrying along the other sheets—a good hard, unemotional piece of iron, which might make the clean and exact writing which the school-master loved—and began again: and this time a little demure mischief was in Joyce's eyes:—

‘DEAR ANDREW—We arrived here last night, tired but not worn out, and came home at once to my father's house. The journey was very interesting—to see so many places I had heard of, even if they only flew past the carriage-windows. Of course it was the train that flew, and not Durham and Newcastle and all the rest. You have been to London yourself, so you will not require me to tell you all I saw, and I was thinking a great deal on what I left behind, so that I did not see them with an

easy heart, so as to get the good of them, as you would do.

‘I wonder if you have ever seen Richmond—it is a beautiful place: the Thames a quiet river, not like any I know; but I have seen so little. It is like a picture more than a river, and the trees all in waves of green, one line above another, rich and quiet, with no wind to blow them about. I thought upon the poem, “As idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean:” though there is neither ship nor ocean, but only the stream that scarcely seems to flow, and the little boats that scarcely seem to move—everything so warm and so still. My father’s house is called Rosebank, as you will see by the printing on the paper. It is rather a foolish name, but it was the name of the house before they came here. It is the most wonderful place I ever saw, so carefully kept and beautifully furnished. I never understood before what all the novels say now about furniture and the pretty things scattered about. There is a quantity of things in the drawing-room which I should have taken the children to an exhibition to see,

and I should have had to read up a great deal to explain everything to them. But no one thinks of explaining: they are just lying about, and no one pays any attention to them here. My father takes a great interest in the gardens and the grounds, which are beautiful. And the best thing of all is the view of all the bits of the Thames, and the beautiful woods.

‘It is a great change, and it makes one feel very unsteady at first, and I scarcely realise what the life will be, but I must trust that everything will turn out well: and my father and Mrs. Hayward are very kind. I am to have a sitting-room to myself to do what I like in, and I am to be taken about to see everything. You will not expect me to tell you much more at present, for I don’t know much more, it being only the first day; but I thought you would like to hear at once. It is a great change. I wonder sometimes if I may not perhaps wake up to-morrow and find I am at home again and it is all a dream.

‘I hope you will go and see Granny, when you can, and cheer them a little.

Grandfather is glad of a crack, you know. They will be lonely at first, being always used to me. I will be very thankful to you, dear Andrew, if you will see them when you can, and be very kind—but that, I am sure, you will be. When I think of them sitting alone, and nobody to come in and make them smile, it just breaks my heart.—Yours affectionately,

JOYCE HAYWARD.'

Joyce Hayward—it was the first time she had signed her name. Her eyes were too full thinking of the old people to see how it looked, but when that lump had melted a little in her throat, and she had dried her eyes, turning hastily aside that no drop might fall upon the fair page and blot the nice and careful writing, Joyce looked at it, and again there came upon her face a faint little smile. Joyce Hayward—it did not look amiss. And it was a beautifully written letter, not a *t* but was crossed, not an *i* but was dotted. She had resisted all temptations to abridge the 'affectionately.' There it stood, fully written out in all its long syllables. That would please Andrew. When she had

put up her letters, she rose from her seat and looked out once more, softly pushing aside the carefully drawn curtains, upon the landscape sleeping in the soft summer haze of starlight and night. All so still—no whisper of the sea near, no thrill of the north wind—a serene motionless stretch of lawn and river and shadowy trees. It was a lovely scene, but it saddened Joyce, who felt the soft dusk fill her soul and fold over all her life. And thus ended her first day in her father's house.

CHAPTER XVIII

JOYCE was sadly uncertain what to do or how to behave herself in her new home. She took possession of the room which was given to her as a sitting-room, with a confused sense that she was meant to remain there, which was half a relief and half a trouble to her. To live there all alone except when she was called to meals was dreadfully dreary, although it felt almost a pleasure for the first moment to be alone. She brought out her writing things, which were of a very humble description, and better suited to the back window in the cottage than to the pretty writing-table upon which she now arranged them,—a large old blotting-book, distended with the many exercises and school-papers it had been accustomed to hold, and a shabby rosewood desk, which she had got several

years ago as the prize of one of her examinations. How shabby they looked, quite out of place, unfit to be brought into this beautiful house! Joyce paused a moment to wonder whether she herself was as much out of place in her brown frock, which, though it was made like Greta's, and so simple and quiet that it could not be vulgar, was yet a dress very suitable for the schoolmistress. She brought down her few books, some of which were prizes too, and still more deplorable in their cheap gilding than the simply shabby ones. Nobody could say that the bindings were not vulgar, although it was *Milton*, and *Wordsworth*, and *Coleridge*, and the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* that were within. She made a row of them in the pretty bookshelves, and they looked like common people intruding into a fine house, as she herself was doing. Common people! Milton and Wordsworth! That showed how little was told by the outside; and Joyce was not without a proud consciousness swelling in her breast that she, too, in her brown frock, and with her village schoolmistress's traditions, was not common or unworthy.

Her father had met her coming downstairs with her arms full of the books, and had stopped to take them from her with a shocked look, and insisted on carrying them down for her. 'But why didn't you ring for somebody to do it, my dear?' he said. 'They are not heavy,' said Joyce; 'they are no trouble,—and I always do things for myself.' 'But you must not here,' Colonel Hayward said, putting them down on the table, and pausing a moment to brush off with his handkerchief the little stains of dust which they had left on his irreproachable coat. Joyce felt that little movement with another keen sensation of inappropriateness. It was not right, because she was unaccustomed to being served by others, that Colonel Hayward, a distinguished soldier, should get specks of dust on his coat. A hot blush enveloped her like a flame, while she stood looking at him, not knowing whether to say anything, whether to try to express the distress and bewilderment that filled her being, or if it would be better to be silent and mutely avoid such an occurrence again.

He looked up at her when he had brushed away the last speck, and smiled. 'Books

will gather dust,' he said. 'Don't look as if you were to blame, my dear. But you must remember, Joyce, you are the young lady of the house, and everything in it is at your command.' He patted her shoulder, with a very kind encouraging look, as he went away. It was a large assurance to give, and probably Mrs. Hayward would not have said quite so much ; but it left Joyce in a state of indescribable emotion, her heart deeply touched, but her mind distracted with the impossibilities of her new position. How was she to know what to do? To avoid giving trouble, to save herself, was not the rule she could abide by when it ended in specking with dust the Colonel's coat, and bringing him out of his own occupations to help her. Joyce sat down when she had arranged her books, and tried to thread her way through all this maze which bewildered her. She had nothing to do, and she thought she was intended to spend her life here, to sit alone and occupy herself. It was very kindly meant, she was sure, so as to leave her at her ease ; and she was glad to have this refuge, not to be always in Mrs. Hay-

ward's way, sitting stiffly in the drawing-room waiting to be spoken to. Oh yes ; she was glad to be here : yet she looked about the room with eyes a little forlorn.

It was a nice little room, with a large window looking out upon the flower-garden, and it was, so far as Joyce knew, very prettily furnished, but without the luxuries and decorations of the other rooms. There were no pictures, but a little standing frame or two on the mantelpiece, no doubt intended for those endless photographs of friends which she had seen in Greta's room at Bellendean, always the first things taken out of her boxes when her belongings were unpacked. But Joyce had few friends. She had a little rude picture on glass, shut up in a little case, of old Peter and Janet, the old woman in her big bonnet and shawl, her husband, all one broad smile, looking over her shoulder—very dear to Joyce, but not to be exposed on the mantelpiece for Mrs. Hayward's quick look of criticism. Joyce felt that Greta in a moment would make that room her own. she would bring down her photographs ; she would throw down her work, which never

was done, with all the pretty silks about. She would spread out her paper and her pens, and the letters she had received and those she had begun to write, upon the table where Joyce's big old blotting-book lay, and the rosewood desk closed and looking like an ugly oblong box as it was—long, bare, and miserable; but none of all these things could Joyce do. She had no work, and no photographs of her friends, and no letters, and nothing to do—nothing to do! And was this how she was to spend her life?

She sat there until the bell rang for lunch, saying to herself that it was far better than being in the drawing-room in Mrs. Hayward's way; and then she went timidly out into the hall, where her father was standing, just come in from some supervision in the garden. 'I have had a busy morning,' he said, beaming upon her, 'and so I suppose have you, my dear; but we'll soon settle down. Mrs. Hayward——' here he paused with a little uneasiness, and after a moment resumed—'your mother—has been very busy too. There is always a great deal to do after one has been away.'

‘Considering that I was only away four days,’ said Mrs. Hayward, coming in from the other side, and leading the way to the dining-room. Joyce could not help feeling stiff and awkward as she followed, and hastily got into her seat before the butler could come behind and push forward the chair. She was a little afraid of him hovering behind, and wondered if he knew.

‘I hope you like your room,’ Mrs. Hayward said. ‘It is small, but I think it is nice; and, Baker, remember to let down the sun-blinds before the afternoon sun gets in. Miss Hayward will not like to find it all in a blaze. That is the worst of a western aspect. Henry, some invitations have come——’

‘Ah!’ said the Colonel, ‘we have more to consider now than we used to have, Elizabeth. There is Joyce to be thought of——’

‘Oh,’ Joyce cried, growing very red. ‘I hope you will not think of me!’

‘For some things, of course, we must consider her, Henry,’ said Mrs. Hayward, taking no notice of Joyce’s hurried exclamation. ‘There are nothing but garden-parties all

about, and she must go to some of them. It will be the best way of making her known.'

'You always think of the right thing, my dear,' the Colonel said.

'But when it is for dinner, Henry, until people know her, Joyce will not mind, she will stay at home.'

'I wish,' said Joyce, with a horrified alarm—'oh, I wish you would never think of me! I would not like—I could not think, I—I would be afraid to go to parties—I——'

'My dear,' said Colonel Hayward, 'perhaps there may be—dressmakers to think of—or something of that sort.'

'I think you may trust me to look after that,' said Mrs. Hayward, with a glance at Baker, who was listening with benignant interest. Joyce had a keen enough feminine sense to know that Baker was not to be taken into the confidence of the family; and accordingly she made no further interruption, but allowed the conversation to go on without attempting to take any part in it. She heard them discuss names which were without any meaning to her, and kept shyly, and, as

she felt, stiffly still, endeavouring with all her might to look as if she knew nothing at all about it, as if it did not at all refer to her—which went sadly against her with her step-mother, who was eagerly on the outlook for indications of character, and to whom Joyce's apparent indifference was an offence—though she would probably have been equally offended had the girl shown too much interest. When Baker left the room, Mrs. Hayward turned to her again.

‘The Colonel was quite right,’ she said; ‘though I didn’t wish to discuss it before the servants. You must want some dresses. You are very nice as you are for indoors, but there is a great deal of dress now worn at garden-parties. And what is called a simple toilet is just the most troublesome of all. For it has to be so fresh and so perfect, not a crumpled ribbon, not a fold out of order. You must go with me—to choose some patterns.’

Joyce coloured high again. She felt offended, proud—and yet knew she had no right to be either. ‘If I may speak,’ she said, ‘I never thought of parties. I would

perhaps not know—how to behave. Oh, if you will be so kind as never to mind me! I will stay at home.'

Colonel Hayward put out his hand with his tender smile, and patted hers where it touched the table. 'You will behave prettier—than any of them,' the old soldier said.

'Oh, don't put nonsense in the girl's head, Henry!' cried his wife with impatience. 'You may very likely be wanting a little, Joyce. You may feel awkward: it would be quite natural. The only thing is, you must begin some time—and the best way is to get your awkwardness over as soon as possible. Afternoon parties are more informal than dances, and so forth. They don't demand so much, and you could pass in the crowd.'

Though Joyce had been frightened at the idea of parties, and though it was her own suggestion that she would not know how to behave, she did not like this. It sent the blood coursing through her veins. To pass in a crowd—to be tolerated where much was not demanded! How different was this from the old dreams in which Lady Joyce

had been supreme! But these were but dreams, and she was ashamed to have ever been so vain. She stole away, while they stood in the hall discussing this question, with a sense of humiliation unspeakable, and retreated so quickly that her disappearance was not remarked, back to the west room once more. She shut the door upon herself, and said half aloud in the silence and solitude, how good a thing it was that they had given her this room of her own in which she could take shelter, and be in nobody's way: and then for want of anything else to do, she fell suddenly, without warning, into a long fit of crying, tears irrestrainable, silent, overwhelming, that seemed as if they would carry her away.

Poor Joyce felt that her fate was harder than she could bear—to be carried away from her homely state, in which she had been accustomed to something of the ideal eminence of her dreams, into this, which was supposed by everybody to be social elevation, and was humiliation, downfall—a fall into depths which she had never realised, which had never seemed possible for her. She cried like a child, feeling no power, nor

indeed any wish, to stop crying, in a hopeless self-abandonment. Altogether, she was like a child, feeling herself lost, undervalued, neglected, and as if all the rest of the world were happy and in their natural places, while she was left here in a little room by herself all alone. And to add to the humiliation, Baker came in, soft, stepping like a large noiseless black cat, to put down the blinds, as his mistress had told him, and found her in the midst of that speechless torrent of weeping, unable to stop herself or to keep up appearances in any way. 'Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Hayward,' Baker said, in subdued apology, shot with a glance of eager curiosity and inquisitiveness: for Baker wanted very much to know something about this daughter who had appeared so suddenly, and of whom no one had ever heard before. Joyce started up to her feet, and hurrying to the bookcase, took out all the books again in order to give herself a countenance. She turned her back upon him, but he could see very well the quivering of her shoulders, which all her pride and dismay at having betrayed herself could not stop.

This curious state of affairs continued for two or three days. Joyce withdrew to her room when the meals were over, at which she was nervously on the watch for anything that might be said concerning her and her mode of existence. It was the third or fourth day before anything was said. Then Mrs. Hayward stopped her as she was stealing away, and laid a hand upon her shoulder. 'Joyce, wait for a moment; let me speak to you. I am not going to interfere with what you wish: but do you really like best to spend all your time alone?'

'I thought,' said Joyce, with a choking voice, for her heart had suddenly begun to thump so in her throat that she could scarcely hear,—'I thought—that I was to stay there: that perhaps—you thought it best.'

'How could you think I was such a barbarous wretch! Joyce, if you mean to make life a fight——'

The girl opened her eyes wide with wonder and dismay.

'That is not what you meant to say, Elizabeth,' said the Colonel, coming up to them: his wife had thought he was out of the way,

and made a little gesture of impatience on seeing him.

‘Don’t interfere, for heaven’s sake, Henry! unless you will manage affairs yourself, which would be much the best way. You make things much more difficult for me, as perhaps you are aware, Joyce.’

‘No; I did not know. I thought when you said I should have a room—for myself——’

‘That I meant you to live there like a prisoner in your father’s house? Are you aware that you are in your father’s house?’

Joyce turned her eyes from one to the other with a mute appeal. Then she said, ‘Yes,’ faintly, not with the vehemence of her former impulses. ‘If *she* had been patient and not run away,’ she added, with a little solemnity, after a pause, ‘it would not have been so unhappy for us all. I would at least have known—my father.’

‘You see that?’ cried Mrs. Hayward, though she did not understand why these words were said. ‘Then you have some common-sense after all, and surely you will get to understand.’

‘Why do you say that, Joyce — why do you say that?’ said the Colonel, laying his hand upon her arm. He was growing very pale and anxious, nervous and frightened, distinguished soldier as he was, by this sudden outburst of hostilities. To see two armies engaged is one thing, but it is quite another to see two women under your own roof—— ‘Joyce, you must not say that,’ he repeated, leaning his hand, which she could feel trembled, upon her arm; ‘you must listen to what Elizabeth — I mean, to what your mother says.’

‘Don’t call me her mother, Henry. She doesn’t like it, and I am not sure that I do either. But we might be friends for all that — so long as she has sense—— Don’t you see, child, that we can’t live if you go on in this way? It is getting on my nerves!’ cried Mrs. Hayward with excitement, ‘and upon *his* nerves, and affecting the whole house. Why should you like to shut yourself up as if we were your enemies, and upset everybody? I can’t settle to anything. I can’t sleep. I don’t know what I am doing. And how you can like——’

‘But I do not like it,’ said Joyce. ‘I did not think I could bear it any longer: everything is so strange to me. I used to think I would know by instinct; but it appears I was very silly all the time—for I don’t think I know how to behave.’

Joyce hated herself for feeling so near crying: why should a girl cry at everything when she does not wish to cry at all? The same thought was flying through Mrs. Hayward’s mind, who had actually dropped one hot and heavy tear, which she hoped no one saw. She put up her hand hastily to stop the Colonel, who was about to make one of those speeches which would have given the finishing touch.

‘Then,’ she said, ‘run and get your work, if you have any work, or your book, or whatever you are doing, and come to the drawing-room like a Christian: for we should all go out of our senses altogether if we went on much longer in this way.’

The Colonel patted his daughter’s arm and hastened to open the door for her like an old courtier. ‘I told you,’ he said, ‘turning round to his wife, ‘that as soon as you spoke

to her, Elizabeth, she would respond. You are a little hasty, my dear, though never with me. I knew that as soon as she saw what a heart you have——’

‘Oh, never mind my heart, Henry! Don’t talk to Joyce about my heart. I think she has a little common-sense. And if that’s so, we shall get on.’

And then Joyce began to spend all her time in the drawing-room, sadly ill at ease, not knowing what to do. She sat there sounding the depth of her own ignorance, often for hours together, as much alone as when in the west room, feeling herself to sit like a wooden figure in her chair, conscious to her fingertips of awkwardness, foolishness, vacancy, which had never come into her life before. She had no needle-work to give her a pretence of occupation: and as for books, those that were about on the tables were not intended to be read, except the novels from Mudie’s, which had this disadvantage, that when they were readable at all, Joyce got absorbed in them, and forgot herself, and would sometimes forget Mrs. Hayward too. She had a feeling that she should be at Mrs.

Hayward's disposal while they were together, so that this lapse occurring now and then, filled her with compunction and shame. But when visitors came, that was the worst of all.

CHAPTER XIX

ON one of these mornings the Colonel came to her almost stealthily, with a very soft step, while she was in the drawing-room alone. Joyce had no book that morning, and was more in despair than ever for something to do. She was kneeling in front of one of the pretty pieces of Indian work, copying the pattern on a sheet of paper. When she heard her father's step, she started as if found out in some act of guilt, grew very red, and dropped her pencil out of her trembling hand.

‘I beg your pardon,’ she said involuntarily. ‘I—had nothing to do. It is a wonderful pattern. I thought I should like to copy it——’

‘Surely, my dear—and very prettily you have done it too ; but you must try to recol-

lect that everything is yours, and that you have no need to ask pardon. I want you to come with me into my library. I believe you have never seen my library, Joyce.'

No, she had not been able to take the freedom either of a child of the house or of an ordinary visitor. She was afraid to go anywhere beyond the ordinary thoroughfare, from dining-room to drawing-room. 'I saw an open door,' she said, 'and some books.'

'But you did not come in? Come now. I have something to say to you.' There was a look in the old soldier's eye of unlawful pleasure, a gratification enhanced by the danger of being found out, and perhaps suffering for it. He led Joyce away with the glee of a truant schoolboy. 'My wife is busy,' he said, with an air of innocent hypocrisy. 'She can't want either of us for the moment. Come in, come in. And, my dear,' he said, putting again his caressing hand upon his daughter's shoulder, 'remember, that when I'm not in the garden, I'm here: and when you have anything to say to your father, I'm always ready—always ready.'

I hope you will learn—to take your father into your confidence, Joyce.'

She did not make any reply; her head dropped, and her voice was choked. He was so kind—and yet confidence was so hard a thing to give.

'That reminds me,' he said, still more gently, 'that I don't think you ever call me father, Joyce.'

'Oh,' she said, not daring to lift her eyes, 'but I think it—in my heart.'

'You must say it—with your lips, my dear; and you must not be afraid of the people who are nearest to you in the world. You must have confidence in us, Joyce. And now look here, my little girl; I have something to give you—not any pretty thing for a present,' said the Colonel, sitting down before his desk and pulling out a drawer, 'but something we can't get on without. I got it for you in this form that you might use it as you please; remember it is not for clothes, but only for your own pleasure, to do what you like with.' He held out to her, with the most fatherly kind smile, four crisp and clean five-pound notes. Joyce looked at

them bewildered, not knowing what they were, and then gave a choking cry, and drew back, covering her face with her hands.

‘Money!’ she cried, and a pang of mortification went through her like the sharp stab of a knife.

‘Well, my dear, you must have money, and who should give it you but your father? Joyce! why, this is worse and worse.’ The Colonel grew angry in his complete bewilderment, and the disagreeable sensation of kindness refused. ‘What can you mean?’ he cried; ‘am I to have nothing to do with you though you are my daughter?’ He got up from his chair impatiently. ‘I thought you would like it to be between ourselves. I made a little secret of it, thinking to please you. No; I confess that I don’t understand you, Joyce: if Elizabeth were here, I should tell her so.’ He flung down the notes upon his table, where they lay fluttering in the morning breeze that came in at the open window. ‘She must do what she can, for I don’t pretend to be able to do anything,’ the Colonel cried.

Joyce stood before him, collecting herself, calming down her own excitement as best

she could. She said to herself that he was quite right—that it would have to be—that she had no independent life or plan of her own any more—that she must accept everything from her father's hands. What right had she either to refuse or to resent? How foolish it was, how miserable, ungenerous of her, not to be able to take! Must it not sometimes be more gracious, more sweet to take, to receive, than to give? And yet to accept this from one who was almost a stranger though her father, seemed impossible, and made her whole being, body and soul, quiver with that sensation of the intolerable in which there is neither rhyme nor reason. Though she was so young, she had provided for her own necessities for years. They were very few, and her little salary was very small; but she had done it, giving rather than getting—for naturally there was nothing to spare from Peter Matheson's ploughman's wages. She stood shrinking a little from her father's displeasure—so unused to anything of the kind!—but with all these thoughts sweeping through the mind, which was only a girl's mind, in many ways wayward and

fantastic, but yet at bottom a clear spirit, candid and reasonable. This would have to be. She must accept the money, she who had been so independent. She must learn how to live, that tremendous lesson, in the manner possible to her, not in her own way. Once more she thought of her mother obeying her foolish impulse, flying from her troubles—only to fall fatally under them, and to leave their heritage to her daughter. It did not require a moment to bring all these reflections in a flood through her mind, nor even to touch her with the thought of her father's little tender artifice, and of how he had calculated no doubt that she would have presents to send, help to offer—or, at least, pleasure to bestow. Perhaps her imagination put thoughts even more delicate and kind into the Colonel's mind than those which were there—which was saying much. She recovered her voice with a great effort.

‘Father——’ she said, then paused again, struggling with something in her throat,—‘I hope you will forgive me. I—never took money—from any one—before——’

‘You never had your father before to

give it you, Joyce.' A little word calmed down the Colonel's superficial resentment. It did more, it went straight to his heart. He came up to her and put his arm round her. 'My child,' he said, in the words of the parable, "'all that I have is thine.'" You forget that.'

'Father, if I could only feel that *you* were mine. It is all wrong—all wrong!' cried Joyce. 'It is like what the Bible says; I want to be born again.'

The Colonel did not know what to say to this, which seemed to him almost profane; but he did better than speaking—he held her close to him, and patted her shoulder softly with his large tender hand.

'And I will, I will,' said Joyce, with a Scotch confusion of tenses, 'if you will have a little patience with me. It cannot come all in a moment; but I will, I will.'

'We'll all have patience,' said the Colonel, stooping over her, feeling in his general weakness, and with even a passing sigh for Elizabeth going through his mind, that it was sweet to have the positions reversed sometimes, and to feel somebody depend

upon him, and appeal to his superior wisdom.

At this moment Mrs. Hayward opened the door of her husband's room quickly, coming in with natural freedom. She stopped 'as if she had been shot' when she saw this group—Joyce sheltered in her father's arm, leaning against him. She made a rapid exclamation, 'Oh!' and turning as quickly as she had come, closed the door after her with a quick clear sound which said more than words. She did not slam it—far from that. She would not have done such a thing, neither for her own sake, nor out of regard for what the servants would say: but she shut it sharply, distinctly, with a punctuation which was more emphatic than any full stop could be.

In the afternoon there were callers, and Joyce became aware, for the first time, of the social difficulties of her position. She heard the words, 'brought up by relations in Scotland,' as she went through the drawing-room to the verandah where the visitors were sitting with Mrs. Hayward. Joyce did not apply the words to herself, but she perceived

a little stir of interest when she appeared timidly at the glass door. The lady was a little woman, precise and neat, with an indescribable air of modest importance, yet insignificance, which Joyce learned afterwards to understand, and the gentleman was in a long black coat, with a soft felt hat in his hands. Eyes more instructed would have divined the clergyman and clergywoman of the district, not rector and rectoress, but simple incumbents. They rose up to meet her, and shook hands in a marked way, as 'taking an interest' in a new member of their little cure; but Joyce, unaccustomed, did not understand the meaning of this warmth. It disconcerted her a little, and so did the conversation into which Mr. Sitwell at once began to draw her, while his wife conversed in a lower tone with the lady of the house. He talked to her of the river and boating, of which she knew nothing, and then of lawn-tennis, to which her response was not more warm. The good clergyman thought that perhaps the game had not penetrated to the wilds of Scotland, and changed the subject.

‘We are going to have our children’s treat next week,’ he said. ‘It would be very kind of you to come and help my wife, who has everything to manage. Our district is but a new one—we have not much aid as yet. Do you take any interest in schools, Miss Hayward?’

‘Oh yes, a great interest,’ cried Joyce, lighting up, ‘that is just my——’ she was going to say profession, having a high opinion of the dignity of her former office: but before the word was said she caught a warning glance from Mrs. Hayward—‘it is what I care most for in the world,’ she said, with a sudden blush of shame to feel herself stopped in that avowal of enthusiasm for the work itself.

‘Indeed!’ cried the clergyman. ‘Do you hear, Dora? here is a help for you. Miss Hayward says that schools are what she cares most for in the world.’

‘Joyce says a little more than she means,’ said Mrs. Hayward quickly. ‘Young ladies have a way of being enthusiastic.’

‘Don’t damp it, please!’ cried Mrs. Sitwell, clasping her hands; ‘enthusiasm is

so beautiful in young people : and there is so little of it. Oh, how delighted I shall be to have your help ! The district is so new—as my husband would tell you.’

‘Of course I have enlisted Miss Hayward at once,’ cried he. ‘She is going to help at the school-feast.’

‘Oh, thank you, THANK you,’ cried the clergyman’s wife, with devotion, once more clasping her hands.

Mrs. Hayward’s voice was more dry than ever—there was a sharp ring in it, which Joyce had begun to know. ‘You must let her give you an answer later,’ she said. ‘She doesn’t know her engagements yet. We have several things to do. When must I send in the cakes, Mrs. Sitwell ? We always calculate, you know, on helping in that way.’

‘You are always so kind, dear Mrs. Hayward, *so* kind ! How can we ever thank you enough !’ said the clergywoman. ‘Always kind,’ her husband echoed, with an impressive shake of Mrs. Hayward’s hand, and afterwards of Joyce’s, who was confused by so much feeling. Her stepmother was drier still as they went away.

‘I must ask you, just at first, to make no engagements without consulting me,’ she said very rigidly. ‘You cannot know—at first—what it is best for your own interests to do.’

Should she say that she had made no engagements, and wished for none? It is hard not to defend one’s self when one is blamed. But Joyce took the wiser way, and assented without explanations. She had scarcely time to do more when other people came—people more important, as was at once evident—a large lady in black satin and lace, a younger, slimmer one in white. They filled the verandah, which was not very broad, with the sweep of their draperies. They both gave a little glance of surprise when Miss Hayward was presented to them, and the elder lady permitted herself an ‘Oh——!’ She retired to the end of the verandah, where Mrs. Hayward had installed herself. ‘I never knew before that you had a grown-up daughter. I always thought, indeed, that there were no——’

‘My husband’s daughter by his first marriage,’ said Mrs. Hayward. ‘She has never

lived at home. In India, you know, children can never be kept with their parents.'

'It is a dreadful drawback. I am so glad my girls will have nothing to say to Indian men.'

The lady in white had begun to talk to Joyce, but the girl's ears were intent on the other conversation which she felt to concern herself. She made vague replies, not knowing what she said, the two voices in the distance drawing all her attention from the one more near.

'So she had to be left with relations—quite old-fashioned people—and she is very simple, and knows very little of the world.'

'The less the better,' said the visitor, whose name Joyce had not caught; and then there was a pause, and the young lady's voice became more audible, close to her ear.

'Brought up in Scotland? Oh, I hope you are not one of the learned ladies. Don't they go in tremendously for education in Scotland?' her visitor said.

'They say our Scotch schools are the best,' said Joyce sedately, with a mixture of national and professional pride.

‘Oh yes, so everybody says; you are taught everything. I know Scotland a little: everybody goes there in the autumn, don’t you know? I wonder if I have been in your part of the country? Papa has a moor whenever he can afford it. And we have quantities of Scotch cousins all over the place.’

‘It was near Edinburgh,’ said Joyce, with a little hesitation.

‘Yes? I have been at several places near Edinburgh,’ said the young lady. ‘Craigmoor where the Sinclairs live, for one. They are relations of ours. And there is another house, a very nice house close by, Bellendean. I suppose you know the Bellendeans.’

The colour rushed over Joyce’s face. She remembered her difficulties no more. The very sound of the name filled her with pleasure and encouragement.

‘Bellendean!’ she said; ‘oh, indeed, I know Bellendean! I know it better than any place in the world. And I know the lady—oh, better than any one. And would it be Miss Greta that was your cousin——?’

Joyce's countenance shone. She forgot all about those bewildering explanations which she had overheard : and about herself, whose presence had to be accounted for. For a moment her natural ease and unconsciousness came back, and she felt herself Joyce again.

Mrs. Hayward rose suddenly from her chair. She, too, had been listening, through her own conversation, to the other voices. She made a step forward—‘So you know the Bellendans,’ she said, with an agitated smile. ‘We have just been staying there, and can give you the latest news of them. What a small world it is, as everybody says! I only heard of them for the first time when we went to fetch Joyce : and now I find my nearest neighbours know all about them! Joyce, will you ask if Baker is bringing tea?’

Lady St. Clair and her daughter gave each other a glance of mutual inquiry. And Joyce, as she obeyed, with a curious pang of wonder and pleasure and annoyance, heard the discussion begin, the interchange of questions mingled with remarks about her friends, the names so dear to her passing

from mouth to mouth. She was sent away who knew all about them, while her step-mother, who knew so little, talked, adopting an air of familiarity. Why was she sent away? Then she remembered suddenly on what a humble footing she could alone claim knowledge of the Bellendean, and divined with a shock of sudden pain that it was to stop any revelations on that subject that she had been despatched on this unnecessary errand. Joyce paused in the luxurious room, which seemed somehow to absorb all the air and leave none to breathe. Oh for the freedom of Bellendean, where everybody knew who she was and thought no harm! Oh for the little cottage, where there were no pretences! The great and the small were easy, they understood each other; but this middle country, all full of reserves and assumptions which lay between, how was an ignorant creature to learn how to live in it, to avoid the snares and keep clear of the pitfalls, not to contradict or expose the falsehoods, and yet to be herself true?

Mrs. Hayward on her side, sitting painfully talking as if she knew all about these

people, whom she thought she hated, so much were they involved with this painful episode of her life, was no more happy than Joyce. To think that her neighbours, the best people about, those whose friendship was most desirable, should be mixed up with the Bellendean, who knew everything! So that now her skilful little romance must fall to the ground, and all the story be fully known.

CHAPTER XX

THE discussions held upon this question in the Colonel's room were many. Mrs. Hayward had kept herself for many years out of society, rejecting it all the more sternly because she loved it and held all its little punctilios dear. And now that all necessity for such self-denial was over, to have everything risked again was terrible to her. She who had so carefully kept her husband from annoyance, in this matter departed from all her traditions. The good Colonel himself was fond of society too. He liked to know people, to gather kindly faces about him, and to be surrounded by a cheerful stir of human interests; but to tell the truth, he did not care very much about Lady St. Clair and the best people in the neighbourhood. It was seldom—very seldom—that it occurred to

him to criticise his Elizabeth ; but on this point he thought her a little mistaken, and not so infallible as she usually was.

‘Have patience a little, my dear,’ he said, falling upon a simple philosophy, which, indeed, he was not at all disposed himself to put in practice, ‘and you’ll see all will come right.’

‘Nothing will come right,’ said Mrs. Hayward, ‘unless we can get your daughter properly introduced. It alters everything in our position, Henry. We were settling down to society such as suits you and me ; but that will not do now. The moment there is a young lady in the house all is changed. She must be thought of. A different kind of entertainment is wanted for a girl. I ought to take her to balls, and to water-parties, and to all sorts of gaieties. You would not like her to be left out.’

‘Well, my dear,’ said the Colonel, more cheerfully, ‘I like young faces, and I don’t object to a little dance now and then. I always, indeed, encouraged the young fellows in the regiment——’

‘If it were giving a dance that was all!—

you may be sure I shouldn't come to you about that. There is a great deal involved that is of much more importance. If it all gets abroad about your daughter, everything will suffer—she in the first place. It will be like a governess—every one respects a governess——'

'Surely, my dear. A good girl who perhaps does it to help her family, or support her old mother, or——'

'Henry, my dear, you are very old-fashioned. But however good she may be, she is always at a disadvantage. It would be bad for us too. Colonel Hayward's daughter a governess! They would say you were either less well off than you appeared, or that you had used her badly, or that I had used her badly—still more likely.'

'But when we did not know of her very existence, Elizabeth!'

'How are you to tell people that? The best thing is to keep quite quiet about it, if we only can. But now here is this new complication. These Bellendean people will talk it all over with the St. Clairs, and the St. Clairs will publish it everywhere. And

people will be sorry for her, and pick her to pieces, and say it is easy to see she is unused to our world ; they will be sorry for her for being with me, or else be sorry for me for being burdened with her.'

'Elizabeth——'

'And the worst is,' she said vehemently, 'that it will be quite true on both sides. She will be to be pitied, and I shall be to be pitied. If only these friends of hers could be kept quiet ! If only she could be dressed properly, and taught to hold her tongue and say nothing about her past !'

The Colonel got up and began to walk about the room in great perturbation of spirit. He could not say, as he had been in the habit of saying, 'If Elizabeth were but here !' for it was Elizabeth herself—extraordinary fact !—who was the cause of the trouble. Social difficulties had not affected them till now ; and what could he do or suggest in face of an emergency which was too much for Elizabeth ? The poor gentleman was without resource, and he had a faint sense of injury, a feeling that he had never expected to be consulted or to have to advise

in such a matter. All the difficulties in their way of a personal character had been Elizabeth's business, not his. He walked about with a troubled brow, a face full of distress, —what could he do or say? It was almost cruel of her to consult him, to put matters which he had never pretended to be able to manage into his hands.

Mrs. Hayward, on her side, felt a faint gleam of alleviation in the midst of the gloom from the spectacle of the Colonel's perturbation. It was his affair after all, and he had the best right to suffer; and though she expected no help from him, there was a certain satisfaction and almost diversion in the depth of his helpless distress. They were, however, brought to a sudden stand-still, which was a relief to both, by a ring at the door-bell, a very unusual thing in the morning. The clouds dispersed from Mrs. Hayward's brow. She put up her hand instinctively to her cap. Agitation of any kind, though it may seem a remarkable effect, does derange one's cap, as everybody who wears such a head-dress knows. 'It can't be any one coming to call at this hour,' she said. 'It

must be some of your men intending to stay for lunch.'

A weight was lifted off the Colonel's mind by this resumption of ordinary tones and subjects. He was always glad to see one of 'his men,' as Mrs. Hayward called them, to lunch, being of the most hospitable disposition; and it was his experience that the presence of a stranger was always perfectly efficacious in blowing away clouds that might arise on the family firmament. Besides, in the strained condition of family affairs, a third, or rather fourth party, who knew nothing about the circumstances, could not but make that meal more cheerful. They stood and listened for a moment while some one was evidently admitted, with some surprise that Baker did not appear to announce the visitor. Presently, however, the door was opened with that mixture of swiftness and hesitation which was characteristic of Joyce, and she herself looked in, more awakened and with a brighter countenance than either of the pair had yet seen in her. Her shyness had disappeared in the excitement of a pleasant surprise; her cheeks had

got a little colour ; the eager air which had struck Colonel Hayward when he first saw her, but which of late had been so much subdued, had returned to her eyes and sensitive mouth. 'Oh, it's the Captain!' she said, with a sense of the importance of the announcement, as if she had been presenting the Prince of Wales at least, which changed the entire sentiment of her face. Mrs. Hayward had never before seen the natural Joyce as she was in the humility of her early undisturbed state. She acknowledged the charm of the girl with a keen little sudden pang of that appreciation and comprehension of jealousy, which is more clear-sighted and certain than love.

'The Captain!' she said, not quite aware who was meant, yet putting on an air of more ignorance than was genuine.

'Oh, Bellendean!' cried the Colonel, going forward with cordiality. 'My dear fellow, how glad I am to see you! You've got away, then, from all your anxious friends. Elizabeth, you remember Captain Bellen-dean?'

'I am not likely to have forgotten him,'

Mrs. Hayward said graciously, yet with a meaning which perhaps was not so gracious as her speech. And there darted through her mind, as is so usual with women, a question, a calculation. Was it for Joyce? Men are so silly; who can tell how they may be influenced? There flashed through her a gleam of delight at the thought of thus getting rid of the interloper, and at the same time an angry grudge that this girl, who seemed to have all the luck, should come to such honour, and be thus set on high above so many who were her betters. All this in the twinkling of an eye. She stood for a minute or two and talked, asking the proper questions about his family, and when he came to town, and how long he meant to stay; then left the visitor with her husband, and hastened to say something about the luncheon to Baker, who on his part was lingering outside with a message from the cook. To those who feel an interest in such matters, we may say that Mrs. Hayward, when one of the Colonel's men made his appearance unexpectedly for luncheon, generally added a dish of curry, for which

her cook was noted (the men being almost all old Indians), to that meal.

When she returned to the drawing-room, Joyce was there, still with the same look of exhilaration and liveliness. She was even the first to speak—a singular circumstance. ‘I hope,’ she said, ‘I was not wrong in taking the Captain to the library. I thought, as you were not here, he would like that better than just talking to me.’

Was this false humility? or affectation? or what was it? ‘You were quite right, no doubt; for it must have been your father he came to see,’ said Mrs. Hayward, with a quick glance. She was prepared to see a conscious smile upon Joyce’s mouth, the little air of demure triumph with which a girl who knows herself the object of such a visit acquiesces in the fact that it is for her father. But no such consciousness was upon Joyce’s countenance. ‘You seem to be very much pleased to see him,’ she continued. ‘And why do you call him the Captain, as if there were not another in the world?’

Joyce paused a little before she answered. ‘I think,’ she said, ‘that the people at Bellen-

dean did think that there was not another such captain in the world.'

'And you are glad to see him—because you know him so well? because he reminds you of your old life?'

Joyce grew red all at once with a blush, which surely meant something. Again she paused a little, with that sense of walking among snares and man-traps, which confuses the mind. 'Oh no; I did not know him well. I have only spoken to him two or three times. It is so difficult to explain. You will perhaps not be pleased if I say it. To me that am not accustomed—the Captain's coming seemed like a great honour.' She stopped short, and the colour went out of her face as suddenly as it came.

'A great honour!' cried Mrs. Hayward with indignation,—'to his commanding officer!' It was all she could do to keep her temper. Her foot patted the carpet angrily, and she tore a band of calico off a piece upon her lap with vehemence, as if she were inflicting pain and liked to do so. 'What an extraordinary notion!' she cried. 'Norman Bellendean, a little Scotch squire—that any-

body should think his visit an honour to my husband!' There was a sort of subdued fury in her laugh of scorn.

'I can see,' said Joyce, 'it was very silly to say that; and it was only a sort of instinct. I forgot when I saw him—all that has happened—and that I was a—different creature.'

'Joyce,' cried Mrs. Hayward quickly, 'I warn you that unless you can get over this constant going back upon your old life, and try and adapt yourself to your present circumstances, it will be impossible for us—impossible for me—almost beyond any one's powers——'

Joyce had become very pale. She did not make any reply, but waited with her lips moving in an eagerness so different from that joyous eagerness of her former aspect, for the next word that should be said. What was it that would be impossible? There is something in a threat which rouses the most placid blood. If it was impossible, what would happen? Joyce was in no way in fault; the circumstances which had changed her life, and transplanted her from her home, were not of her creating any more than they

were of Mrs. Hayward's. But Mrs. Hayward said nothing more. She went on tearing, wounding, cutting her calico with stabs and thrusts of the scissors that seemed as if they must draw blood. But she had gone as far as could be done unintentionally by sudden impulse—which, and no set purpose, was what had moved her. And she had come to herself by dint of that half-spoken threat. She had no desire to be cruel or even unkind; her desire, indeed, was quite different, if one could have come to the bottom of her heart. She would have given a great deal to have been upon comfortable terms with her stepdaughter, and to have been able to quench the jealousy and the grudge with which, deeply ashamed of them all the time, she had taken in this third between the two who were so happy—this interloper, this supplanter, whom she had seen her husband embrace so tenderly, and heard saying with a voice full of emotion 'father'—a word never to be addressed to him by child of her own.

Once more, however, this uncomfortable state of affairs was brought to a pause by

the recurrence of the ordinary course of domestic events. The voices of the Colonel and Captain Bellendean became audible crossing the hall towards the drawing-room door. At the first sound of these voices, Mrs. Hayward threw her calico into the work-basket, and tore and stabbed at it no more. She relapsed suddenly into tranquil hemming, like a good child at school. Joyce had not the same cover for her agitation, but yet she collected herself as quickly as was possible, and made believe to be as quietly occupied and at her ease as her stepmother was.

‘I should have thought,’ said the Colonel, opening the door as he spoke, and bringing in this new subject with him, ‘that a pokey house in London, now that the season is more than half over, would be a bad change after your beautiful place; but that’s our mistake thinking of other people, as if they were just the same as we are—which nobody is, as a matter of fact.’

Mrs. Hayward thought that her husband meant this for her, as a reproach in respect to Joyce—which he did not, being totally incapable of any such covert assault.

‘My father has always been fond of society,’ said Captain Bellendean. ‘I suspect my beautiful place, as you are kind enough to call it, was always a great bondage to him.’

‘Joyce, I want you to show Bellendean the garden and the river,’ said the Colonel; ‘I have a——letter to finish. Take him down to the water, and show him the willows, and the poet’s villa, and all that. Have you got a hat handy, my dear, or a parasol, or something? for it’s very hot. You must take care not to get a sunstroke, or anything of that sort. This is the way, Bellendean. It’s only a little bit of a place, not like your castle; but we’re very much pleased with it for all that. The verandah is our own idea. It is the nicest possible place in the afternoon, when the sun is off this side of the house. My wife planned it all herself. Walk down under the shrubbery: you will have shade the whole way. The river’s sparkling like diamonds,’ he said, as he stood bareheaded in the moderate English sun, which he kept up a pretence of dreading as an old Indian ought, and

watched the pair as they obeyed his directions somewhat shyly, not quite understanding why they were sent off together. Colonel Hayward came back to the drawing-room where his wife sat, rubbing his hands with satisfaction. 'I have sent them off that they may have a quiet word, with nobody to interfere.'

'Why should they want a quiet word? Was it *her* he came to see? Do you suppose he means anything?' said Mrs. Hayward, in that unsympathetic tone.

'They may not perhaps have anything particular to say; but they come from the same place, and they know the same people, and probably they would not like to talk their little talks about old friends with us listening to every word; so I said I had a letter to finish,' said the Colonel, with a mild chuckle. 'I must go and do it though, that they may not think it was a pretence.'

'Do you know, Henry,' said Mrs. Hayward, 'that some people would say you were throwing your daughter at Captain Bellen-dean's head?'

'Bless me!' said the Colonel, with a won-

dering look ; ‘throwing my daughter at—— Elizabeth, these would surely be very unpleasant people, not the kind that ever had anything to do with you and me.’ He paused a moment, looking at her with an appeal which she did not lift her eyes to see. Then he repeated, ‘I must go, though, and finish my letter, or they will think it was only a pretence.’

Perhaps Captain Bellendean had some faint notion that it was, as he walked along under the shade of the shrubbery skirting the long but narrow lawn towards the river, which flowed shining and sparkling in the full sun—half amused to find himself walking by the side of the heroine of the curious story which had been worked out under his roof—the little schoolmistress turned into a young lady of leisure, transplanted out of her natural place. He was not without a little natural curiosity as to how such a strange travesty would succeed. There was nothing in her appearance to emphasise the change. She walked slowly, almost reluctantly, with that shyness which is not unbecoming to youth, as if she would have liked to fly and

leave him unguided to his own devices. He gave her a good many glances under his eyebrows as they walked along very gravely together, scarcely speaking. Certainly if Colonel Hayward meant to throw his daughter at the Captain's head, she had no intention that way.

'The last time I saw you, Miss Joyce,' he said, 'was the evening before you left home. And you thought England and London would be a new world. What do you think of the new world, now that you have seen them near?'

'Did I say they would be a new world?' Joyce sighed a little, looking up to the Captain with a faint smile, which made, he thought, a charming combination. She added, 'I have only seen London in passing; but I'm beginning to think there is no new world, but just what we make it—and the same in every place.'

'One of the old classical fellows says that, doesn't he?' said the Captain. 'I've forgotten all my Latin; but you're up to everything of that sort——'

'Oh no; I am not a scholar. I just

know a little at the very beginning. But I understand what you mean. It is something about changing the skies but not the mind.'

'I wonder if that is what Mrs. Bellendean will do?'

'Mrs. Bellendean?'

'Oh, I forgot; it was your father to whom I was speaking; but you will know better all that this means. My father and his wife have left Bellendean—for good, do you understand, not to come back.'

'For good! but I should think that would rather be for ill,' Joyce said.

'Yes, I knew you would understand. I didn't myself, however, till very lately. I had no conception what she had done for the place, nor how much it was to her. And now they have shaken the dust from off their feet, and left it—as if I could have wished that.'

'They would think,' said Joyce, with an explanatory instinct that belonged to her old position—'the lady would think that perhaps you were likely——'

Here she looked up at him, and suddenly realising that she was not Joyce the school-

mistress, with a little privilege of place, making matters clear, but a young woman discoursing about his own affairs to a young man, stopped suddenly, blushed deeply, and murmured, 'Oh, I beg your pardon,' with a horror of her own rashness which gave double meaning to all she said.

'That perhaps I was likely——?' said Norman. He found her very pleasant company, with her intelligent eager looks, her comprehension of what he meant before it was uttered. 'Tell me what she would think likely. I know so little about—the lady, as you call her. She was only my step-mother, whom I didn't much care for when I went away. It is a mistake to judge people before one knows them,' he added reflectively; but this sentiment, so cognate to her own case, did not in the immediate urgency of the moment arrest Joyce's attention, especially as he repeated with a smile, 'what would she think me likely to do?'

'I was going to speak like an old wife in a cottage—like my dear old granny.'

'Do so, please,' he said, with a laugh; and Joyce yielded to the unknown temptation,

which had never come in her way before. The gentle malice of society, the under-current of meaning, the play with which youths and maidens amuse themselves in the beginning of an intercourse which may come to much more serious results, were quite out of her understanding and experience; but there are some things which are very quickly learnt.

‘She would think—the old wives would say—that now the Captain was come back, he would be bringing home a lady of his own.’

Joyce said this, not with the absolute calm of two minutes ago, but with a smile and blush which altogether changed the significance of the little speech. It had been an almost matter-of-fact explanation—it became now a little winged arrow of provocation, a sort of challenge. Captain Bellendean laughed.

‘I see,’ he said; ‘and you think that is a course open to me? But a lady of my own might not be so good as *the* lady—and then there are difficulties about time, for instance. I might not be able to bring her at once; and

the one I wanted might not have me : and —— Miss Joyce, your attention flags—you are not interested in me.'

'I was thinking,' said Joyce, 'that though you laugh, it would be no laughing for her to leave Bellendean.'

The Captain perceived that the joke was to go no further. 'I do not believe it is her doing at all—it is my father's doing. He prefers London—Half Moon Street, and rooms where you can scarcely turn round.'

'Half Moon Street !'

'Do you know it ?'

'No more than in books,' said Joyce, with a smile ; 'there are so many places that seem kent places because they are in books.'

'Italy, etc.,' the Captain said, looking at her with a sympathetic glance.

'Oh, but not etc. !' cried Joyce. 'Italy—is like nothing else in the world.'

'Well,' said Captain Bellendean, 'when you are in the circumstances which you have just been suggesting to me, no doubt you will go to Italy ; that is the right time and the right circumstances——'

Before he had half said these words, a

sudden vision of Andrew Halliday flashed across his mind, and he stopped in sudden embarrassment. By this time they had reached the river's side, and Joyce turned dutifully to point out to him the poet's villa, as her father had bidden her; but there was something in her tone which betrayed to the sympathetic listener that the same image had suddenly overshadowed her imagination too. Captain Bellendean was very sympathetic—more so, perhaps, than he would have been had his companion been older or less pretty. He pretended to look with great interest at the willows sweeping into the water, and the lawn, with its little fringe of forget-me-nots reflected in the softly flowing stream. Joyce had lost the colour which was half excitement, and had kept coming and going like the shadows over the sky, while they walked together down the shady walk. It is very interesting to see a face change in this way, and to think that one's own society, the quickening of the blood produced by one's sudden advent, may have something to do with it. He had felt that it was very pleasant to watch these changes, and was conscious of a little agree-

able thrill of responsive exhilaration in his own veins. But when this sudden shadow fell upon Joyce, his sympathy sprang into a warmer, energetic sentiment. Could that be the fate for which this girl was reserved? Surely some one must step in to save her from that fate!

CHAPTER XXI

IT was some days before the new difficulties which possessed all Mrs. Hayward's thoughts were fully revealed to Joyce. These early days were long, being full of so many confusing circumstances and new problems to be encountered, solved, or left aside for further trouble in their turn ; and what she had heard her stepmother say about her bringing up had passed over Joyce's mind with little effect. She had enough to do in other ways : to find out a mode of living which would be practicable, to subdue her own spirit, to reconcile herself with so many new necessities all rushing upon her at once. How to apportion her time was in itself a difficulty almost beyond her untried powers : to be long enough, yet not too long, with Mrs. Hayward—to find something to do during these hours

which she had to pass in that drawing-room which was so pretty and comfortable, but so little homelike to the stranger. Joyce had abundant resources in herself. She was fully instructed in all kinds of work—a mistress of fine-sewing and mending, able to clothe her household with needlework, like the woman in the Proverbs ; but there was no need for these qualifications here. And she had gone through all the studies which were open to her in design, besides having found out somehow, amid those gifts of nature which to all her early friends had seemed so lavish, a faculty for drawing, which had been of endless pleasure to her, and pride to her belongings in the old time. Music, indeed, was left out, except in so far as it belonged to her profession. She had learned the Hullah system, or something like it, and could read easily all the simple songs which were taught to the children ; but a piano had never been within her reach, nor had she heard anything that a musician would think worth hearing. At home in Bellendean the old people thought that nobody could sing the ‘ Flowers of the Forest,’ or the ‘ Banks of Doon,’ or the old

Psalm tunes, which were still dearer, like their Joyce. But these were not the sort of performances with which to please Mrs. Hayward.

Thus, though she was full of accomplishments in her way, none of Joyce's acquirements stood her in much stead in her new circumstances. She had to contrive something for herself to do, which was far from being easy. She had to think of what she could talk about, to take her fit part in the household intercourse—not to sit like an uninterested spectator between these two strange people, who were her nearest relations. And this was almost the hardest of all; for Colonel Hayward and his wife were like so many people of their class—they had read little, they were puzzled by references to books, and did not understand that keen sense of association and fellowship with her favourite writers and their productions which made Joyce an inhabitant of a second world, to her consciousness almost more real than the external sphere. The Colonel said 'Eh?' as if he had become a little deaf, with a kind but bewildered smile, when she adduced

the example—to Joyce more natural than the most familiar examples of every day—of somebody in Scott, or, as she loved to say, Sir Walter, to illustrate a position; while Mrs. Hayward was more apt to frown, and to say impatiently that she thought it very wrong for young people to read so many novels. They did not even know what she meant by Sir Walter!—her father, with his puzzled look, suggesting, ‘Sir Walter—Gilbert, did you mean, my dear? Now, where can you have met Gilbert, Joyce? and what could he know about the oyster-dredging in the North?’ Thus it was against her that she knew more than they did, as well as that she knew less: in either case, she was left out of their circle, out of their world,—her very wealth futile, and more useless than had she been without endowment at all.

But in the preoccupation of so many matters, important beyond measure to her new existence, and much pondering of the way to make that existence possible, which seemed to her sometimes a problem almost beyond her powers of solving, Joyce was not

at all quick to catch up the allusions of her stepmother, or to perceive what it was that filled Mrs. Hayward's mind with new alarms. The possibility of there being something to be ashamed of in respect to herself—something to conceal or gloss over, in case it might revolt the visitors, of whom Joyce, hitherto measuring them by the standard of Bellendean, had not formed a very high idea—had never entered her mind; and she was startled beyond measure when Mrs. Hayward opened the subject directly in a moment of impatience, and notwithstanding her own excellent resolutions against doing so. Joyce had been betrayed into some reference to her old work, which she had instinctively felt to be distasteful and seldom alluded to, but which would crop up now and then. It was Mr. Sitwell, the clergyman, and his school feast, which was the original subject of the talk.

‘I think they are playing at school work,’ Joyce said. ‘I would like to see the mistress, and hear what she says.’

‘I beg you will do nothing of the kind,’ cried Mrs. Hayward. ‘I did not at all like your enthusiasm about the schools when the

Sitwells were here. I think you said you were more interested in them than in anything else in the world. I am never fond of extravagance.'

'But it was true,' said Joyce, with a deprecating smile. 'When you have been interested about one thing all your life, and always thinking which is the best way, what can you do but feel it the most important?'

'It is time,' said Mrs. Hayward, 'that you should find another channel for your thoughts. I didn't mean to say anything to vex you, Joyce. But you must know that your father's daughter should have been brought up in a very different way; and, to tell the truth, I would much rather our friends here knew as little as possible—about your antecedents.'

Joyce looked up astonished, with a quick cry, 'Antecedents!' which was a word that seemed to imply something bad, like the reports in the newspapers. She was, to be sure, too well instructed to think that implication necessary; but there are prejudices of which even the best-informed persons cannot shake themselves free.

'You know what I mean!—the teaching,

and all that. That you should be fond of the schools, and interested in them, is all very well ; but that you were a——’

A flush of deep colour had rushed over Joyce’s uplifted face. ‘A—schoolmistress,’ she said, with the quiver of a piteous little smile.

‘I can’t bear to hear you say it—your father’s daughter!—and of course it is impossible to enter into particulars, and explain everything to everybody. I think it better, far better, to draw a veil. You were brought up by relations in Scotland—that is what I mean to say.’

‘Relations!’ repeated Joyce softly; ‘thank you for saying that. Oh, and so they were!—the kindest relations that ever a poor little girl had.’

‘I am glad I have pleased you, so far as that goes,’ said Mrs. Hayward, in a tone of relief. ‘Well, then, I hope you will back me up, and show yourself grateful to your old friends. There are various other things I may mention as we are on this subject. For instance, when you were talking to Alice St. Clair you said *Miss* Greta. Now that

young lady, if you were to renew your acquaintance with her, would certainly not allow you to call her Miss *now*.'

Joyce opened her eager lips to reply, but, struck by a sudden sense of the uselessness of any explanation, closed them again—a movement not unnoticed by her companion.

'I notice also,' said Mrs. Hayward, 'that you have a way of calling Mrs. Bellendean the Lady. That's all very well if it's one of the fantastic names that girls are so fond of nowadays—I mean, if other young people use it as well as you; but if it's one of your terms of respect—— Remember, Joyce, that to go on speaking in that way is a—is a kind of insult to your father and to your own family, which is quite as good as Mrs. Bellendean's.'

As good as Mrs. Bellendean's!—her heart revolted against this claim. The old homage which she had given with youthful enthusiasm was not to Mrs. Bellendean's position or her family. But how was Joyce to explain this to her judge, who did not look upon her or her romances with a favourable eye? And yet she could not but say a word in

self-defence. 'It was for kindness,' she said, —'for,' hesitating with her Scotch shyness, 'for love!'

'For love!' Mrs. Hayward echoed the word with a tone of opposition, and almost offence. 'She is one of the women who seem to have the gift of attracting girls. I don't know how they do it, for girls have always seemed to me the most uncertain, unappreciative——' She sighed impatiently, then added in a softened tone, 'If it's only a sort of pet name, that's different. But you must see that it is your duty to avoid everything that could seem to—to discredit your father. And we can't explain the circumstances to everybody, and prove that it was not his fault. For my part,' she cried, with a flash of quick feeling in her clear eyes, 'I'd say anything or do anything rather than let it be supposed for a moment that the Colonel—had anything to be ashamed of in the whole course of his existence. He has not, and never had, whatever you may think. That's what I call love,' she cried, vehemently, with a sudden tear or two taking her by surprise.

Joyce turned towards her stepmother with a quick responsive look ; but Mrs. Hayward was ashamed of her own emotion, and had turned away to conceal it, thus missing the eager overture of sympathy. She went on in another moment with a little laugh : ‘ It shows we never should be sure of anything. If there was one thing more unlikely than another, I should have said it was the gossip of a Scotch village getting abroad here. I should have thought that nobody here had ever heard the name of Bellendean—when lo ! it turns out that we are in a perfect wasp’s nest of relations and connections. Your Miss Greta, as you call her, a cousin, and the St. Clairs themselves visitors of the Bellendeans. I suppose before another week is over all Richmond will know the story. It is very vexatious, when I had planned to take you about everywhere, and do all sorts of things ! ’

She was called out of the room at this moment by some domestic requirement, and did not hear Joyce’s troubled murmur. ‘ Was there anything, then, to think shame of ? ’ Joyce had said, her voice trembling, with the

Scotch idiom which Mrs. Hayward disliked. She added to herself, 'in me,' with a wondering pang. Perhaps the girl had too high a conception of herself, which it was well to bring down ; but such an operation is always a painful one. Though she had been brought up in a ploughman's cottage, and occupied the humblest position, yet nothing had ever happened in her life to humiliate Joyce. She had been admired and praised, and placed upon a little pedestal from her earliest consciousness : and that any one should be ashamed of her struck her as something so incredible and extraordinary, that it took away her breath,—'anything to think shame of—in me.' She had no defence against such a sudden dart : it went through and through her, cutting to her heart. She rose up quickly, with a sensation intolerable—a quick and passionate impulse. To do what? She could not tell. To have the wings of a dove and fly away—but where? She stopped herself, clasping her hands together, holding herself fast that she might not be so unreasonable as to do it. The mother had done it, and what had come of it? To

herself madness and death, and to her poor child this,—that the people to whom she belonged were ashamed of her—ashamed of Joyce! It seemed a thing impossible, not to be realised. She said it over to herself incredulously, making an effort to smile. Ashamed!—but no, no! Whatever there was to bear, it must be borne, even though those wings for which so many have sighed should be given to her: she must not fly, she must stay.

But Joyce had in this particular still something more hard to bear. A few days after the visit of the Captain, Mrs. Bellendean came to Richmond, bringing with her Greta. The two ladies came with a purpose. They had been warned by Captain Bellendean that there were difficulties in the Colonel's household, and that Joyce's position was not of the happiest. How he had divined that much it would be difficult to say, for divination was not Norman's *forte*. But for once his sympathy or interest had given insight to his eyes.

'You should go and let them see that the poor girl has friends,' he said.

‘I shall go,’ said Mrs. Bellendean, who was very sure that she must know better than Norman, ‘and make myself very agreeable to the stepmother. She is not a bad sort of woman. She will be pleased if we go and call at once, and I confess I shall do everything I know to make her like me and trust me: that will be the best way of serving Joyce.’ With this intent the ladies arrived and played their part very prettily. They were delighted with the house, the drawing-room, the lovely things, Indian and otherwise, admiring them with a comprehension and knowledge which Joyce had not possessed, and making Mrs. Hayward glow with gratification and modest pride. Joyce followed her beloved lady with her looks,—her usual and faithful admiration of everything Mrs. Bellendean said and did very slightly modified by surprise at this new aspect of her. They had not failed in any mark of affection to herself—nay, had startled her by the warmth of their greetings. Mrs. Bellendean had met her with outstretched arms and a kiss which confused Joyce with pleasure, and afterwards with — something else, which was not so

agreeable. Joyce, indeed, was the one silent in the midst of the effusive cordiality and pleasantness of this meeting. She did not know how to respond or what to say. It was the first time she had met her friends under this new aspect. The night she had spent at Bellendean before leaving had been different. She was then in all the excitement of the great revolution in her life, and nothing seemed too extraordinary for that crisis; but Joyce had calmed down—she had returned to life's ordinary, though with so amazing a difference—and her lady's kiss and Greta's eager outstretched arms overwhelmed her with doubts and questions which half blotted out the pleasure.

Finally, they strayed out upon the lawn, and down the shaded walk towards the river, as all visitors did. Joyce had made that little pilgrimage only in company with Captain Bellendean as yet; and there did not fail to pass through her mind a comparison which affected her in a way she did not understand. She knew him so much less than Greta, cared for him much less—and yet—— Joyce fled from the faint rising of

an uncomprehended thought with a thrill of strange alarm, and turned to her friend, who was so sweet, the admired of all her youthful thoughts, her little paragon of prettiness and sweetness. Greta had twined her arm within her companion's, and was looking tenderly into her face.

‘And are you happy?’ Greta said. ‘Oh, Joyce! I remember how you used to fancy all manner of things. You would not have been surprised if you had turned out to be a princess—like Queen Mary's daughter, who was “unknown to history.”’

‘If there ever was such a person,’ said schoolmistress Joyce. ‘Yes, I think I was quite prepared to be a princess.’

‘It would have been much more troublesome than this, and not half so nice, I think. To have had that horrible Bothwell for a father, or some one else as dreadful, instead of delightful Colonel Hayward.’

‘My father,’ said Joyce, with the little flush and stir of feeling which was always called forth by his name, ‘is better—than anything I ever could have dreamed.’

‘Then why are you not happy?’ cried

Greta, going direct to the heart of the matter, as children do.

‘But perhaps I am happy,’ said Joyce, with a little sigh, followed by a smile. ‘To be happy is a strange thing: it is not at your own will, nor because you are well off, and have everything you can want. It is just for nothing, and comes when it pleases. And life is very confusing. There are so many things to think of that I never thought of before. How to please them—and I always used to please, just because it was me. And sometimes I think they are ashamed.’

‘Ashamed, Joyce!’

‘No,’ she said, ‘not of me, as me: but because of what I was. You used all to say pretty things to me, Miss Greta, about the fine work I was doing,—about the use I was to the children—even to the country,’ Joyce added, with a light in her eyes.

‘Miss Greta, Joyce! is that like the friends we are? I shall call you Miss Hayward if you say that again.’

Joyce turned upon her with a sudden flash, raising her head with an involuntary movement that looked like disdain. ‘See,

now,' she said, 'you yourself! You never said *that* when I was Joyce Matheson, the schoolmistress at Bellendean. And yet you all praised me, and said I was doing a good work. I am doing no work nor anything here. I am just a cumberer of the ground. They don't know what to do with me, though they want to be very kind. And I don't know what to do with myself. But you never said *that* to me in the old time.'

'Oh, Joyce!' cried Greta, with conviction and shame. She added, holding her companion's arm close, 'Not that I didn't want to say it—many and many a time! You were always much better, much higher than I.'

Joyce put her hand upon her friend's, but shook her head, her cheeks flushed with a transient glow of feeling, her eyes troubled and unconvinced. 'We'll say nothing about that. It was all as it ought to be, and natural: anything else would have been out of place both for you and me. But you did not then; and now you would have me in a moment change, and say Miss Greta no more, because

I am no longer the schoolmistress, but Colonel Hayward's daughter. But how can I do that? that would mean a change in me. And there is no change in me.'

Greta did not understand what was in her friend's face. Joyce no longer looked at her, but away into the blue distance over the river among the tufts and clusters of the soft English trees—looking but seeing not; perceiving only the mists and confusion of a change with which her own will and thoughts had nothing to do, against which she could not help rebelling, though she was compelled to acknowledge that it was all natural, inevitable, not to be resisted. It wounded her native sense of dignity to be thus elevated, to have a position given to her, even in the hearts of her friends, which had not been hers before. Mrs. Belendean's kiss, and Greta's eager affection, what were they to the real Joyce, to whom both had been so kind, so friendly, even tender, but never with this demonstration of equality? If Joyce had been embittered, she would have considered them insults to her old and true self; but she was not bitter. She was only humiliated, strangely wounded,

and astray, seeing the necessity of it, and the hardness of it, and only feeling in her heart the absence of any place for her, herself, the true Joyce, who had never changed amid all these strange alterations. She put her hand upon that which was trembling yet clinging fast to her arm, and softly patted it, with something of the feeling of the elder to the younger, the superior to the inferior—which was a change too, though Joyce was scarcely cognisant of it; for in her unawakened days she had looked up with genuine faith to Miss Greta, making a little ideal of her. Now, though Joyce did not know it, that balance had turned too, and she was keenly perceiving, pardoning, excusing that in which her ideal had failed. ‘I could have wished,’ she said, ‘*you* had not done it. I could have wished that we should bide—as we always were—just you you, and me me.’

‘Oh, Joyce!’ faltered Greta, clinging more and more. ‘I have been so glad that you and I could be like sisters—as I have always felt.’

‘You and—Colonel Hayward’s daughter, Miss Greta,’ she said.

By this time the two elder ladies had followed to the water's edge, and stood looking up the Thames at the sweeping willows, and the spot, which none of them cared the least about, where the poet's villa had been planted. Mrs. Bellendean, who was very quick in observation, saw that Greta was disturbed, and came up, laying her hand on Joyce's shoulder. 'Let me have her a little now,' she said. 'Norman told us about your river-side, Joyce, and how you had showed him everything. He could talk of nothing else when he came back.'

'It was a beautiful day — which was all that is wanted ; for you see yourself there is not much to show.'

'And you,' said Mrs. Bellendean, 'who were the first thing to be taken into consideration, perhaps. Joyce, I want to speak to you, my dear. Your—yes, I know, she is not your mother ; but she wants to be as kind as you will let her. She is troubled about all this story being known.'

'All what story ?' said Joyce, with a catching of her breath.

'Oh, my dear, you know. And I don't

wonder at it. You were a miracle in your own—I mean in that position. But now it is very natural your parents should wish—no more to be said about it than is necessary. Mrs. Hayward says very truly that it is better a girl shouldn't be talked about, even when it is all to her credit. She wanted to warn *me*,' Mrs. Bellendean said, with a smile at the ignorance thus manifested. She had put her arm into that of Joyce, and led her along the velvet turf, as far as the lawn extended, leaving Greta with Mrs. Hayward. 'As if I were likely to betray you! But I want you to promise, Joyce, that you won't—betray yourself, which is far more likely.'

'Betray!' cried Joyce. She had been humiliated by Greta; she was indignant now. 'What have I to betray?' she cried; 'that I am a waif, and a foundling, and an abandoned creature that belongs to nobody? or that I am a trouble and a charge to everybody that has to do with me, breaking my poor granny's heart because she wants me, and a shame to the others that don't want me? Myself! what is it to betray myself? Oh, you are kind; you are very kind. You were

my dear lady that I honoured above everything. But you kiss me to-day because I'm — not Joyce, but Colonel Hayward's daughter; and you bid me not to betray myself. To betray that I am myself—is that what you mean?'

'Joyce! Joyce!' cried Mrs. Bellendean.

Joyce paused for a moment to dry the sudden tears which had betrayed her, coming with a rush to her eyes—girls being such poor creatures, that cannot do anything or feel anything without crying! She had drawn her arm out of her friend's arm, and her eyes were shining, and a swift nervous movement, scarcely restrainable, thrilling through her. That impulse, as of a hunted deer, to give one momentary glance round, and then turn and fly—the impulse of her mother, which was in all Joyce's veins, though nothing had occurred till now to bring it out,—took hold upon her, and shook her like a sudden wind. She knew what it was, though no one else had any warning of it; and it frightened her to the depths of her soul.

CHAPTER XXII

NOTWITHSTANDING this sense of outrage and injury, time and the hour had their usual effect upon Joyce. There are few things that the common strain of everyday does not subdue in time—few things, that is, that are of the nature of sentiment, not actual evil or wrong. She reconciled herself to the affectionate demonstrations of her old friends, which were such as they had not made in the old times, without at least saying again that these were for Colonel Hayward's daughter, and not for Joyce; and she learnt to make new ones, or at least to receive shyly and respond as much as her nature permitted to the overtures of acquaintance-ship made to her by the society among which she lived. The sense of strangeness faded away; she became familiar with her surround-

ings, and with the things which were required of her. She acquired, to her astonishment and amusement, and pleasure too, when she had become a little accustomed to her own appearance in them, a number of new dresses and ornaments, the latter chiefly presents from her father, who found it the most delightful amusement to make a little expedition into town—a thing which was at all times a pleasant diversion to him—to go to Hancock's, or some other costly place, before or after he went to his club, and bring Joyce a bracelet or a ring. These expeditions were not always agreeable to Mrs. Hayward. She said, 'If you would tell me what you wanted, Henry, I could get it a great deal cheaper for you at the Stores—half the price: these Hancock people are ruinous.'

'But, my dear, I bought it only because it chanced to take my fancy—in the shop-window,' said the scheming Colonel, with wiles which he had learned of recent days. His wife knew as well as he did that this little fable was of doubtful credence, but she said no more. After all, if he could not give his child a bracelet or two, it would be a strange

thing, Mrs. Hayward said to herself with a little heat. She was determined to be reasonable, but she could not help being slightly suspicious of his meaning, when he announced his intention at the breakfast-table of taking a little run up to town, and seeing how those fellows were getting on. He meant his old cronies at the club, whom he was always pleased to see ; but it always turned out that there were other little things to be done as well.

And Joyce was far from being without pleasure in these pretty presents, and in the tenderness which beamed from the Colonel's face when he stole his little packet out of his pocket with the air of a schoolboy bringing home a bird's nest. 'My dear, I happened to see this as I passed, and I thought you would like it.' She did not know much about the value of these gifts, overestimating it at first, underrating it afterwards — and cared very little, to tell the truth, after the first sensation of awe with which she had regarded the gold and precious stones, when she found such unexpected treasures in her own possession. But what was of far greater

importance was the tender bond which, by means of all the kind thoughts which resulted in these gifts, and the grateful and pleased sentiment which these kind thoughts called forth, grew up between the Colonel and his daughter. She became the companion of a morning walk which up to this time he had been in the habit of taking alone—Mrs. Hayward considering it necessary to be ‘on the spot,’ as she said, and looking after her household. The Colonel, who never liked to be alone, took advantage one lovely morning of a chance meeting with Joyce, who was straying somewhat listlessly along the shrubbery walk, thinking of many things. ‘I am going for my walk,’ he said—his walk being a habit as regular as the nursery performance of the same kind. ‘If you have nothing to do, get your hat and come with me, my dear.’ And this walk came to be delightful to both, Joyce making acquaintance thereby with those genuine reflections of a mind uninstructed save by life, which are so often full of insight and interest; while the Colonel on his side listened with delighted admiration to Joyce’s information on all kinds of subjects,

which was drawn entirely from books. He talked to her about India and his old friends there and all their histories, enchanted to rouse her interest and to have to stir up his memory in order to satisfy her as to how an incident ended, or what became of a man.

‘What happened after? My dear, I believe he was killed at Delhi, poor fellow!—after all they had gone through. Yes, it was hard: but that’s a soldier’s life, you know; he never knows where he may have to leave his bones. The poor little woman had to be sent home. We got up some money for her, and I believe she had friends to whom she went with her baby. That’s all I know about them. As for Brown, he got on very well—retired now with the rank of a general, and lives at Cheltenham. The last time I saw him, he was at Woolwich with his third boy for an exam. It is either the one thing or the other, Joyce—either they get killed young, or they live through everything and come home, regular old *vieux moustaches*, as the French say, with immense families to set out in the world. The number of fine fellows I’ve seen drop! and then the number of

others who survive everything, and are not so much the better for it after all.'

'When I read the Vision of Mirza to my old granny at ho—— at Bellendean—she said life was like that,' said Joyce gravely,— 'some dropping suddenly in a moment, so that you only saw that they had disappeared.'

'The Vision of—— what, my dear? It has an Eastern sound, but I don't think it's in the Bible. Very likely I've heard it somewhere: but my memory is rather bad'—(he had been giving her a hundred personal details of all kinds of people, in the range of some thirty or forty years)—'especially for books.' Colonel Hayward added, 'More shame to me,' with a shake of his gray head.

And then she told him Mirza's vision, with the warm natural eloquence of her inexperience and profound conviction that literature was the one deathless and universal influence. The Colonel was greatly pleased with it, and received it as the most original of allegories. 'It's wonderful,' he said, 'what imagination these Eastern chaps have, Joyce. They carry it too far, you know, calling you the emperor's brother, the flower of all the

warriors of the West, and that sort of thing, which is nonsense, and never after the first time takes in the veriest Johnny Raw of a young ensign. Well, but your old woman was very right, my dear. If I were to tell you about all the fellows that started in life with me—such a lot of them, Joyce; as cheery a set—not so clever, perhaps, as the new men nowadays, but up to anything—it's very like that old humbug's bridge, which, between you and me, never existed, you know—you may be quite sure of that.'

Joyce held her breath when she heard the beloved Addison called an old humbug, but reflected that the Colonel did not mean it, and made no remark.

'It is very like that,' he continued musingly. 'One doesn't even notice at the time—but when you look back. There was Jack Hunter went almost as soon as we landed: such a nice fellow—I seem to hear his laugh now, though I haven't so much as thought upon him for forty years,—dropped, you know, without ever hearing a shot fired, with the laugh in his mouth, so to speak. And Jim Jenkinson, the first time we were under

fire, in a bit of a skirmish for no use. His brother, though — by George! he hasn't dropped at all; for here he comes, as tough an old parson as ever lived, Joyce. Excuse the exclamation, my dear. It slips out, though I hate swearing as much as you can do. We'll have to stop and speak to Canon Jenkinson. I think, on the whole, rather than grow into such a pursy parson, I'd rather have dropped like poor Jim.'

Colonel Hayward directed his daughter's attention to a large clergyman, who was walking along on the other side of the road. The Colonel had the contempt of all slim men for all fat ones; and Joyce, too, being imaginative and young, looked with sympathetic disapproval at the rotundity which was approaching. Canon Jenkinson was more than a fat man—he was a fat clergyman. His black waistcoat was tightly, but with many wrinkles, strained across a protuberance which is often anything but amusing to the unfortunate individual who has to carry it, but which invariably arouses the smiles of unfeeling spectators; the long lapels of his black coat swung on either side as he

moved quickly with a step very light for such a weight—swinging, too, a neatly rolled umbrella, which he carried horizontally like a balance to keep his arm extended to its full length. When he saw Colonel Hayward he crossed the road towards him, with a larger swing still of his great person altogether. ‘Holloa, Hayward!’ he said, in a big, rolling, bass voice.

‘Well, Canon; I am glad to see you have come back.’

‘And what is this you have been about in my absence, my good fellow,—increasing and multiplying at a time of life when I should have thought you beyond all such vanities? Is this the young lady? As a very old friend of your father’s, Miss Hayward, and as he doesn’t say a word to help us, I must introduce myself.’

He held out a large hand in which Joyce’s timid one was for a moment buried, and then he said, ‘You’ve hidden her away a long time, Hayward, and kept her dark; but I’ve always remarked of you that when you did produce a thing at the last, it was worth the trouble. My wife told me you had sprung a

family upon us. No story was ever diminished by being retold.'

'No, no, my daughter only—Joyce, who has been brought up by—her mother's relations—in Scotland.' The Colonel had learned his lesson, but he said it with a little hesitation and faltering.

'Oh!' said the clergyman, and then he added in a undertone, 'Your first poor wife, I suppose?'

The Colonel replied only by a nod, while Joyce stood embarrassed and half indignant. She was deeply vexed by the interrogatory of which she was the subject, and still more by her father's look and tone. For the poor Colonel was the last person in the world to be trusted with the utterance of a fiction, and his looks contradicted the words which he managed to say.

'Ah!' said Canon Jenkinson: and then he turned suddenly upon Joyce. 'Are you a good Churchwoman, or are you a little Presbyterian?' he said. 'I must have that out with you before we are much older. And I hear you are going to range yourself on the side of Sitwell, and help him to defy

me. His school-feast, *par exemple*, when I am having the whole parish three or four days after! You know a good deal of the insubordination of subalterns, Hayward, but you don't know what the incumbent of a district can do when he tries. He is not your curate, so you can't squash him. Miss Hayward, I take it amiss of you that you should have gone over to Sitwell's side.'

'I don't know even the gentleman's name,' said Joyce. 'There was somebody spoke of his schools—and I am very fond of schools.'

'His schools! You shall come and see the parish schools, and tell me what you think of them. Don't take a wretched little district as an example. I'll tell you what, Hayward,—she shall come with me at once and see what we can do. I don't go touting round for unpaid curates, as Sitwell does. But I do think a nice woman's the best of school inspectors—in an unofficial way, *bien entendu*. I don't mean to propose you to the Government, Miss Hayward, to get an appointment, when there are so much too few for the men.'

He spoke with a swing, too, of such fluent

talk, rolling out in the deep, round, agreeable bass which was so well known in the neighbourhood, that the two helpless persons thus caught were almost carried away by the stream.

‘I don’t think she can go now, Jenkinson. Elizabeth will be wondering already what has become of us.’

‘Is that so?’ said the Canon, with a laugh. ‘We all know there’s no going against the commanding officer. Another time, then—another time. But, Miss Hayward, you must give me your promise not to let yourself be prejudiced; and, above all, don’t go over to Sitwell’s side.’

He pressed her hand in his, gave her a beaming smile, waved his hand to the Colonel, and swung along upon his way, exchanging greetings with everybody he encountered.

‘My dear,’ said Colonel Hayward, ‘there is no telling what that man might have plunged you into if I had not been here to defend you. Let us go home lest something worse befall us. I think I see the Sitwells coming up Grove Road. If you should fall

into their hands, I know not what would happen. Walk quickly, and perhaps they will not see us. Elizabeth will say I am not fit to be trusted with you if I let you be torn to pieces by the clergy. The Canon, you see, Joyce, was the means of having this new district church set up. And Sitwell has not behaved prudently—not at all prudently. He has played his cards badly. He has taken up the opposition party—those that were always against the Canon, whatever he might do. They are good people, and mean well, but—— Oh, Mrs. Sitwell! I am sure I beg your pardon. I never imagined it was you.'

There had been a quick little pattering of feet behind them, and Mrs. Sitwell, out of breath, panting out inquiries after their health and the health of dear Mrs. Hayward, captured the reluctant pair. She was a small woman, as light as a feather, and full of energy. She took Joyce by both her hands. 'Oh, dear Miss Hayward!' she cried, breathless, 'I ran after you to tell you about the school-feast. I hope you don't forget your promise. Austin's coming after me—he'll be

here directly, but I ran to tell you. Tomorrow afternoon in Wombwell's field. Colonel Hayward, you'll bring her, won't you? I know you like to see the poor little children enjoying themselves.'

'My dear lady,' said the Colonel, 'I am distressed to see you so out of breath.'

'Oh, that's nothing. There's no harm done,' said Mrs. Sitwell. 'I am always running about. Here is Austin to back me up. He will tell you how I have been calculating upon you, Miss Hayward. Dear, don't pant, but tell her. I have told every one you were coming. Oh, don't disappoint me—don't, don't!'

'I can't help panting,' said the clergyman; 'it is my usual state. I am always running after my wife. But, Miss Hayward, it is quite true. We want you very much, and she has quite set her heart upon it. I do hope you will come—as I think you said.'

Mrs. Sitwell left Joyce no time to reply. 'You must, you must, indeed,' she said. 'Ah, Colonel Hayward, I saw what you did. You brought down the Great Gun upon her. Was that fair? when we had been so fortu-

nate as to see her first, and when she had begun to take to us. And whatever he may say, you are in our district. Of course the parish includes everything. I think that man would like to have all England in his parish—all the best people. He would not mind leaving us the poor.'

'Hush, Dora,' said her husband. 'I don't wonder you should form a strong opinion: but we must not say what is against Christian charity.'

'Oh, charity!' cried the clergyman's wife; 'I think *he* should begin. I am sure he told Miss Hayward that she was to have nothing to do with us. Now, didn't he? I can read it in your face. Austin himself, though he pretends to be so charitable, said to me when he saw him talking, "Now you may give up all hopes;" but I said, No; I had more opinion of your face than that. I knew you would stick to your first friends and hold by your word.'

'You ought to be warned, Miss Hayward,' said the Rev. Austin Sitwell; 'my wife's quite a dangerous person. She professes to know all about you if she only sees your

photograph—much more when she has the chance of reading your face.'

'Don't betray me, you horrid tell-tale,' said his wife, threatening him with a little finger. There was a hole in the glove which covered this small member, which Joyce could not but notice as it was held up; and this curious colloquy held across her bewildered her so much, that she had scarcely time to be amused by it. For one thing, there was no need for her to reply. 'But I do know the language of the face,' said Mrs. Sitwell. 'I don't know how I do it, it is just a gift. And I know Miss Hayward is true. Wombwell's field at three o'clock to-morrow afternoon. You won't fail me! Colonel Hayward, you'll bring her, now won't you? or it will quite break my heart.'

'Sooner than do that, my dear lady,' said the Colonel, with his hat in his hand——

'Ah, you laugh—you all laugh; you don't think what it is to a poor little woman trying to do her best. Good-bye, then, good-bye till to-morrow—Wombwell's field. I shall quite calculate on seeing you. My love to dear Mrs. Hayward. Tell her we got the

cakes this morning—such lovely cakes. I shall keep a piece for my own chicks. Good-bye, good-bye.'

'Thank heaven, Joyce, my dear,' said the Colonel piously, 'we have got away without any pledge. If Elizabeth had only been there! but I don't think she is very sure herself which side she is on. The Canon is the head of the parish, to be sure, and a sort of an old friend besides; but these young people take a great deal of trouble. And we were all instrumental in getting this new church built, so I think we ought to stand by them. But, thank goodness, we neither said one thing nor another. So we can't be blamed, my dear, neither you nor I.'

CHAPTER XXIII

As it turned out, they all went to the school-feast.

Mrs. Hayward was not quite sure, as the Colonel had said, which side she was on. The Canon had a great influence over her, as he had over most of the ladies in the parish ; but the Canon had a way of making jokes about India and her husband's youth, which were apt to turn Mrs. Hayward sharply round to the other side. When the Colonel reported to her all that happened, and the meeting in the road, and Canon Jenkinson's questions, Elizabeth's suspicions were at once aroused. 'What did you tell him?' she said.

'I said exactly what you told me, my dear. I don't quite approve of it—but I wouldn't run the risk of contradicting you——'

‘And what did he say?’

‘Well, my dear,’ said Colonel Hayward, a little flushed by this rapid questioning, ‘he said something about “your first poor wife” —which was quite natural—for he knows that we have no——’

‘Yes, yes,’ Mrs. Hayward cried indignantly. ‘I knew he was just the man to make references of that sort.’ And after a few minutes she added, ‘I think we’ll go to the school-feast. It will please the Sitwells, who have a great many difficulties, and who do the very best they can for their people; and it will show the Canon——’

‘But I assure you, my dear——’

‘You have no occasion to assure me of anything, Henry—I hope I know him well enough. He is just the sort of man,’ Mrs. Hayward said. And on the next afternoon she dressed very well indeed, as for one of the best of her afternoon parties, and went to the school-feast. To see her going in at the swinging-gate, with Joyce and the Colonel following in her train, was a very fine sight. But the group was not so conspicuous as it might have been, from the fact

that a great many people equally fine had already gathered in Wombwell's field, where the Sitwells, though they were poor, had gone to the expense of having a tent put up,—an extravagance which the people who shared their humble hospitalities did not forget for many a long day. It was not a school-feast only, but a demonstration of the faction of St. Augustine's as against the parish. Mrs. Sitwell had worked for this great end with an energy worthy of the best of causes. She had not neglected any inducements. 'The Haywards are coming,' she said, 'with their daughter, you know,—the young lady whom no one ever heard of before. I am sure there is some mystery about that daughter.' This was how it was that she had been so anxious and importunate with Joyce.

It was the very first occasion on which Joyce had found herself among a company of ladies and gentlemen as one of themselves, and she had not at all expected it. She had gone expecting to find children, among whom she was always at home,—poor children who, though they would be

English, and talk with that accent which, to Joyce's unaccustomed ears, meant refinement almost as extraordinary as the strange acquirement of speaking French, which continues to astonish unaccustomed travellers on the other side of the Channel—would still be not so much unlike Scotch children that one used to them should not find means of making friends. She had made sure that there would be some young woman in charge of them with whom, perhaps, she might be allowed to make acquaintance, who would tell her how she managed, and what were her difficulties, and which was the way approved in England. In short, Joyce had looked forward wistfully to a momentary half-clandestine return to what had heretofore been her life. It was disappointing to go in company with her father and his wife, who would be on the outlook to see that she did not commit herself. But then, on the other hand, she was unexpectedly reinforced by the arrival of Captain Bellendean, in whom she found a curious support and consolation. He knew—that she was Joyce the schoolmistress, not a fine young lady. That

of itself felt like a backing up—just as it had been a backing up in the old times that the lady at Bellendean knew that perhaps she was not altogether Joyce the schoolmistress, but Joyce the princess, Lady Joyce, if all were known.

But when Joyce found herself in the midst of this well-dressed company, and understood that she was, so to speak, quite accidentally, plunged into the world, a great tremor came over her. The scene was very animated and pretty, though not exactly what it professed to be. Wombwell's field was a large grassy space, very green and open, surrounded on three sides by overhanging foliage, and with a few trees at the upper end, where the ground sloped a little. In the flat ground at the bottom the travelling menageries which visited Richmond were in the habit of establishing themselves from time to time, whence its name. The round spot created by innumerable circuses showed upon the grass; but beyond the turf was of unbroken greenness, and there stood the little tent within which tea was dispensed to the company. The children were at the

other end of the field occupied with divers games, with a few of the faithful of the district superintending and inspiring. But Joyce found herself not in that division of the entertainment, where she might have been at her ease, but in the midst of all the well-dressed people—the people who knew each other, and exchanged greetings and smiles and polite conversation.

‘Dear Mrs. Hayward, how kind of you to come to our little treat! Dear Miss Hayward, how sweet of you to remember! Colonel, you are always so kind; I am sure you have been working for me,’ cried Mrs. Sitwell, meeting them with extended hands. She was beaming with smiles and delight. ‘I asked a few friends to look in, and people are so kind, everybody has come. It is quite an ovation! Dear Austin is quite overcome. It is such an encouragement in the face of opposition to find his friends rallying round him like this.’

‘Why are his friends rallying round him?’ said Captain Bellendean. ‘I thought it was a school-feast.’

‘And so did I,’ said Joyce, looking some-

what piteously round her, and wistfully at the children in the distance. The Colonel and Mrs. Hayward had both been swallowed up by the crowd. They were shaking hands with all their acquaintances, exchanging smiles and remarks. Joyce said to herself, with a thrill of mingled alarm and self-congratulation, What should I have done had not the Captain been here?

Norman looked round upon the company, though with different feelings from those of Joyce. 'I don't know a soul,' he said, with a little amusement—the consciousness, so soon acquired by a man who has been for however short a time 'in society'—not only that it is a very extraordinary thing to know nobody, but also that the people among whom he cannot find a single acquaintance cannot be of much account.

'And neither do I,' said Joyce, with a wistful look. Her feeling was very different. She was a little fluttered by the sight of so many people, and looked at them with a longing to see a face she knew, a face which would smile upon her. She met many looks, and could even see that there were little

scraps of conversation about her, and that she was pointed out to one and another ; but there was no greeting or recognition for her among the pleasant crowd. She turned round again, very grateful, to the Captain, whose society sustained her—but, alas ! the Captain had been spied and seized upon by Lady St. Clair, and Joyce felt herself left alone. She looked wistfully at the collection of daughters who surrounded Lady St. Clair, ready to claim acquaintance with a smile if the Miss St. Clair who had called should be among the array. But either the Miss St. Clair who had called was not there, or else she had forgotten Joyce. She stood for a moment shy yet desolate, not knowing where to turn ; then, with a little sense of taking flight, moved quickly away to where the children were.

‘Miss Hayward, Miss Hayward!’ cried a voice behind. She paused, glad that some one cared enough to stop her, and saw Mr. Sitwell hastening after her, with a young man following closely,—a very young man in the long coat and close waistcoat which were quite unusual things to Joyce. ‘You

are so kind as *really* to wish to help with the children? Let me introduce my young friend and curate, Mr. Bright; he will take you to them,' the clergyman said.

The other little clergyman made his bow, and said how fortunate they were in having such a fine day, and what a pretty party it was. 'I always think this is such a nice place for outdoor parties: not so nice as one's own lawn, of course—but if one has no lawn, what can one do? In most places there is no alternative but a vulgar field. Now this is quite pretty—don't you think it is quite pretty, Miss Hayward?'

'There is so much green, and such fine trees, that everything here is pretty,' said Joyce.

'You put it much more nicely than I did; but I'm so glad you like the place; and how very gratifying for the Sitwells! It really was time that there should be a demonstration. After beguiling Sitwell here with such large promises, to have the rectory set itself against him! But there is a generosity about society, don't you think, Miss Hayward, as soon as people really see the state

of affairs. It will be a dreadful slap in the face for Jenkinson, don't you think ?'

'Indeed——' Joyce had begun, meaning to say she was too ignorant to form an opinion, but her new companion did not wait for the expression of her sentiments.

'Yes, indeed—you are quite right ; and for Mrs. Jenkinson, who, between ourselves, is a great deal worse than the Canon. Every one who comes to St. Augustine's she seems to think is taking away something from her. That is the greatest testimonial we can give to the ladies,' said the little gentleman, with a laugh ; 'when they are disagreeable, they are so very disagreeable—beyond the power of any man. But, fortunately for us, that happens very seldom.' The curate glanced up for the smile of approval with which his little sallies were generally received, but getting none, went on again undismayed. 'Which kind of children do you like, Miss Hayward,—the quite little ones, the roly-polies, or the big ones ? I prefer the babies myself : they roll about on the grass like puppies, and they are quite happy—whereas you have to keep the

other ones going. Miss Marsham takes the big girls in hand. You must let me introduce her to you. She is our great stand-by in the district—a little peculiar, but such a good creature. Well, Miss Marsham, how are you getting on here?’

‘Very well, oh, very well. We always do nicely. We have been playing at Tom Tidler’s ground. We just wanted some one to take the head of the other side. Oh, Mr. Bright,’ cried this new personage, clasping her hands together, ‘what a pleasure for everybody; what a good thing; what a thorough success!’

‘Isn’t it?’ cried the curate; and they both turned round to look down upon the many-coloured groups below with beaming faces.

‘Nobody can say now that St. Augustine’s was not wanted,’ said the lady.

‘No, indeed; I have just been saying to Miss Hayward what a slap in the face for the Canon,’ the gentleman added, again giving vent to his feelings in a triumphant laugh.

‘Oh, is this Miss Hayward?’ said Miss

Marsham, offering her hand to Joyce. She was a thin woman, with long meagre arms, and hands thrust into gloves too big for her. Without being badly dressed, she had the general air of having been taken out of a wardrobe of old clothes: everything she wore being a little old-fashioned, a little odd, badly matched, and hanging unharmoniously together. Even those gloves, which were too big, had the air of having had two hands thrust into them at random, without any thought whether or not they were a pair. But the old clothes were all of good quality; the little frills of lace were what ladies call 'real,' not the cottony imitations which are current in the present day. She had a worn face, lit up by a pair of soft brown eyes, in which there was still a great deal of sparkle left, when their owner pleased.

'I have heard so much of you,' she said. 'Dear Mrs. Sitwell takes such an interest! it is so very kind to come and see how the children are getting on: and here they are all waiting for their game. Mr. Bright, you must take the other side. Now then, children, I hope that is high enough for you. Come on.'

Joyce stood by with great gravity while the game proceeded—Mr. Bright and Miss Marsham making an arch with their joined hands, through which the children streamed. The curate, no doubt, would have taken this part of his duties quite simply if it had not been for the presence of this spectator, whose momentary smile died off into a look of very serious contemplation as she stood by, taking no part in the fun, which, with the stimulus of Mr. Bright's presence, grew fast and furious. Joyce could not have told why she felt so serious. She stood looking on at Miss Marsham's old clothes on the one side—the thin wrist, with its little edge of yellow lace, the big glove, made doubly visible by the elevation of the hand—and Mr. Bright in his neat coat, falling to his knee, extremely spruce in his professional blackness, against the vivid green of the sloping field. Joyce thought him very good to do it, nor was she conscious of any ridicule. She compared Mr. Bright with the minister at home, who would have looked on as she herself was doing, but certainly would not have joined in the play: and she thought that the chil-

dren were very much made of in England, and should be very happy. Presently, however, Mr. Bright detached himself from the game, and came and joined her.

‘I am afraid you thought me a great gaby,’ he said; ‘but at a school-feast, you know, one can’t stand on one’s dignity.’

‘Oh no,’ said Joyce, ‘it was I that was the great—— for not joining in. I should like to do something; but I don’t know what would please them.’

‘Something new to play at,’ said Miss Marsham. ‘I always ask strangers if they can’t recommend something new. Look, look!’ she cried, suddenly clutching the curate’s arm; ‘do you see? the Thompsons’ carriage, his very greatest supporters! Dear me, dear me! who could have thought of that!’

‘And Sir Sam himself,’ said the curate exultantly. ‘Well, this is triumph indeed. I must go and see what they say.’

‘Sir Sam himself,’ said Miss Marsham musingly. ‘Do you know, Miss Hayward, if you will not think it strange of me to say it, I am beginning to get a little sorry for

the Canon. It is not that Sir Sam is such a great person. He is only a soap-boiler, or something of that sort ; but he is enormously rich, and the Canon has always been by way of having him in his pocket. Whatever was wanted, there was always a big subscription from Sir Sam. Yes, dear, by all means. Hunt the Slipper is a very nice, noisy—— You will think it very queer, Miss Hayward, but I *am* beginning to get sorry for the Canon. I can't help recollecting, you know, the time before St. Augustine's was thought of. Yes, yes, my dear ; but let me talk for a moment to the young lady.'

'I know so little,' said Joyce,—'scarcely either the one or the other.'

'And you must think us so frivolous,' said the kind woman, with a sigh. 'The fact is, I was very anxious it should be a success. St. Augustine's was very much wanted—it really was. There are such a number of those people that live by the river, you know—boatmen, and those sort of people—and so neglected. I tried a few things—a night-school, and so forth ; but by one's self one

can do so little. Have you much experience, Miss Hayward, in parish work ?'

'Oh, none—none at all.'

'Ah!' said Miss Marsham, with a sigh, 'that's how one's illusions go. I thought you would be such a help. But never mind, my dear, you're very young. Oh, you've begun, children, without me! All right, all right; I am not disappointed at all. I want to talk to this young lady. They think we care for it just as much as they do,' she went on, turning to Joyce; 'but if truth be told, I am a little stiff for Hunt the Slipper. And you can't think how good the Sitwells are. He is in the parish—I ought to say the district—morning, noon, and night. And she—well, if I did not know she had three children, and did everything for them herself, and really only one servant, for the other is quite a girl, and always taken up with the baby—besides her work about the photographs, you know—I should say she was in the parish too, morning, noon, and night.'

Joyce stood and looked down upon the people flitting in and out of the tent, arrang-

ing and re-arranging themselves in different groups, and on the rush of the hosts to the swinging-gate, at which a fat man and a large lady were getting down, and listened to the narrative going on in her ear with the accompaniment of the cries and laughter of the children, all in that tone which, to her northern ears, was high-pitched and a little shrill. How strange it all was! She might have fallen into a new world. It was curious to listen to this new opening of human life; but she was young, and not enough of a spectator to be able to disengage herself, and be amused with a free mind by the humours of a scene with which she had nothing to do. She looked still a little wistfully at the little crowd, where there was nobody who knew anything of herself, or thought her worth the trouble of making acquaintance with. Joyce had not heard any fine conversation as yet, nor had she encountered any of the wit or wisdom which she had expected; but still she could not free herself from the idea that to be among the ladies and the gentlemen would be more entertaining than here, with Miss Marsham

giving her a sketch of the history of the Sitwells and the church controversies of the place, and the school children quite beyond her reach playing Hunt the Slipper in the background. She was much too young to take any comfort in the thought that such is life, and that the gay whirl of society very often resolves itself into standing in a corner and hearing somebody else's private history, not always so innocent or from so benevolent a historian.

But presently, and all in a moment, the aspect of affairs changed for Joyce. It changed in a completely unreasonable, and, indeed, altogether inadequate way,—not by an introduction among the best people, the crowd whose appearance filled the clergyman and his wife, and all their retainers, with transports a trifle short of celestial; not in making acquaintance with Sir Sam Thompson, the soap-boiler, whose appearance was the climax of the triumph—a climax so complete that it turned the scale, and made the Sitwells' hard-hearted partisan sorry for the Canon. None of these great things befell Joyce. All that happened was the appear-

ance of a tall individual, separating himself from the crowd, and walking towards her from the lower level.

‘Here is a gentleman coming this way,’ said Miss Marsham. ‘I don’t think he is one of the school committee, or any one I know. But I am rather short-sighted, and I may be mistaking him for some one else, as I do so often. Dear Miss Hayward, I am sure you must have good eyes: will you look and tell me. Ah, I see you know him.’

‘It is Captain Bellendean,’ said Joyce. Her musing face had grown bright.

‘Who is Captain Bellendean? Does he take an interest in Sunday schools? Is he——’ Here Miss Marsham turned to look at her companion, and though she was short-sighted, she was not without certain insights which women seldom altogether lose. ‘Oh!’ she said, and, with a subdued smile and a sparkle out of her brown eyes, which for a moment made her middle-aged face both young and bright, returned to the children who were playing Hunt the Slipper, and though she had said she

was too stiff for that game, was down among them in a moment as lively as any there.

It is to be doubted whether Joyce was conscious that her friend of ten minutes' standing had left her, or how she left her. She stood looking down upon the same scene, her face still full of musing, but touched with light which changed and softened every line. 'I have been looking for you everywhere,' said Captain Bellendean; 'when I got free of that rabble you were nowhere to be seen. I might have thought you would turn to the children, who have some nature about them. And so I had the sense to do at last.'

'Do you call them rabble?' said Joyce.

'Not if it displeases you,' he said. 'But what are they after all? Society is always more or less a rabble, and here you get it naked, without the brilliancy and the glow which takes one in in town.'

Perhaps Captain Bellendean had not found himself so much appreciated as he thought himself entitled to be in town, and thus produced these sentiments, which are

so common, with a little air of conviction, as if they had never been heard before. And indeed, save in books, where she had often met them, Joyce had never heard them before.

‘And yet,’ said Joyce, ‘when educated people meet—people that have read and have seen the world—it must be more interesting to hear them talk than—than any other pleasure.’

‘May we sit down here? the grass is quite dry. Educated people? I am sure I don’t know, for I seldom meet them, and I’m very uninstructed myself. But I’ll tell you what, Miss Joyce, you are the only educated person I know. Talk to me, and I will listen, and I have no doubt it will be far more entertaining to me than any other diversion; but whether it may have the same effect on you——’ he said, looking up to her from the grass upon which he had thrown himself, with inquiring eyes.

Oh, Andrew Halliday! whose boast was education, who would have tackled her upon the most abstruse subjects, or talked Shake-

speare and the musical glasses as long as she pleased,—how was it that the soldier's brag of his ignorance seemed to Joyce far more delightful than any such music of the spheres?

CHAPTER XXIV

NORMAN BELLENDEAN appeared very often at Richmond. He made what Mrs. Hayward considered quite an exhibition of himself at that school-feast—in a way which no man had any right to do, unless—— People asked who he was—a distinguished-looking man, and quite new to society in Richmond. It is well known that in the country a man who is really a man—neither a boy of twenty nor an aged beau masquerading as such—is always received with open arms. Half a dozen ladies, with water-parties, or dances, or some other merrymaking in hand, asked Mrs. Sitwell anxiously who her friend was. ‘And could you induce him to come to my dance on the 23d?’ or to my picnic, or whatever it might be. He formed in some degree the climax of that most successful

entertainment; for the little clergywoman was too clever to confess that in reality she knew nothing whatever about Captain Bel-lendean. She replied evasively that she did not know what his engagements were,—that he had only come from town for that afternoon; and so got herself much worship in the eyes of all around, who knew how very difficult it was, what an achievement almost impossible, to get a man to come from town, while still the season lingered on. It was just as well, the disappointed ladies said; for a man who could *afficher* himself, as he had been doing with that Miss Hayward, was either an engaged man, and so comparatively useless, or a dangerous man, who had better be kept at arm's-length by prudent mothers with daughters. An engaged man, as is well known, is a man with the bloom taken off him. He cannot be expected to make himself agreeable as another man would do—for either he will not, being occupied with his own young lady, or else he ought not, having a due regard to the susceptibilities of other young ladies who might not be informed of his condition. And to see him

sitting on the grass at Joyce's feet was a thing which made a great impression upon two people—upon Lady St. Clair, who knew Norman's value, and whose heart had beat quicker for a moment, wondering if it was for Dolly, or Ally, or Minnie, or Fanny, that the Lord of Bellendean had come; whereas it appeared it was for none of them, but for the Haywards, and that stiff girl of theirs. The other person was Mrs. Hayward herself, who, after all the trouble she had been at in making up her mind to Joyce, thus found herself, as it seemed, face to face with the possibility of being released from Joyce, which was very startling, and filled her with many thoughts. It would, no doubt, be a fine termination to her trouble, and would restore the household to its original comfortable footing. But besides that she grudged such wonderful good luck to a girl who really had done nothing to deserve it, Mrs. Hayward felt that, even with Joyce married, things could not return to their old happy level. No revolution can be undone altogether; it must leave traces, if not on the soil over which it has passed,

at least on the constitution of affairs. The house could never be, even without Joyce, as easy, as complete, as tranquil, as before it was aware that Joyce existed. Therefore her mind was driven back into a chaos of uncertainties and disagreeables.

Besides, it was not in the abstract a proper thing for a man to *afficher* himself in such a way. It was wrong, in the first place, unless he was very certain he meant it, compromising the girl; and even if he meant it, it was an offence against decorum, and put the girl's mother, or the person unfortunately called upon to act in the place of the girl's mother, in a most uncomfortable position; for what could she say? Should she be asked, as it would be most natural that people should ask, whether it was a settled thing, what answer could she make? For she felt sure that it was not a settled thing, — nothing indeed but a caprice of this precious Captain's. To amuse himself, nothing but that! And yet she felt with an angry helplessness, especially galling to Elizabeth, who had hitherto commanded her husband with such absolute ease and completeness, that this

was a case in which she could not get the Colonel to act. He would not bring the man to book : he would not ask him what he meant by it. Of this Mrs. Hayward was as certain as that night is not day. Colonel Hayward could not be taught even to be distant to the Captain. He could not behave coldly to him ; and as for herself, how could she act when the father took no notice ? This was one of the things which, even under the most skilful management, could not be done.

It kept Mrs. Hayward all the more anxious that young Bellendean continued to appear from time to time without invitation, sometimes indeed bringing invitations of his own. Twice there was a water-party, the first time conducted by Mrs. Bellendean, and to which a party came from town, including Greta—a large and merry party, which the St. Clairs were asked to join as well as the Haywards. The gratification of this, which brought her into bonds of apparent intimacy with Lady St. Clair, her most important neighbour, threw a pleasant mist over Mrs. Hayward's sharpness of

observation ; but she was suddenly brought back to her anxieties by remarking the eagerness of Mrs. Bellendean to have Joyce with her on the return voyage. Joyce had been in Norman's boat on the way up the stream, while Greta sat sedately by her elder relative ; but in coming back Mrs. Bellendean had shown so determined a desire for Joyce, that the Captain's plans were put out. Mrs. Hayward, till that time rapt in the golden air of the best society, feeling herself definitely adopted into the charmed circle of 'the best people,' had forgotten everything else for the moment, when she suddenly became aware of a little discussion going on. 'Joyce, you must really come with me. I have scarcely had the chance of a word. Greta will take your place in the other boat, and you must—you really must give me your company.' 'What is the good of disturbing the arrangement?' said Norman's deeper voice, in a slight growl. 'Oh, I must have Joyce,' said the other. And Mrs. Hayward, looking up, saw a little scene which was very dramatic and suggestive. The Captain, in his flannels, which are generally a very be-

coming costume, making his dark, bronzed, and bearded face all the more effective and imposing, stooping to hold the boat which Joyce had been about to enter, looking up, half angry, half pleading, as his glance was divided between the two ladies. Joyce's foot had been put forward to step on board, when her elder friend caught her arm; and Mrs. Hayward's keen eyes observed the change of expression, the sudden check with which Joyce drew back. And the change was effected, notwithstanding the Captain's opposition. Mrs. Hayward did the girl the justice to say that she did not look either dull or angry when she was transferred to the other boat; but she was subdued—sedate as Greta had been, and as was suited to the atmosphere of the elder people. The Colonel, it need not be said, was among the younger ones, making himself very happy, but not pleased, any more than his inferior officer, to have Joyce taken away.

This little episode was one concerning which not a word was said. The immediate actors made no remark whatever, either good or bad. Mrs. Bellendean held Joyce's hand

in hers, and talked to her all the way with the tenderest kindness; and save that she had fallen back into more of her ordinary air, and was serious as usual, Joyce showed no consciousness that she had been removed from one boat to another, *pour cause*. Was she aware of it? her stepmother asked herself; did she know? Mrs. Hayward replied to herself that a woman is always a woman, however inexperienced, and that she must know: but did not specify in her thoughts what the knowledge was.

And in the evening, when all was over, when the visitors had departed after the cold collation which Mrs. Hayward thought it necessary to have prepared for them on their return, though that had not been in the programme of the day's pleasure—she held a conversation with the Colonel on the subject, which gave much information to that unobservant man. ‘Did you tell me, Henry,’ she said, opening all at once a sort of masked battery upon the unsuspecting soldier, pleasantly fatigued with his party of pleasure, ‘or have I only imagined, that there was some man—in Scotland—some sort of a lover, or

engagement, or something—that had to do with Joyce?’

‘My dear!’ the Colonel cried, taken by surprise.

‘Yes, but tell me. Did I dream it, or did you say something?’

‘There was a man,’ the Colonel admitted, with great reluctance, ‘at the cottage that day, who said—— But Joyce has never spoken to me on the subject—never a word.’

‘But there was a man?’ Mrs. Hayward said.

‘There was a man: but entirely out of the question, quite out of the question, Elizabeth. You would have said so yourself if you had seen him.’

‘Never mind that. Most likely quite suitable for her in her former circumstances. But that is not the question at all. What I wanted to know was just what you tell me. There was a man——’

‘I have never heard a word of him from that day to this. Joyce has never referred to him. I hope never to hear his name again.’

‘Ah!’ said Mrs. Hayward, opposing the

profound calm of a spectator to the rising excitement of her listener. 'I wonder, now, what he would think of Captain Bellendean.'

'Of Bellendean? why, what should he think? What is there about Bellendean to be thought of? Yes, yes, himself of course, and he's a very fine fellow; but that is not what you mean.'

'Do you mean to say, Henry, that you did not remark how the Captain, as she calls him, *affiches* himself everywhere—far more than I consider becoming—with Joyce?'

'*Affiches* himself. My dear, I don't know exactly what you mean by that. So many French words are used nowadays.'

'Makes a show of himself, then—marks her out for other people's remark—can't see her anywhere but he is at her side, or her feet, or however it may happen. Why, didn't you remark he insisted on having her in his boat to-day, and paid no attention to the young lady from town who was of his own party and came with him, and of course ought to have had his first care?'

'My dear, I was in that boat. It was natural Joyce should be with me.'

‘Oh yes,’ said Mrs. Hayward; ‘and accordingly Captain Bellendean, with that self-denial which distinguishes young men, put out his own people in order that you might have her near you. How considerate!’

‘Elizabeth! not more-considerate, I am sure, than you would be for any one who might feel herself a little out of it,—a little strange, perhaps, not knowing many people,—not with much habit of society.’

‘My dear Henry, you are an old goose,’ was what his wife said.

But when there was another water-party proposed, she looked very closely after her stepdaughter—not, however, in the way of interfering with Captain Bellendean’s attentions,—for why should she interfere on behalf of Greta or any one else? let their people look after them,—but only by way of keeping a wise control and preventing anything like this *affichement*, which might make people talk. Captain Bellendean was a free man, so far as any one knew; he had a right to dispose of himself as he pleased. There was no reason why she should interfere against

the interests of Joyce. To be sure, it gave her a keen pang of annoyance to think of this girl thus securing every gift of fortune. What had she done that all the prizes should be rained down at her feet? But at the same time, Mrs. Hayward began to feel a dramatic interest in the action going on before her eyes—an action such as is a great secret diversion and source of amusement to women everywhere—the unfolding of the universal love-tale; and her speculations as to whether it would ever come to anything, and what it would come to, and when the *dénouement* would be reached, gave, in spite of herself, a new interest to her life. She watched Joyce with less of the involuntary hostility which she had in vain struggled against, and more abstract interest than had yet been possible—looking at her, not as Joyce, but as the heroine of an ever-exciting story. The whole house felt the advantage of this new point of view. It ameliorated matters, both upstairs and down, and, strangely enough, made things more easy for Baker and the cook, as well as for Joyce, while the little romance went on.

All this took place very quickly, the water-parties following each other in rapid succession, so that Joyce was, so to speak, plunged into what, to her unaccustomed mind, was truly a whirl of gaiety, before the day on which Canon Jenkinson called with his wife in state—a visit which was almost official, and connected with the great fact of Joyce's existence and appearance, of which they had as yet taken no formal notice. Mrs. Jenkinson was, in her way, as remarkable in appearance as her husband. She was almost as tall, and though there were no rotundities about her, her fine length of limb showed in a free and large movement which went admirably with the Canon's swing. They came into the room as if they had been a marching regiment; and being great friends and having known the Haywards for a number of years, began immediately to criticise all their proceedings with a freedom only to be justified by these well-known facts.

‘So this is the young lady,’ Mrs. Jenkinson said. She rose up to have Joyce presented to her, and, though Joyce was over the common height, subdued her at once to the

size and sensations of a small schoolgirl under the eyes of one of those awful critics of the nursery who cow the boldest spirit. 'I am very pleased to make your acquaintance, my dear.' The Canon's wife was a very well educated woman, but her English was not perfect. She used various of those colloquialisms which are growing more and more common in ordinary talk. The reader will not imagine that, in reporting such dreadful forms of speech, the writer has any sympathy with persons who are capable of saying that they are very pleased.

'I am very pleased to make your acquaintance,' said Mrs. Jenkinson; 'how do you do? I think I ought both to have had information of this wonderful appearance upon the scene and to have had you brought to see me; but that is, of course, not your fault: and though late, I am very delighted to make friends with you. She has a nice face,' she added, turning to Mrs. Hayward. 'I like her face. No doubt she will give you a great deal of trouble, but in your place I should expect to make something of a girl with that kind of looks.'

‘I am sure Joyce is very much obliged to you for thinking so well of her. It remains to be seen what we are to make of each other—but I never pretended to be so clever,’ Mrs. Hayward said.

‘As for pretending, that is neither here nor there. I want you to tell me all about it now,—not for my sake, but that I may have something to answer when people bother me with questions. That is the worst of not being quite frank. When you make a mystery about anything, people always imagine there is a great deal more in it. I always say it is the best policy to make a clean breast of everything at once.’

‘There is no clean breast to make. I have all along said precisely the same thing—which is, that she couldn’t possibly have been with us in India, and that she was brought up by her mother’s friends.’

‘The first wife,’ said Mrs. Jenkinson; ‘poor thing, I have always heard she died very young, but never before that she left a child.’

‘Few people are so clever as to hear everything. You perceive that it was the

case, nevertheless,' Mrs. Hayward said, with a sparkle in her eyes.

'And I hear you are plunging her into all sorts of gaiety, and that there is a follower, as the maids say, already, or something very like one—a Scotch officer, or something of that sort. You are not so pleased to have her, but what you would be resigned to get rid of her, I suppose.'

'I can't tell what you suppose, or what you may have heard,' said the Colonel's wife. 'I hope I will do my duty to my husband's daughter whatever the circumstances may be.'

'Oh, I don't mean to throw any doubt upon that; but we were very surprised,' Mrs. Jenkinson said.

In the meantime the Canon had withdrawn to the other side of the room and called Joyce to him, who had been considerably alarmed by the beginning of this interchange of hostilities. 'Come here and talk to me,' he said. 'You have not kept faith with me. I have got a crow to pluck with you, my new parishioner. You went to that affair of the Sitwells after all.'

‘My father took me,’ said Joyce, with natural evasion; and then she added, ‘but there was no reason I should not go.’

‘Here’s a little rebel,’ said the Canon; ‘not only flies in my face, but tells me there’s no reason why she shouldn’t. Come, now, answer me my question. Are you a good Churchwoman—they turn out very good Church principles in Scotland when they are of the right sort—or are you a horrid little Presbyterian? you wouldn’t answer me the other day.’

‘I am a—horrid Presbyterian,’ Joyce said, with an unusual amusement and sense of humour breaking through her shyness and strangeness. The Canon was the first person who had touched any natural chord in her.

‘I thought as much,’ he said. ‘Hayward, here’s a pretty business. As if it were not enough to have a nest of rebels conspiring under my very nose, here’s a little revolutionary with no respect for any constituted authority whom you’ve brought among us. But I must teach you the error of your ways. You shall come and hear me preach my famous sermon on Calvin, and if after that you

find you have a leg to stand upon—but I suppose you're ready to go to the stake for your religion, however wrong it may be proved to be?'

'I was never taught,' said Joyce, with her schoolmistress air, 'that it was a religion at all—for them that instructed me said we were all at one in our religion, and that it was only the forms of Church government——'

'Do you hear that, Hayward! This will never do. I see, she means to convert me. And that's why she sympathises with these Sitwells and their demonstrations. You were there too. And they dragged that old boy—that big Sir Sam—to their place, by way of a little extra triumph over me—as if I cared for the soap-boiler. And, Hayward, you were there too.'

'Elizabeth,' said the Colonel, abashed, 'as they made so great a point of it, thought we might as well go.'

'And fly in the face of your oldest friend,' said the Canon. 'Look here, I am going to be great friends with this girl of yours. I'll bring her over to my side, and she'll help me

to make mince-meat of these St. Augustine people. What is her name?—Joyce—why to be sure, that was her mother's——' The Canon's fine bass dropped into a lower key, and he broke off with a 'poor thing, poor thing! Well, my dear, I don't mean to stand on any ceremony with you. I mean to call you Joyce, seeing I have known your father since before you were born. You shouldn't have taken him off to that business in Wombwell's field, and made him take sides against me.'

'I did not know—one side from another,' said Joyce; 'and besides, it was not me.'

It was very hard for her not to say 'sir' to him. He belonged to the class of men who are in the way of visiting schools, and to whom a little schoolmistress looks up as the greatest of earthly potentates; but she resisted the inclination heroically.

'Well,' he said, 'I don't doubt both of these things are true. But you shall hear all about it. Why, I set up the man! It was I who put him in that district—it was I who got it constituted a district—you know, Hayward. They were starving in a curacy

when I put them there. Not that I blame Sitwell—it's that little sprite of a wife of his that is at the bottom of it all. A little woman like that can't keep out of mischief. She runs to it like a duck to the water. And they thought they would make an end of me by laying hold of that old soap-boiler—old Sam! Soapy Sam, no doubt she'll call him—that woman has a nickname for everybody. She calls me the Great Gun, do you know? If she doesn't take care she'll find that guns, and Canons too, have got shot in them. Why, she's got that good old Cissy Marsham away from me—that old fool that is worth ten thousand soap-boilers.'

'Oh no,' said Joyce.

'What?' cried the Canon—'not worth ten thousand soap-boilers? No, you are right; I meant ten million—I was under the mark.'

And then Joyce told her little story about Miss Marsham's regrets. And the Canon's melodious throat gave forth a soft roar of laughter, which brought a little moisture to his eyes. 'I always knew I should have you on my side,' he said. 'Here's this little schismatic extracting the only little drop of

honey there was in all that prickly wilderness—and laughing in her sleeve all the time to see the Church folks quarrelling. But don't you be too cock-sure : for I'll have you converted and as stanch a Churchwoman as any in the diocese before Michaelmas—if that Scotch fellow leaves us the time,' the Canon said, with another big but soft laugh.

That Scotch fellow! Joyce grew very red, and then very pale. There was only one, as far as she was aware, who could be called by that name. And how completely she had forgotten him and his existence, and those claims of his! The shock made her head swim, and the very earth under her feet insecure.

CHAPTER XXV

THERE had been great exultation in St. Augustine's over the demonstration. At the lively supper-party which was held in the little house which the Sitwells occupied, *en attendant* the parsonage which had been promised them (it was one of their chief grievances that no steps had been as yet taken towards carrying out this promise), on the evening after the school-feast, the parson's wife had been more animated, more witty even, than usual. She had made quite a little drama of the possible scene going on in the rectory, where the Canon and his wife were supposed to be discussing the matter. She walked about the room to represent Mrs. Jenkinson panting with rage, demanding, 'Canon, what were you doing that you let it be? Why didn't you stop it? Why didn't

you interfere? I'd rather have written to the bishop, and had them turned off on the spot—that man: and that woman! The woman is far the worst, in my opinion. I am very surprised that you didn't interfere!' Then Mrs. Sitwell puffed herself out so that you would actually have believed her to be Canon Jenkinson, and made her small voice into something as like his softly rolling bass as was possible to so different an organ. 'If you will consider, my dear, there was nothing to go to the bishop with. The most contemptible of creatures, even a curate, is committing no crime when he gets up a school-feast; and he may even be so abandoned as to give a garden-party, and still his bishop would not interfere. Bishops have too little power—their hands are dreadfully tied. If ever I take a bishopric, I hope they'll be good for something more——' 'I should hope so, indeed!' cried the imaginary Canon's wife, in asthmatic pants. 'The Thompsons too—poor Sir Sam, who is too good-natured for anything. You will see that odious little woman will turn him round her finger. He'll build their parsonage—

he'll back them up in everything. He'll get them a grant for their schools, Canon ; and it will be your fault if you let him slip through your fingers. Austin, dear !' cried little Mrs. Sitwell, suddenly becoming herself, with her little ingratiating look, and her voice a little thin, high-pitched, and shrill—'Austin, dear ! will you turn upon me if I let him slip out of mine?'

Austin dear had laughed until he had cried over these sketches of his ecclesiastical superiors, and so had the Rev. Mr. Bright, and even good Miss Marsham—for they were well done ; and the cleverness with which this small person made herself into the semblance of two large people was wonderful. But afterwards Mr. Sitwell shook his head a little. 'I hope he will do what you, or rather Mrs. Jenkinson, thinks,' he said. 'I shan't mind how much you turn him round your little finger : but these fat men are not so easily influenced as you would suppose,' he added, with a sigh.

'And, my dear,' said Miss Marsham, nervously pulling out the little bit of yellow lace round her wrist, and keeping her eyes upon it, 'though you make me laugh—I can't

help it, it is so funny to hear you do them—yet, you know, if they feel it as much as that, I am sorry. I want you to get your parsonage, and I want St. Augustine's to get on. I am sure, if I had money enough I should like, above all things, to give it you for all your schemes; but I don't want *them* to suffer—I don't, indeed,' she said, making a little hole in her lace, and then trying with nervous efforts to draw it together. Miss Marsham was of opinion, ever after, that this hole in her old Mechlin was in some way judicial,—a judgment upon her for having participated, however unwillingly, in the ridicule of her old friends.

'As for Sir Sam, if he resists Mrs. Sitwell, he will be the first who has done it,' said Mr. Bright admiringly. He was not aware that she called him 'Angels ever Bright and Fair' when he was not present, and sang that sacred ditty with all his little airs and graces, so that the circle permitted to see the performance nearly died with laughter—or so at least they said.

But the demonstration was over, and nothing more happened. The sudden stop

which comes to all excitement when it has been stirred up to a boiling pitch, and afterwards has just to subside again and nothing happens—is painful. The Sitwells went on from day to day expecting a letter from Sir Sam, in which he should propose to build the parsonage (he could so easily!—it would not have cost him a truffle from his dinner, of which the doctor said he ate far too much), or to start the subscription for it with a good round sum, so as to induce others to follow—or, at the very least, enclosing a cheque for the schools. But nothing came, not even an invitation to dinner, which would have afforded an occasion to the parson's wife to turn the fat gentleman round her finger, as she had almost engaged to do. Nothing came except, in a fortnight's time, an invitation to—a garden-party! Mrs. Sitwell cried with anger and disappointment when this arrived. She took it in to her husband in his study, after she had calmed down a little. 'Look what I have got!' she said; 'an invitation to Alkaleigh—to a garden-party—next month. What shall I say?'

'A garden-party! is that all it has come

to?' cried the parson; and then he added, angrily, 'Say we've no time for such nonsense—say we never go to garden-parties—say we're engaged.'

'I don't think we should do that. I was very angry too, for the first moment; but when I came to think of it, I felt sure it was her doing. Women never want their husbands to give away their money. And at a garden-party, you know, Austin, there are such opportunities—when you have your wits about you, and can make use of them.'

'It doesn't seem as if we did much when we had him in Wombwell's field—at your command,' the parson said.

This change of pronouns was very significant, and the sharp little clergywoman perceived it instantly. Austin did not like the idea of wheedling a soap-boiler—especially when it was entirely unsuccessful. He did not want it to be supposed, even by himself, that he ever countenanced such unworthy ways. A man cannot (notwithstanding all Biblical and other warrants for it) control his wife, or get her to refrain from using her own methods; and so long as it is clearly

understood that he is not responsible for them—— Adam did not object to the apple,—rather liked it, so far as we have any information ; but he wished it to be known that it was his wife's doing, not any suggestion of his. Unfortunately, however, he could not slide out of the responsibility, as Mr. Sitwell, among a community always disposed to think it was *her* doing, was not unhopeful of being able to do.

‘ I gave in to you about making a demonstration,’ he said. ‘ It cost a good deal of money, Dora, and I can't say I ever heartily approved of it ; but I gave in, thinking you knew more of society than I did, and that you might be right. And it was a great success, you all said. No ; I don't say anything against that. I daresay it was a success ; but what has come of it ? Nothing at all—except twenty pounds for the schools, counting that ten of Cissy Marsham's, which we should have had anyhow.’

‘ Twenty pounds is always something, Austin,’ said Mrs. Sitwell, ignoring the drawback. ‘ And it is a great deal to have made it so fully known. Sow your bread, don't

you know, by all waters, and it will return to us after many days.'

'That's all very well, my dear,' said the parson, a little subdued—for how is a man of his cloth to answer when you stop his mouth with a text? He added, however, somewhat dolefully, 'And not a move about the parsonage; and if we are to stay here another winter, when not a single door or window fits, and the rain is always coming in through the roof——'

'We must stay here another winter, and there is an end of it!' cried his wife. 'If the subscriptions were full and money to spare, they couldn't build the parsonage in four months. You must see the landlord, Austin, and get him to do something. And we must think of something else to get up the money; we haven't tried half the things we might. Why, if the worst comes to the worst we can have a bazaar. There's always money to be made in that way: and private theatricals, and a concert—and——'

'Dora, you know I hate bazaars.'

'Everybody says so,' said Mrs. Sitwell. 'But everybody goes, and everybody buys, no

matter what rubbish it is. People that won't give a shilling will spend twenty in materials for making up some trumpery or other, and twenty more in buying other trumpery that other people have made. Bazaars must respond to some need of human nature, Austin, which it has been left to this generation to find out.'

'It looks like it,' says the parson. 'But don't talk to me about it, Dora. If it has to be, I suppose I shall find philosophy enough to tolerate it when the time comes.'

'Oh, tolerate it! You will be out and in ten times a-day, making pretty speeches to all the ladies,' cried little Mrs. Sitwell, with a laugh. 'Depend upon it, you will find a bazaar responds to some need of your nature too.' She said this, though he did not find it out, so exactly in her husband's own tone, and with his manner, that she had to laugh herself at the double joke of her own fun and his unconsciousness. 'And "Angels ever Bright and Fair" will enjoy it above all things. He will wonder how we never thought of a thing so delightfully calculated to bring people together before.'

This time it was the parson who laughed, recognising the voice of Mr. Bright and all his ways, and even his appearance evolved as if by witchcraft.

‘You are really incorrigible, Dora,’ he said, turning back to his sermon with a mind amused. But he did not know altogether how incorrigible she was, and that he himself, all innocent and unsuspecting, had been a victim too.

‘And I’ll go and see whether I can’t get Joyce to make her father do something,’ cried the parson’s wife.

Joyce had been plunged in spite of herself into this new and strange current of life. The Miss St. Clairs, notwithstanding the momentary intimacy of the boating party, made few advances towards friendship; but Mrs. Sitwell was very eager to secure her society, and also her help in the many activities which absorbed the clergywoman’s busy life. And there could be no doubt that it was very convenient to Mrs. Hayward that her step-daughter should have a friend who would relieve herself from the duty of tolerating Joyce’s constant companionship, and provid-

ing for her entertainment. Joyce, with a singular impartiality and fairness of mind, herself perceived the advantages of this, and what it must be to her father's wife to be now and then free of her presence, and able to act as if no grown-up daughter, no unexpected much-claiming personage had ever been in existence. She had a certain sympathy even with Mrs. Hayward—and she allowed herself to be drawn into the other current, with wistful yet genuine understanding of its expediency. Indeed, Joyce went on day by day making discoveries, learning fully only now when she seemed to have settled into her place in her father's house, all the difficulties, the almost impossibilities of it. She felt her disjunction from her past growing day by day, and that was perhaps the worst of all.

The very climax of disquietude and distress came upon her suddenly one day when she was sitting in her room writing her usual letter to Janet, the long journal-letter which had been her safety-valve in her early troubles. In the midst of her writing, while she was giving that minute account of herself and of all her actions, which was everything to her

old grandmother, Joyce suddenly awoke as from a dream, with a burning blush, and threw away her pen out of her hand, as if it had been *that* that was in the wrong. That little implement, which, one way or other, does so much for us, betraying us, expounding us even to ourselves, seemed to her for the moment like a tricky demon drawing out of her things which it was against her honour to say. She got up suddenly, pushing away the table and the letter—things that were in the conspiracy! and with a great deal of agitation walked about the room to subdue the beating in her heart. How was it she had never felt, never recognised till now, the difference? Not Janet's child, free to secure in everything the sympathy of those old people who belonged to her, but Joyce Hayward, her father's daughter, bound by a hundred ties, bound above all to betray his household to no one, not to those who were dearest to her. Joyce was very miserable for a time over this discovery. It stopped not only her letter but the whole course of her thoughts. When she resumed her writing, it was with a poignant sense of unreality, a feeling that

her letter was fictitious, written not to reveal but to conceal, which took all the comfort and pleasure out of it. She felt that Janet would read between the lines that it was no longer her Joyce that was writing, but Colonel Hayward's daughter. Their relationship seemed to change in a moment, to become a thing unreal, no longer full of solace and confidence, but fictitious, strained, and untrue.

For a time she no longer cared to write at all, making excuses, finding that she had not time—that to put off till to-morrow was a relief. The change made her heart sick. She felt as if she had been over again cut adrift from what she loved best. And yet it had to be. Hers was not the hand to lift any veil from the doorways of her father's house, or hand over its household manners to remark, or take refuge from it in another. She wrote a longer letter than usual to Janet after that abrupt awakening, and kissed and cried over it when she sent it away, redoubling the tender words in which she was usually shy of indulging, and writing protestations of affection which had been un-

necessary, and which she felt to ring untrue. But how could she better it? It was her first false letter, yet so loyal—the first little rift within the lute, and the music was mute already. She accompanied it with many an anxious, wondering thought, but never knew what Janet thought of it, if Janet had perceived. If Janet did perceive, she never let her nursling suspect it. And not a word was said between them; but it is scarcely to be believed that the acute and keen intellect of the old woman, and her tremulous sympathy with every movement in the mind of her child, could pass over that change which to Joyce's consciousness was so complete.

To say that the letters to Andrew Halliday grew few and rare would be to say little. Joyce began to feel the writing of them as the greatest burden of her life. She did not know what to say to him—how to address him. His very name made her tremble. Her heart, which had never beaten two beats quicker for his presence, sank now into depths unknown at the thought of him. What if he were to come to claim her! That he would do so one day, Joyce felt a

terrifying awful conviction. And would she be bound to arise and go with him—to leave everything that she was beginning to love? Joyce knew nothing else that could be done. She had pledged him her word. To withdraw from it because—because, as she had said, she was Colonel Hayward's daughter—how should she do that? He was the inevitable, standing at the end of all things—a sort of visible fate.

Joyce shuddered and turned away from this thought. To escape from it, to hide her face and not see that image in her pathway, became more and more a necessity as the days went on. And this was another reason for finding refuge in the society which was close to her, though it was so perplexing and unfamiliar. Anyhow, it was more comprehensible than garden-parties and lawn-tennis, which, to the spirit of the Scotch peasant which was in her, were inscrutable pleasures regarded with awe. Joyce did not understand these rites. She understood Mrs. Sitwell's schemes a little better, though still with wonderment and many failures in comprehension. And it took her a long time to

find out that the parson's wife intended to employ her for the furtherance of her own purposes, and that it was the novelty of her and her unlikeness to other people which made her attractive to her new friend. Mrs. Sitwell wooed Joyce with flattering pertinacity. She showered invitations upon her. She took the girl into her confidence, telling her how much she wanted, how little she had, and unbosoming herself about her pecuniary concerns in a way which horrified her listener. For Joyce had the strong Scotch prejudice against any confession of poverty or appeal for help. She had been trained in the stern doctrine that to starve or die was possible, but not to beg or expose your sorrows to the vulgar eye. When the parson's wife told of her poverty, which she was quite willing to do, to the first comer, Joyce listened with a painful blush, with a sense of shame. She was very sorry—but horrified to see behind the scenes, to be admitted thus, as she felt, to the sanctuary which ought to be kept sacred. But for the woman who had bestowed upon her this painful confidence, Joyce felt that she must be

ready to do everything. It could not be for nothing that such a confidence was bestowed.

Mrs. Sitwell, for her part, did not care at all for what poor Joyce considered this exposure of her circumstances. She told her tale with a light heart. She was not ashamed of being poor. 'It's very nice of you to be so sorry,' she said. 'And, my dear, if you would just say a word to the Colonel, and get him to set things agoing. He could do it quite, *quite* easily. If you were to take an opportunity when you are walking with him, or when you have him alone. But I don't doubt you would have done that, you kind thing, without being asked——'

'Oh no,' said Joyce; 'I would not have betrayed your confidence, nor said a word——'

'Oh, my confidence! It is only rich people that can hope to keep their affairs to themselves. I didn't want you to make any secret of it. Just say to your father, who is so kind—whatever you please, my dear. I can trust you. Say, "Dear daddy, those Sitwells are so poor! don't you think you could do something for them?" or any other thing that will please him and make him think well of us.'

‘Oh!’ said Joyce, with a low exclamation of fright and horror. The suggestion that she should say ‘dear daddy’ put a final crown upon the extraordinary mission confided to her. But Mrs. Sitwell thought it the most natural thing in the world.

‘Don’t do it when Mrs. Hayward is by, that’s all. Oh, she’s an excellent woman, I know; but its always the women, you know, that hold back. But for the women, we should have had the parsonage long ago; they won’t let people be liberal. I often say, if there were no ladies in the parish—oh, what a difference! I shouldn’t be a bit afraid even of the Great Gun himself.’

‘You seem to think that it is women who do everything—especially everything that is bad,’ said Joyce, with a gleam of amusement.

‘And so it is,’ said Mrs. Sitwell, with a sigh. ‘If one could only get hold of the gentlemen by themselves. I should like to be the one woman to make them do all I wanted,’ she continued, with a laugh. She was the product of a very advanced civilisation, much beyond anything which her untrained companion knew.

CHAPTER XXVI

JOYCE, being so untrained, had, however, but a poor account to give of her intercession. The Colonel could do nothing without Elizabeth, and his promise to consult his wife and see what steps could be taken did not convey much comfort to the parson's wife. She listened to Joyce's account of the manner in which she had fulfilled her commission with a lengthening face. At the end she jumped up and gave the girl a kiss which took Joyce very much by surprise. To this inexperienced Scotch peasant-girl the ways of the English were extravagant and full of demonstration, as are to English persons the manners of 'foreigners' in general, both being disposed to believe that to show so much was rather an indication that there was little feeling to show.

‘I am sure you meant it as well as possible,’ she said, ‘but you should have seized an opportunity and spoken to the dear Colonel when there was nobody there. Oh, I am sure you are as good as gold—and perhaps if they will really get up a movement—— But I’ve been promised that so often, I have not much faith in it. I thought you might just whisper a word to your dear father, who thinks all the world of you, and the thing would have been done.’ ‘It is the women,’ continued this oracle, ‘as I told you before, who hold back. If we had only the men to deal with, it would be much easier to manage. But the women calculate and reckon up, and they say, “It will be a loss of so much on the year’s income;” or, “There is so and so I wanted to buy; if I let him give the money away, I shall have to do without it.” That is how they go on. Whereas the men don’t think; they just put their hands in their pockets, and the thing’s done—or it isn’t done,’ she added, with a sudden smile, looking up in Joyce’s face. ‘Never mind,’ she continued, ‘don’t let us make ourselves unhappy about it. Come and see

what I am doing.' She returned to the corner from which she had sprung up on Joyce's entrance. 'Come and I'll show you my workshop, and how I keep the pot boiling,' she cried.

The room was divided into two, a larger and a smaller portion, with folding-doors, as is usual in such small habitations; but these doors were always open, and Mrs. Sitwell's corner was at the farther end, commanding the whole space. Joyce saw with amazement a quantity of small photographs ranged upon the ornate but rather shabby little desk at which her friend worked, and which was covered with sheets of paper, each containing a piece of writing and a number. Mrs. Sitwell took up one of the photographs and handed it to Joyce.

'Now tell me,' she said, 'what would you think was the character of that gentleman, supposing that you were going to marry him, or to make him your friend, or to engage him as your butler? What would you think of him from his face?'

'I think,' said Joyce, bewildered, 'that I

should not be—very fond of him : but I don't know why.'

'Oh, you dreadful ' little critic ! why shouldn't you be fond of him, as you say ? He is quite nice-looking—better than half the men you see. Now here is what he really is,' said Mrs. Sitwell, lifting one of the pieces of paper and handing it to Joyce, who read it with amazement : 'No. 310.—This face is that of a man full of strength and character. The brow shows great resolution, the eyes much courage and judgment. The mouth is sensitive, and the nose expresses shrewdness and caution. He will be very decided in action, but never rash ; very steady in his affections, but slow in forming any ties. There is a great but suppressed love of art and music in the lines about his eyes.'

'Well, dear, do not stare at me so ; don't you think, now you look at him again, that it's all true ? or perhaps you would like this one better.' The second was the photograph of a simpering girl, in that peculiar combination of stare and simper which only photographs give. 'Now, don't commit yourself,' said Mrs. Sitwell, with a laugh. 'Look at

the account of all her perfections before you say anything. "No. 603.—Ethelinda is a young lady of many qualities. Her eyes show great sweetness of disposition. She will be very true, and when she gives her heart, will give it altogether. The lips show a highly sensitive and nervous disposition, feeling too strongly for her own peace. There are also signs of much musical power, and of great constancy in love."

Joyce put down these two extraordinary literary compositions with something like consternation. 'It is perhaps stupid of me,' she said, 'not to understand.'

'Oh no; it is not stupid at all. Perhaps you have never seen the *Pictorial*? It has quite a great circulation, and is very popular. This is a new branch of the answers to correspondents that made the *Family Herald* such a success. Don't you know the Answers to Correspondents in the *Family Herald*? Oh, you must indeed have been brought up out of the world! But the *Pictorial* is quite in advance of that. If you send your photograph to the editor, you receive next week a description of

your character from Myra. Now Myra is me.'

'Then those—are going into a newspaper,' said Joyce, looking at the pieces of written paper with a mingling of curiosity and shame.

'Those—are going into the *Pictorial*, and they are going to give a great deal of pleasure to various people, and to put a little money into my pocket, which wants it very much,' said the parson's wife. 'Now, what is there to object to in that?'

'Indeed,' said Joyce, 'I was not thinking of objecting. I was only taken by surprise.'

'Ah!' cried Mrs. Sitwell, with a little moisture enhancing the keen sparkling of her eyes, 'that is what you all say, you well-off people, who never knew what it was to want a sovereign! You are surprised at the way we poor unfortunates have to take to make a little money. Why, I would simply do anything for a little money—anything that was not wrong, of course. You don't know what money means to us. It means clothes for the children and a nursemaid to take care of them, and good food, which they require, and a hundred little things, which you people

who never were in want of them never think of.'

'But I was not accustomed to be rich. I know what it means to have nothing. No,' Joyce added hurriedly, 'perhaps that is not true; for when I had nothing I wanted nothing, and that must be the same thing as having everything. I find no difference,' she said.

'Then you don't know anything about it, just the same. The dreadful thing is to have nothing and want a great many things—and this is the case of so many of us. How could we live upon poor Austin's little pay? People think a clergyman ought to have private means—but where are we to get the private means? We have a little something in my family, but my mother has it for her life. I don't want my mother to die, who is always so kind to the children, that I may get my little share. It would only be a few hundred pounds, after all. And Austin's people thought they did enough for him when they gave him his education, as they call it—sending him to Oxford to learn expensive habits. A great deal too much is made of

education,' said the parson's wife. 'I don't think I shall take any trouble about education for my children. They get on better without it, in my opinion.'

This dreadful assertion made Joyce gasp with horror. Not take any trouble about education!—which was the only thing in all the world to take trouble about. But she did not trust herself to say anything, and indeed Mrs. Sitwell did not leave her time.

'But they *shall* be comfortable and have things as nice as possible while they are babies,' cried the parson's wife; 'and when I found out that I could do this, I was as pleased as Punch. One goes upon rules, you know—it is not all guess-work; and my opinion is, there is a great deal in it. Austin says that supposing these people had everything in their favour, no bad influences or anything of that kind, then what I find in their faces would be true. Let me see, now. Let me read yours. You have a great deal that is very nice in you, dear. You are of a most generous disposition. You would give anything in the world that you had to give. But you are apt to get frightened, and not

to follow it out. And you are musical—I can see it in your eyes.’

‘Indeed, I don’t know anything at all about music.’

‘That has nothing to do with it,’ said Mrs. Sitwell. ‘You would have been if you had known. And you are *very* sensitive, dear. You put meanings upon what people say, and take offence, or the reverse, when none is meant. You are full of imagination; but you haven’t much courage. You love people very much, or you dislike them very much. You are devoted to them, or else you can’t endure them.’

‘I don’t think I ever do that,’ said Joyce sedately, taking it all with great gravity.

‘Oh, of course you have been modified by education, as Austin says. Nobody is just as nature made them; but that is what you would be if you had been left alone, you know. I’ll write it all out for you when I have a little time. Give me back Ethelinda and No. 310. I have a kind of idea these two simpletons are going to be married, and they want each to know a little more of the other—that is, you know, they want the

prophet to agree with them, and say this is the sweetest girl that ever was—and that is the nicest man. And you may be sure that the better you speak of any one, the more you will agree with what they think of themselves. When you say they are musical and intellectual, and all that, they think how wonderful that you should understand them so well! though they may be the stupidest people that ever were seen.'

'But——' Joyce said, with timidity.

'I don't want any buts. You would never let any one do anything if you were to carry a "but" with you everywhere. If you heard me say to Sir Sam the soap-boiler what excellent taste he had, and how beautiful his house was, you would think it was wrong perhaps, and put in that "but" of yours. But why? Gillow, who did it all, is supposed to have excellent taste, and poor dear Sir Sam thinks it perfection. And it pleases him to be told so. Why shouldn't I please him? If I were of his way of thinking, I would admire it too; and don't you see, when you sympathise with a man, and want to please him, you *are* of his way of thinking

—for the moment,' the little lady added. 'Now just wait a minute till I finish off my people,' she said.

Joyce sat in a bewilderment which had become almost perennial in her mind, and watched the woman of business before her. Mrs. Sitwell took up photograph after photograph, examining each with every appearance of the most conscientious care. She would put down the little portrait, and write a few sentences, looking at it from time to time as a painter might look at his model, — then pausing, biting her lips as if some contradictory feature puzzled her, would take it up again and follow its lines, sometimes with the end of her pen, sometimes with the point of her finger, knitting her brows in the deepest deliberation. 'I wish people wouldn't be so much alike,' she said. 'I wish they wouldn't all show the same traits of character. I can't make all the ladies affectionate and musical, and all the men determined and plucky, can I?—but that's what they expect, you know. Now here's one,' she cried, selecting a photograph, 'upon whom I shall wreak my rage. She shall be everything

she wouldn't like to be ; that will make the others laugh who have got off so much better. I'll put it as nicely as I can, but she won't like it. Listen !—"The brows denote much temper, verging upon the sullen, against which I warn Arabella to be on her guard. There is a tendency to envy in the lines of the nose ; the thinness of the lips shows an inclination to the use of language which might develop into scolding in later life. The eyes show insensibility to love, which might make her very cruel to her admirers if she has any. Arabella ought to take great care to obtain a proper command of herself, so as to keep these dangerous qualities under. There is a strength in all the lines, which probably will assure her success if she tries ; but she will have much to struggle against. There is something in the form of her chin which I suspect to mean love of money, if not avarice ; and there seem some traces of greed about the mouth, but of these last I am not quite sure." There ! what do you think of that as a foil ? It will make the others more delighted than ever with their own good qualities.'

‘And do you see all that in the face?’

‘Look!’ cried Mrs. Sitwell, placing the photograph before Joyce with a triumphant movement. It was a heavy, unattractive face, such as hang by dozens in the frames of poor photographers, and are accepted by the subjects with that curious human humility which mingles so strangely with human vanity, and teaches us to be complacent about anything which is our own. The parson’s wife snatched it back and threw it among the little heap on the table. ‘Now I have done for to-day,’ she said; ‘and you know you are going with me round my district. Don’t look so miserable about Arabella; I have sacrificed her to the satisfaction of the others—the greatest happiness of the greatest number, don’t you know? But all the same, it’s all there—every word’s true. I’ve no more doubt she’s a nasty, ill-speaking, ill-tempered toad, than I have that you are the nicest girl I know—only it doesn’t always do to say it. If there were many unfavourable ones, inquirers would fall off. I give them one now and then to show what I can do when I think proper. Come along. We’ll

take a look at the children first, and then we'll go—and forget that there ever was a cheap photograph done. Oh, how I loathe them all!' Mrs. Sitwell said.

They went upstairs accordingly to see the children, of whom there were three, the youngest being a baby of some seven or eight months old. 'They are not fit to be seen,' said the nursemaid, who was maintained by those photographs.

'They have got their nursery overalls on, and not very much underneath,' said their mother. 'We keep our swell things for swell occasions. But look at those legs!' Joyce was not deeply learned in babies' legs, her experience lying among elder children. But there are few women to whom the round, soft, infantine limbs—'the flesh of a little child,' as the Old Testament writer says, when he wants to describe perfect health and freshness—have not a charm, and she was able to admire and praise to the mother's full content. 'Little Augustine—we give him his full name to distinguish him from his father, and also because of the church—is really wonderfully clever, though I say it that

shouldn't,' said Mrs. Sitwell; 'and little May is the most perfect little mother! You should see her taking care of baby! Do you know, I was at my Characters two days after that boy was born. I couldn't afford to lose a week! I sat up in bed and did them. Don't you think it was clever of me?' she said, with a laugh, as they went downstairs,—'and never did me the least harm.' The rapid succession of aspects in which this little person disclosed herself took away Joyce's breath. Her mind was of slower action than that of her new friend. She had not been able to settle with herself what she thought of the photographs and the *Pictorial* and the sacrifice of the ugly Arabella, when her companion flashed round upon her in the capacity of the devoted and admiring mother, which softened her sharp voice, and lit up her face with love and sweetness.

Joyce had further surprising experiences to go through in the district, to which she now accompanied the parson's wife, and where everything was new to her. She thought within herself, if the minister's wife had fluttered into her granny's cottage in the

same way and stirred up everything, that the reception Janet would have given her would have been far from agreeable. Yet probably the minister's wife had more means of help than Mrs. Sitwell, and the poor women whom she visited more actual money in the shape of wages than Janet had ever possessed. Joyce felt herself retire with a shiver, feeling that quick resentment must follow, when the charitable inquisitor put questions of a more than usually intimate character—but no such result appeared. And there could be no doubt about the practical advantage and thorough sympathy of the visitor. She had a basket in her hand, out of which came sundry little gifts, and her suggestions were boundless. 'I have some old frocks of my boy's that would just do for that little man. Are you sure you can mend them and make them up for him?'

'Well, ma'am, I could try,' the poor woman would say, with a curtsy.

'Oh, I don't believe in trying unless you know how to do it,' said the parson's wife; 'come up to my house at six, and bring the

child, and I'll fit them on him, and show you how. You ought to go to the mothers' meeting, where they will show you how to cut out and put things together. It would be so useful to you with all your children.' 'Well, Mrs. Smith,' she ran on, darting in next door, 'I hope things are going on all right with you. Now he's taken the pledge, you ought to be so much more comfortable. But, dear me! you are in as great a muddle as ever.'

'He's took the pledge, but he's not kep' it,' said the woman sullenly.

'I don't wonder, if he has only a house like this to come home to. Why, if I were in a cotton gown and a big apron like you, I'd have it all spick and span in an hour. I wish I could turn to this moment,' cried the little lady, quivering with energy, 'and show you what sort of place a man should come home to. Poor Mr. Smith, I don't wonder he's broken the pledge. Why, that poor child makes my heart ache. When did it have its face washed?'

'I haven't the heart to begin,' said Mrs. Smith, subsiding into feeble crying — 'I'm

that ill and weak. And I don't never get on with anything.'

'Poor thing! is that so? I thought you couldn't be well, you're so helpless. I'll send the mission woman to-morrow morning to put all straight for you, and you'd better go to the doctor to-morrow and let's get at the bottom of it. If you're ill we must get you set right. I'll come and see what the doctor says, and I'll send you something down for the man's supper. But for goodness' sake wash the baby's face and get the place swept up a little before he comes in. That can't hurt you. Come, you mustn't lose heart—we'll see you through it,' said the parson's wife.

There could not be a better parson's wife, Joyce acknowledged, strange though to her the type was. She petted and humoured the sick children as if she had been their mother. She sat by a bedridden woman and listened to a long rambling story about her illness and all its details, with every appearance of interest and unquestionable patience. And when the round was got through, she skipped out of the last house

with the satisfaction of a child to have got its task over. 'Now let's have a run down to the river to see the boats, and then home to tea. You are going to stay with us for tea? I want a good fast nice walk to blow all the cobwebs out of my head.'

'But you must be tired. And it must make your heart sore.'

'You say that *sore* in such a pathetic way,' said Mrs. Sitwell, laughing and mimicking Joyce with her soft, low-toned, Scotch voice—an action which Joyce only detected after a minute or two, and which made her flush with a troubled sense of being open to ridicule. The sensation of being laughed at was also a thing to which she was entirely unaccustomed. 'But you can't help them unless you see what they want,' the parson's wife went on. 'And as half of them will cheat you if they can, and you must find out the truth from your own observation, not from what they tell you, you must simply put your heart in your pocket, and think nothing of its being *sore*. And as for being tired, I'm never tired, I have so many different things to do. If they were the same,

I should die of it. We are going to have some fun to-night—we are going to have “Angels ever Bright and Fair” to meet you. Oh! don’t you know what I mean by “Angels ever Bright and Fair”? I mean Mr. Bright, our curate. He is the best little man in the world, and he is so pleased you agree with him, only putting it so much more nicely.’ Then the little mimic changed her tone, and was more Bright than Mr. Bright himself. ‘He shall sing that song of his for you, and he will try to make a little mild love to you, and it will all be great fun. But first let us go on to the bridge and have a look at the boats.’

CHAPTER XXVII

IT was the afternoon of a brilliant summer day, and the Thames was full of water-parties going home, full of frolic and merriment, and pretty ladies in fine dresses, and men in flannels, in that *négligé* which Englishmen alone know how to make agreeable and pleasant to behold. The sight of all that pleasure had a pleasurable effect upon the parson's wife, though she had no share in it. And the charm of the scene,—the river, struck full by the level sunshine which made it blaze, the colour and movement of the continually passing boats, the more tranquil river-people about—fishermen in their punts, who had sat there all day long, and looked 'as steadfast as the scene,' immovable like the trees that overhung the water,—was delightful to Joyce, who had so soon acquired

associations with that river, and to whom her two expeditions upon it were the most delightful of her life. She was leaning upon the bridge, looking over, watching the measured movement of the oars, as a party of small boats together swept down the stream, and thinking, not of them, but of her own water-party, and the strange enchantment in it—when she suddenly saw in one of the passing boats a figure which made her heart jump with sudden excitement. It was Captain Bellendean, who was standing up in the stern of the boat behind a gay party of ladies, steering, which was a difficult operation enough at that moment. He was too much absorbed in his occupation to look up, but Joyce had no difficulty in identifying him. His outline, his attitude, would have been enough for her quick eyes; his face was almost stern in the intentness with which he was surveying the river, guiding the deeply-laden boat through the dangers of that passage, amid a crowd of other boats, many of them manned by very unskilful boatmen,—and entirely unconscious of her observation.

The sight of him gave the sensitive girl a

curious shock. She knew very well that his life was altogether apart from hers, that he must be engaged in many scenes and many pleasures with which she had nothing to do, and that the point at which their two lives came in contact at all was a very narrow one. She knew all this as well as it was possible to know such an evident matter of fact; and yet, somehow, this sudden proof of it, and sight of him passing her by, unconscious of her existence, in the society to which, and not to her, he belonged, had an effect upon Joyce altogether out of proportion to the easiness of the incident. Where had he been? Who were the people who were with him? Had it been as delightful to him as when he had made it a scene of enchantment and delight to her? She did not ask herself these questions. She only recognised in one swift moment that there he was in his own life, altogether unaware of, and unconcerned by, hers. The shock, the recognition, the instant identification of all these facts, were complete in a moment—the moment which it took the boat, propelled by four strong pairs of arms, to shoot

within the shadow of the bridge—and no more.

‘Why! wasn’t that your friend, Captain Bellendean, standing up steering that big boat?’ Mrs. Sitwell said.

Joyce had a curious sensation as if she were standing quite alone, separate from all the world, and that this was some ‘airy tongue that syllables men’s names’ echoing in her ears. She heard herself murmur as if she too were but a voice, ‘Yes, I think so’—while the glowing river and the drooping trees, and all the gleams of mingled colour, melted and ran into each other confusedly like the mists of a dream.

‘I am sure it is. What a wonderful thing when one has all sorts of things to do, to watch those people who have nothing to do but amuse themselves! He has been philandering about with his ladies all day, and probably he will be out at half a dozen parties, or lounging in his club half the night—and the same thing to-morrow and to-morrow. Well, on the whole, you know I think it must be dull, and not half so good as our own hard-working life,’ Mrs. Sitwell

said; but she sighed. Then turning upon Joyce with a sudden laugh—‘I forgot you were one of the butterflies too.’

‘Oh no,’ said Joyce, ‘only twice’—thinking of those enchanted afternoons upon the water, and having only half emerged from the curious haze of enlightenment, of realisation, if such a paradox may be, which had surrounded her. She thought, but was not sure, that her companion laughed at this inconsequent reply. Only twice! How strange it was that these two frivolous water-parties—mere pleasure, meaning nothing—should have taken such a place in her life, more than all the hard work of which Mrs. Sitwell (with a sigh) asserted the superiority! The school, the labours in which Joyce had delighted, her aspirations, her Shakespeare class, had all melted away and left no trace; while the Thames with its pleasure-boats, the mingled voices of the rowers and their companions, the tinkle of the oars, the sunshine on the water, appeared to her like the only realities in the haze of her present life. They came back to her with the most astonishing distinctness

when this sudden glimpse, which felt like a revelation, but was not—how could it be so?—rather the most ordinary circumstance, the most natural accident, befell her. It was at least a revelation to her; for it showed her how distinctly she remembered every incident, every detail, every word that had been spoken; how the Captain had handed her into the boat; how she had been placed near him, her father on the other side; how he had bent over his oar, speaking to her from time to time; how the others had called to him by the name of Stroke—which at first Joyce had supposed to be a playful nickname, not knowing what it meant—to mind his business, to take care what he was about. Joyce did not know why, but had a curious dazzled sense of his eyes upon her face, of his attention to her every movement, of the curious change in everything when she was drawn into the other boat on the way back, and the cloud that had come over his eyes. All these things were as a picture or a dream to her, not things she remembered as having been, but which seemed to go on and continue and

be, like an enchanted world, which, having once come into existence, could never cease.

Only twice! but remaining always—so that she could go back at her pleasure, and float again upon the enchanted stream, and hear again the merry mingled voices, the one of deeper tone sounding through. She recognised with a strange confusion that this sudden, unexpected sight of Captain Bellendean steering another boat, with another crew, disturbed the previous image in her mind in some unexplainable way. It was like the sudden plunge of a stone into the midst of a still water full of reflections, breaking up the reflected images, spreading vague circles of confusion through the lovely unreal world that had been there. It was unreal altogether, everything, both that which had been before and that which now was.

Joyce walked back very soberly by Mrs. Sitwell's side, vaguely listening to the lively strain of talk, which conveyed scarcely any idea to her mind—hearing, answering, knowing nothing, feeling as if the many-sided practical life in which her companion was so

busy, was an unfortunate and troublesome unreality, breaking into experiences so far more vivid and true. She was glad to be rid of Mrs. Sitwell for a moment when they reached the house, where Joyce was to be entertained at tea.

While its mistress flew about seeing that all was ready, Joyce sat down, thankful to be alone, very happy to find silence and stillness round her, even in the little shabby sitting-room, with the faded ornamental desk and the mystery of the photographs at the other end. She wanted to think, to make it all out, to realise what had happened. What had happened! and yet nothing had happened at all. She had seen a boat floating down, with a score of others, passing under the bridge; and what was that to her or to any one? A boat passing, a water-party going down the river, and nothing more. But this was not how it appeared to Joyce: thinking is one thing and seeing another. Whatever she might say to herself, what she continued to see was the Captain standing up in the stern of the long boat, with the steerage-ropes in his vigorous

hands, with that pretty group of ladies in the shadow of his erect figure,—another world, another life of which she knew nothing at all. Norman Bellendean had by no means neglected his new friends. Only two days before he had appeared in the afternoon, and had filled the place with that something which Joyce did not understand—that influence and personality which seemed to soften all tones and warm all tints, and charm the common day into miraculous brightness. She said to herself that this was society—that interchange of thoughts and feelings which had always appeared to her the most desirable thing in the world. That she should have found the charm in the sole possession of a cavalry officer—who was, it is true, at the same time, a country gentleman, and the lord and superior of the place which had been her early home, and in which everybody regarded him with an interest half feudal, half friendly—did not surprise her, though a cooler head might have found it a very surprising thing. Joyce believed that Mrs. Bellendean produced the same charmed atmosphere around her. They

were the symbols of all higher intelligence and finer breeding, and she was not as yet in any way undeceived, nor suspected any other influence in the delightfulness of the Captain's visits—a delight which had begun with the very first of them, and which had never failed. It was not, therefore, any kind of jealousy which had sprung up in her mind, even unconsciously. She did not suspect among the ladies in that boat some special one who might have all his best looks and words aside. Her mind was not at all in that conscious phase. She only realised with a curious consternation that he lived his life in another world—that the days when he was absent were to him the same as other days, though to her lost in mystery and the unknown. Where he spent them, with whom he was, mattered nothing. She was not even curious as to who his companions were. The wonder, the shock, consisted in the fact that his life had another side to her absolutely unknown.

In all this there was no pang of jealous love. She was unaware that there was love in it, or anything save wonder and disappoint-

ment, and a strange realisation of difference and separation. She did not know where he had been, or who were with him : he might have passed her very door—the other side of the hedge—and she would have been none the wiser. She knew him so well, and yet not at all. Something of the astonishment with which the primitive traveller recognises the existence of a hundred circles of human creatures altogether beyond his ken, who must have gone on living for all those years totally outside of his knowledge, filled her now. The thought affected her with fantastic pain, and yet she had not a word to say against it. Her heart made a claim all unconsciously upon those people who had first awakened its sympathies ; and to pass him on the road, as it were, like this, he not even seeing her, unexpectant of her appearance, like two strangers, out of reach of even a passing salutation, was more strange, more overpowering, more enlightening, than anything, she thought, that had ever happened before.

The tea after this was bewildering and rather tedious to Joyce. She wanted to get

away to think over her new discovery by herself, and instead she was compelled to share in an evening of lively wit and laughter, solidified by much parish talk. A churchwarden, who was no more than a local tradesman—though one of the ‘best people’—and much overawed by finding himself there—and good Miss Marsham, were of the party. Mrs. Sitwell’s voice ran through the whole like the *motif* of a piece of music, never lost sight of. ‘You must sing, Mr. Bright, as soon as you have recovered your voice a little after tea. Eating, we all know, is very bad for the voice: we will give a little time for tired nature to restore herself, and then the songster must be heard. Miss Hayward has never heard you, don’t you know.’

‘I am not very much to hear. Miss Hayward would not lose much if she remained in that state of deprivation.’

‘Oh, we don’t think so,—do we, Mr. Cosham? What would the choir do without him? By the way, that dear boy of yours is coming on famously. He must have a solo in the anthem on our Saint’s day. He is quite like a cherub in his white surplice.

That is one thing the Canon envies us. He would give his little finger to have a surplised choir—but they won't let him! Though he is so tyrannical to us, he has to knock under to all the old women who sit upon him. They call it sitting under him, but I don't. Do you, Mr. Cosham?'

'Really, ma'am,' said the churchwarden, with his mouth full, 'you put it so funnily, one can't help laughing;' and with humility, putting up his hand to conceal it, he indulged in an apologetic roar.

'Oh, let's laugh a little—it does nobody any harm,' said the parson's wife. 'What I should delight in would be to have a band for the festival: it might be amateur, you know; there are so many amateurs about the world that want nothing for it—that are too glad to be allowed to play.'

'And oh, so badly,' said Mr. Bright.

'Not always so very badly—especially when it is strings. Don't you think we might have a band, Mr. Cosham, so long as it was strings? it would be such an attraction—with a solo from your dear little boy.'

‘I think it would be a great attraction; what do you think, sir?’ said the churchwarden, looking towards the chief authority. Mr. Sitwell shook his head.

‘Perhaps we think too much of outside attractions when our minds should be set upon higher influences; but if you think the people would like it——’

‘It helps a deal with the collection—does a band,’ said the churchwarden. ‘There’s a church I know where they have the military band, and the place is crowded, with people standing outside the doors.’

‘Not from the best of motives, I fear,’ said the parson, still shaking his head; ‘but to get them to come is something, by whatever means.’

‘That’s what I think—like Mrs. Sitwell; and a brass band——’

‘Oh no, Mr. Cosham!—strings! strings!’ cried the lady. ‘A brass band is a deal too noisy.’ She turned upon the unsuspecting man eyes which had suddenly become dull round orbs like his own, and spoke with the very echo of his voice. ‘It would drown Johnny’s voice, bless him!’ the little mimic

cried. Mr. Cosham, good man, thought there was something a little strange and thick in this utterance ; but he did not understand the convulsion of suppressed laughter on the curate's face, nor the smile that curled about the corners of Mr. Sitwell's mouth. These signs of merriment disturbed him a little, but he did not suspect how. He turned to the ladies, who were quite grave, and replied with much sincerity—

‘That's quite true, ma'am—it's wonderful how you do see things ; it *would* drown Johnny's voice—and he's got a sweet little pipe of his own, and pleased and proud his mother would be to hear him in church.’

‘The boys' voices are like angels,’ said Miss Marsham ; ‘they're sometimes naughty little things, but their voices are like heaven. But I can't help saying, though I don't like to disagree with you, that I'm not fond of a band in church.’

‘What ! not strings ?’ cried Mrs. Sitwell, with such an air of ingenuous and indeed plaintive surprise, that the tender-hearted woman was moved in spite of herself.

‘Well—perhaps strings are different,’ she answered, with hesitation.

‘We never thought of anything else : when our kind friend said brass, it was only a slip of the tongue. You meant violins all the time, Mr. Cosham, didn’t you ?’ said the parson’s wife, with her appealing gaze, which made the churchwarden blush with emotion and pleasure.

‘I believe I did, ma’am,’ he said doubtfully. ‘I’m sure that’s what’s right if you say so : for naturally being so musical yourself, you know about these things better than me.’

‘Dear,’ said Mrs. Sitwell, addressing Joyce, whom she no longer called Miss Hayward, but whom she did not yet venture, in sight of a certain dignity of silence and reserve about that young woman, to call, except in her absence, by her Christian name,—‘you never give us your opinion on anything. Do give us your opinion ; we have all said our say.’

‘Indeed I don’t know anything at all,’ said Joyce—‘nothing at all. I was never used to music—of that kind, in the church.’

‘And yet,’ said Mr. Sitwell, ‘the Scottish Church has a fine ceremonial of her own, where she has not been deadened by contact with Dissent. I have always heard there were things in her service which went further and were more perfect than anything attempted here—until quite recently. But of course there is always a tendency to be deadened by the atmosphere of Dissent.’

The party all listened very respectfully to this, which had almost the weight of an oracular statement. Joyce, for her part, was more bewildered than ever. The words he used bore to her a completely different meaning, and she was not sufficiently instructed to be aware of that which he intended to express. She understood the Canon when he asked her if she was a horrid little Presbyterian, but she had no comprehension of what Mr. Sitwell meant. She was wise enough, however, to be silent, and keep her ignorance to herself.

‘But we all believe the same in the chief points, after all,’ said Miss Marsham, laying her thin hand caressingly on Joyce’s arm. This kind lady could not bear the girl to be

distressed if, perhaps, she might happen to be one of those who had been deadened by the atmosphere of Dissent.

‘Well, now that this great question is settled, and we are to have the band and Johnny’s solo—and mind you keep him in good voice, Mr. Cosham—let us go upstairs and have “Angels ever Bright and Fair.” We are so fond of “Angels ever Bright and Fair,”—aren’t we, Austin?’ cried the parson’s wife, putting her hand through her husband’s arm and looking up in his face. He laughed and put her away with a little pat. ‘You are incorrigible, Dora,’ he said. Mr. Bright lifted his eyebrows and looked at the others, asking why.

And then there followed songs and sallies, and bits of that involuntary mimicry of everybody in turn which the lively mistress of the house seemed to be unable to keep under. Joyce saw her assume a serious aspect, with a grave face and a little movement about her lips, as she said something in slow and soft tones, at which Miss Marsham did not laugh, but once more laid her thin hand tenderly upon Joyce’s arm, while the

gentlemen did,—the churchwarden bursting out in a short abashed roar, while Mr. Bright went off to a corner, and Mr. Sitwell hid his face with his hand. This little pantomime perplexed Joyce much, but it was not till after that she realised how she herself had been ‘taken off’ for the amusement of her friends.

She got home at last in the dusk of the summer night, feeling as if the world were full of a babble of voices, and of jests, and of calculations and little intrigues, and attempts to do something unnamed by means of something else. Joyce had not been altogether unaware that all was not perfectly straightforward and true in the world before. She had been fully acquainted with the extraordinary little deceptions and stories made up by children to save themselves from punishment, or to procure some pleasure, or even for nothing at all—out of pleasure apparently in the mere invention; but these little falsities were of altogether a different kind, and her brain throbbed with the contact of so many unaccustomed trifles which were like the buzz of the flies in the

air. The piquancy of mimicking an individual in his own presence, though she was not insensible to the fact, was strange to her serious soul: it helped to increase the queer unreality of this world in which she found herself, where there were droll little plays going on on all sides upon somebody's weakness, from the silly correspondents of the *Pictorial* to the rich soap-boiler who was to be wheedled by praise of his house, and the humble churchwarden who was bound hand and foot in reverential servility by praise of his boy—and people who were to be brought to church by the attraction of a band as being better than not going at all. And what was it for? For the parsonage? Joyce was not so hard a critic as to believe this. She saw the good parson tired with his day's work, and she had seen that kind mischievous little woman as good as an angel to the poor people. Their meaning at the bottom was good, and the parsonage only an incident in the strong desire they both had to make the district of St. Augustine's as near perfection as possible, and chase all sorrow and sickness and trouble

out of it, and set up a beautiful service, and steal the people's hearts with angelic voices in the choir and celestial thrilling of violin-strings—to steal their hearts, but only for God, or for what they thought God,—for the Church at least. This part of it Joyce but faintly comprehended, yet more or less divined.

And then from the conception she dimly attained of this real and great motive, her mind came down again to the laughter and the mimicry and the photographs, and that perplexing utterance about an atmosphere deadened by Dissent. What a strange world it was! making good things look bad by dint of trying to get good out of evil! Joyce wondered whether it would not succeed better to reject the artifices, and try what simple means would do. And then having shaken off that coil, her mind suddenly returned with a spring to what was for herself the central event of this day—the Captain standing up in that boat among those unknown people, in that other world. Strange! and he was her friend—but yet belonged to her no more than the river itself

flowing on its way, with so many other lawns to reflect besides that little bit of green which Joyce, watching the stream go by, had begun to think of as her own. But it was not hers, and neither was he. Bellendean had been hers, and her old people, and—— Joyce hurried her steps to get refuge in her father's house from that shadow which began to start up in her path and look at her, and filled her with alarm—a shadow demure and serious, with no thought of other worlds or other influences strong enough to eclipse his own.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE next scene in which Joyce found herself which broke the ordinary routine of her life was the great garden-party at the soap-boiler's, which was all that the poor Sitwells had got out of their supposed great demonstration and triumph of the school-feast. Sir Samuel Thompson lived in a large mansion on the hill overlooking the whole panorama of the Thames valley, with its winding river and happy woods—a scene enchanting enough to have satisfied any poet, and which this rich and comfortable person looked upon with much complacency, as in a manner belonging to himself, and deriving a certain importance from that fact. He was a man who was fond of great and costly things, and it seemed natural to him that his windows should command the best thing in

the way of a view that was to be had near enough London to be valuable. And it gave him much satisfaction to gather around him all 'the best people' from miles round: it was pleasant thus to be able to prove the value of money, which was the thing that had made him great, and which he liked to glorify accordingly. 'They all knock under to it in the end,' he was fond of saying. 'They think a deal of themselves and their families, and rank and all that, but money's what draws them in the end.' And Sir Sam was right. Some people came because his house was a show house, and his table the most luxurious of any far or near; and some because to see him swelling like a turkey-cock in the midst of his wealth was funny; and some by that indefinable attraction which wealth has, which brings the most rebellious to their knees: at all events, everybody came.

Sir Sam was, to use his own phraseology, the chief partner in his own concern. Nobody remarked Lady Thompson. She was not the leader of the expenditure and display, as the wife of a self-made man so often

is. She was a homely stout little person, who did not love her grandeur—who would have been far happier in the housekeeper's room. Even in the finest dresses—and she had very fine dresses—there was to understanding eyes the shadow of an apron, a sort of ghostly representation of a soft white comfortable lap to which a child might cling, where stockings to be darned might lie. She stood a step behind Sir Sam to receive their guests. He said, 'How do you do? hope I see you well. Hope you've brought a large party—the more the merrier; there's plenty of room for all;' while she only shook hands with the visitors and beamed upon them. She went everywhere with her husband, but always in this subsidiary capacity. And Sir Sam was by no means reluctant to bestow the light of his countenance. It was not so difficult a thing to persuade him to appear at an afternoon party as the deluded Sitwells had supposed. He liked to show himself and his fat horses and his carriage, which was the last and newest and most comfortable that had ever been fashioned. But there he stopped. He took a cup of

tea from any one ; but if they thought to get anything more in return they were mistaken, and justly too,—for why should a millionaire's good offices be purchased by a cup of tea ? He had the right on his side.

This poor Mrs. Sitwell found when she made her anxious and at last desperate attempt to gain his ear. To waste his attentions upon the wife of the incumbent of St. Augustine's did not in the least commend itself to Sir Sam. He was not aware that she was amusing, and could take off all his friends ; and he thought with justice that she was not worthy to be selected out from that fine company only because she had asked him to her school-feast. In return for the cup of tea offered to him there—which he did not drink—he had asked her and her husband to his gorgeous house, and put it within their power to drink tea of the finest quality, coffee iced and otherwise, claret-cup or champagne-cup ; and to eat ices of various kinds, cakes, fruit, grapes, which at that time of the year, had they been sold, would have been worth ever so much a pound. Sir Sam thought he had

given the parson of St. Augustine's and his wife a very ample equivalent for their cup of tea.

Joyce went to this great gathering in Mrs. Hayward's train, as usual, following—with a silence and gravity which were gradually acquiring for her the character of a very dignified and somewhat proud young woman—her stepmother's active steps. She knew a few people now, and silently accepted offered hands put out to her as she bowed with a smile and response to the greeting, but no more. The crowd was no longer a blank to her. She did not now feel as if left alone and among strangers when, in the course of Mrs. Hayward's more brilliant career, she was left to take care of herself. On this occasion it was not long before she saw the portly Canon swinging down upon her, with the lapels of his long coat swinging too, on either side of the round and vast black silk waistcoat. She had been watching, with a disturbed amusement, the greetings made at the corner of a green alley between Mrs. Jenkinson and Mrs. Sitwell. They had been full of cordiality—the elder

lady stooping to give the younger one a dab upon her cheek, which represented a kiss. 'I could not think it was you,' Mrs. Jenkinson said; 'I have been watching you these ten minutes. How are you, and how are the dear children? I am very pleased to see you here. I did not know you knew the Thompsons.'

'Oh yes; very well indeed,' said the parson's wife, with a beaming smile. 'What a pretty party it is!'

'A party cannot well fail to be pretty when it is given in such gardens as these; and with such a house behind it, flowing with wine and oil.'

'You mean with ices and tea. It's very fine, no doubt; but I like something humbler, that one can call one's own, quite as well.'

'No one should attempt these parties,' said Mrs. Jenkinson, 'who has not a large place to give them in, and plenty of things going on—tennis and all that, or music, or a beautiful prospect: we have them all here.'

'Oh,' said Mrs. Sitwell, 'we did very well

indeed, I assure you, in Wombwell's field. You did not do me the honour to come, but everybody else did—the Thompsons and all.'

'Really,' Mrs. Jenkinson said. She added pointedly, feeling that she was not a match for the lively and nimble person with whom she was engaged—'It must, I fear, have been very expensive.'

'Oh, not at all,' said the parson's wife. 'You see, we gave nothing but tea. People don't come for what they get, though dear Sir Sam thinks so; they come to see other people, and meet their friends, and spend the afternoon pleasantly. Don't you think so, dear Mrs. Jenkinson? If I had the smallest little place of my own, with a little bit of a garden, such as we might have if there ever is a parsonage to St. Augustine's, I should not be at all afraid to ask even the Duchess to tea. She would come for me, she is such a dear,' Mrs. Sitwell said.

'I am afraid I am not half so courageous,' the Canon's wife replied; and she added quickly, 'There is Lady St. Clair; excuse me, I must say a word to her,' and hastened

away. She was routed, horse and foot ; for Mrs. Jenkinson did not know the Duchess, and this little district incumbent, this nobody, this scheming, all-daring little woman, actually did, by some freak of fortune,—and probably would have the audacity—and succeed in it, as such sort of persons so often do—to ask that great lady to tea.

The Canon swooped down upon Joyce after this little scene was over. She was standing by herself, only half-seeing the fun, perhaps because her sense of humour was faint, perhaps only because of her vague understanding of all that lay underneath, and made it funny. He took her hand and drew it within his arm. ‘Here you are, you little rebel,’ he said. ‘I have got you at last. There is nobody eligible within sight. Come and take a walk with me.’

Joyce had very little idea what he meant by some one eligible ; but she was very well content to be led away, hurrying her own steps to suit the swinging gait of the big Churchman. He led her through the green alleys and broad walks of the soap-boiler’s magnificent grounds to the mount of vision

which crowned them. 'There now! look at that view,' he said, 'and tell me if you have anything like it in Scotland. You brag us out for scenery, I know; but where did you ever see anything like that?'

Joyce looked up in his face for a moment, then answered, with a smile, 'I like as well to see the Craggs below Arthur's Seat, and the sea coming in ayont them.'

'Eh!' cried the Canon, lifting his brows. 'What do you mean by that? You don't generally speak like that.'

With nobody was Joyce so much at her ease as with this big impetuous man. 'There was once,' she said, in the tone, half bantering, half reproachful, with which she had once been wont to recall her 'big' class to the horror of having forgotten something in Shakespeare, 'a little Scotswoman whose name was Jeanie Deans.'

'Eh!' cried the Canon again; and then he pressed, with half angry affectionateness, the hand that was on his arm. 'Oh, you are at me with Scott!' he said—'taking a base advantage; for it's a long time since I read him. So Jeanie Deans said that, did

she? I don't remember much about her. They say Scott is played out, you know, in these days.'

'Then, sir,' said Joyce quickly, 'they say what they don't understand; for look how it comes to me just as the natural thing to say. Sir Walter knew—he and some others, they know almost like God—what is in the hearts of the common people that have no words to speak.'

'Ah!' said the Canon; and then he laughed and added, 'So you are one of the common people that have no words to speak? It's not the account I should have given of you. Sit down here, and let's pluck our crow. You have gone entirely off, you little schismatic, to the other side.'

'No,' said Joyce.

'No! how can you tell me no, when I know to the contrary? You've been out in the district visiting with her. You are going to undertake something about the schools. They've had you to tea in company with the curate and that fat dolt Cosham whom they lead by the nose. Oh, you wonder how I know! My dear,' said the Canon, with a

slight blush, if it is to be supposed that a canon can blush, 'a clergyman in a country parish knows everything—whether he will or not. Now, isn't it true?'

'Yes, it is quite true,' said Joyce; and then she added, looking up at him again with a smile, and a little rising colour, caused by what she felt to be her boldness, 'But still I like you best.'

'My dear girl,' cried the Canon. He patted her shoulder with his large white hand, and Joyce saw with astonishment a little moisture in his big eyes. 'I always knew you were an exceeding nice little girl,' he said. 'I took a fancy to you the first time I met you. It gives me the greatest pleasure that you should like me best. But, my dear, why do you go over to the other side if you are so wise and discerning and sensible as to prefer me?'

Joyce hesitated a little, and then she said, 'They wish very much to do everything that is best.'

'Eh?' the Canon cried, this time in astonished interrogation.

'They want to do good to everybody,'

said Joyce, in her slow soft voice, which to ears accustomed to lighter and louder tones had an air of being very emphatic. 'They would like to make their parish perfect.'

'District,' said the Canon.

'District—but I don't know the difference; and I don't know many of the things they want to do. I was not brought up that way. Many things they say are all dark to me; but what they want in their hearts is to do good to everybody. They would like to have their church service and everything perfect.'

'High ritual, as they call it,—music and all sorts of fal-lals.'

'And to get everybody to come,' continued Joyce, 'and to teach everybody, and to help the poor folk. I could not do it that way,' she added, shaking her head, 'but to them it's the right way. They have no other thought but to be good and do their best.'

'Oh!' said the Canon, this time in a dubious and disturbed tone.

'They go among the poor folk every day,' said Joyce; 'they would like to take the

command of them, and give them everything, and guide them altogether. It is not—oh, not my way—not our way at all, at home; but they say it is the way here. They never spare themselves any trouble. They would like to take it all on their shoulders; to nurse all the ill people, and mend all the bad ones, and even cut out all the clothes for the poor little things that have none. They will sometimes do things that look as if they were—very different: but it is all for this end.'

'For making themselves important, and proving their own merit, and last, but not least, getting themselves that parsonage about which they make my life a burden to me. Why, your father has taken it up now—that must be your doing. These people, though your excellent sense keeps you from liking them, are taking you in, my dear. The parsonage—that's what they're aiming at.'

'And why not?' said Joyce.

'Eh?' The Canon turned round upon her with a snort of impatience. Then he elevated his large hands, and gave forth a still larger sigh. 'You women are so gul-

lible,' he said ; 'you believe whatever is told you.'

'I believe,' said Joyce, 'that it would be better to have a house of your own, and not to pay rent when you have very little money for one that lets in the rain, and is very, very small—so small it would scarcely hold you,' she said, looking at her companion.

'It is fortunate I haven't got to live in it,' he said.

'Very fortunate—for you. But, sir,' said Joyce, feeling more and more the authority and power of this big friendly man, like a very kind inspector in the old days—'you are far more fortunate than they are. You are like a prince to them. You have everything you want—money and honour, and a beautiful house, and plenty of room, and power to do what you please. They say in my country, "It is ill talking between a full man and a fasting,"—if you understand that.'

The Canon humphed and shook his head, and then he laughed and said, 'Oh yes, I understand that. So I am the full man, and Sitwell the empty one, you think, Miss Joyce.'

‘It makes a great difference,’ said Joyce; ‘and then they think—that it was promised to them before they came here.’

‘Yes,’ said the Canon, after a pause, ‘it *was* promised to them in a way—before they showed what sort of free-lances they were.’

‘And that makes a sense of wrong,’ said Joyce, wisely taking no notice of the last remark. ‘If you think there is an injustice, it always hangs on the heart.’

‘The Canon is ’ere before us,’ said the fat voice of Sir Samuel, as the sound of much scattering of the gravel under heavy feet broke suddenly upon this colloquy; ‘and I would say, by the looks of them, that this young lady has been a-lecturing the Canon. Good joke that, preaching to the Canon, that most times ’as it all his own way.’

Sir Sam’s laugh was a little asthmatic—it shook him subterraneously and in a succession of rolling echoes. ‘Good joke that, preaching to the Canon,’ he went on, as if his announcement of the fact was the climax of the joke. He was followed by Mrs. Jenkinson, tall and energetic, wrapped in a

white *chudder*, the softest and most comfortable of shawls—and by Lady Thompson, panting and red in the face with the climb, and gorgeous in all the colours of the rainbow. The Canon made room for the two ladies on the bench, and Sir Sam got a garden-chair and seated himself in front of them, against the view which they had come to see, half shutting it out with his bulky person. But the view was no novelty to any there.

‘Yes,’ said the Canon, ‘it is quite true. This little thing has been lecturing me. Indeed I don’t hesitate to say she’s been giving it me hot and strong—about the Sitwells,’ he added, in a sort of aside to his wife.

‘I must say,’ said that lady indignantly, ‘I think that young ladies should keep their hastily formed opinions to themselves. What can she know about the Sitwells that we don’t all know?’

‘Well, she says she likes us best,’ said the Canon, quite irrelevantly; ‘so it’s not from partiality, or taking their side.’

‘Oh!’ cried Mrs. Jenkinson, darting a

glance of anger mingled with a certain respect at the girl, whom she immediately set down as a foeman worthy of her steel.

‘She says they’re very hard - working people, working at their district night and day. She doesn’t understand their ways (she’s Scotch, you know), but she sees they mean the best by their people—hush for a moment, my dear. And she says that they think they were promised a parsonage, and that this makes a sense of wrong. Well, you know, she’s about right there—they were promised a——’

‘Before any one knew what they were—before we understood all the schemes and designs—the setting up to be something altogether above—the ridiculous fuss about everything—the flowers and the lights and the surpliced choir, and Bach’s music with little Johnny Cosham to sing the soprano parts—if she doesn’t do it herself, as I verily believe she does, done up in a surplice and put at the end of the row: such a thing as was never heard of!’

‘Well, my dear—well, my dear! Joyce here,’ patting her hand, ‘who has no sym-

pathy with all that (being Scotch, you know), says they mean it all well, to get people to go to church. And they do get a number of that hopeless lot down by the river to go. But, however, that's not the question ; they were promised a parsonage if they got on and stayed a year or two. I can't say but what that's quite true.'

The Canon looked at Sir Samuel, and Sir Sam looked at the Canon. The rich man's countenance fell a little in harmony with that of his oracle, and he replied subdued, 'I don't say neither but what it's true.'

'She says it makes a sense of wrong : well, perhaps it does make a sense of wrong. We have very nice houses, Sir Samuel,—mine naturally not magnificent like yours, but on the whole a nice, comfortable, old-fashioned place.'

'Oh, very nice,' sighed Lady Thompson, who till now had been recovering herself, and had just got back her voice ; 'nicer than this, Canon, if you were to ask me.'

There was a pause, and the two pairs looked at each other, a little conscious, pleased with their own good fortune, feeling

perhaps a little prick of conscience—at all events aware that a moral was about to be drawn.

‘Well, and what then?’ Mrs. Jenkinson said at last, in her highest pitch of voice.

Nobody spoke until Joyce said timidly, ‘They would be happier, and she would not scheme any more. The rain comes in upon the little children.’ She had half said ‘bairns,’ which was not at all Joyce’s way, and she changed the word, which would have been very effective if she had but known. ‘There is no room for the little children.’

‘People in such circumstances ’as no business with children. I always said so,’ said Sir Sam, with a wary eye upon his spiritual director, of whose opinion he stood much in awe.

Joyce was as innocent and ignorant as a girl should be. She lifted up her fair serene brow with no false shame upon it, knowing none. ‘How can they help that?’ she said. ‘It is God that sends the children, not the will of men.’

‘Oh, my pretty dear!’ cried Lady Thompson, who was so homely a woman, reaching

across Mrs. Jenkinson's prim lap to seize Joyce's hand. 'Oh, my dear!'—with tears in her homely eyes—'however you knows it, that's true.'

Mrs. Jenkinson did not say a word: emotion of this kind is contagious, and these two women, though without another feature in common, were both childless women, and felt it to the bottom of their hearts.

'Canon,' said Sir Sam, with a slight huskiness in his voice, 'if you're of that opinion I've got a cheque-book always 'andy. It was an understood thing, so far as I can remember. There was to be an 'ouse.'

'Yes, there was to be an 'ouse,' the Canon replied, without any intention of mimicry. At this moment of feeling he could not reprove the soap-boiler even by too marked an accentuation of the $\frac{1}{2}$ which he had lost. He turned to his wife as he rose to accompany the soap-boiler, laying his hand upon Joyce's shoulder. 'This child has got very pretty turns of phraseology,' he said. 'Her Scotch is winning. You should have heard one or two things she said.'

'Oh, go away, Canon!' cried his wife.

‘She is just a pretty girl, and that is what you never could resist in your life.’

Thus Joyce’s first interference, and attempt to ascertain whether plain truth might not be more effectual than scheming, ended fortunately, as such attempts do not always do. It was her first appearance separately in the society of the new world she had been so strangely thrown into. But she had not time for much more, and perhaps it was as well. Such a success may happen once in a way, but it is seldom repeated. She was found sitting on that garden-seat with those two ladies a short time afterwards by her father, who had come late, and who brought with him Captain Bellendean.

Joyce had not seen Bellendean since that curious moment when she stood a spectator and watched him like a stranger, passing with his friends, steering the laden boat with all the ladies down the river. She was as much startled by his appearance now as if some strange embarrassing thing, requiring painful explanations, had passed since last they met.

CHAPTER XXIX

MRS. HAYWARD decided that she would walk home.

For what reason?—for no reason at all, so far as she was aware; only, apparently without knowing it, to help out the decisions of fate. There was a stream of other people going home, some of them walking too, as it was so lovely an evening. The air was the softest balm of summer, cool, the sun going down, soft shadows stealing over the sky, the river still lit with magical reflections—those reflections which are nothing, such stuff as dreams are made of, and yet more beautiful than anything in earth or heaven. The rose tints were in the atmosphere as well as the sky. When you turned a corner, the resistance of the soft air meeting you was as a caress—like the kiss with which one loving

creature meets another as they pass upon their happy way. It was no longer spring indeed, but matured and full-blown summer, ready any morning, by a touch of north wind or early frost, to become autumn in a moment, but making the very best of her last radiant evening. The well-dressed crowd streamed out of the gates of Sir Samuel's great house on the hill, and then separated, flowing in little rills of white and bright dresses, of pleasant voices and talk, upon their several ways. Till then, of course, they had all kept together. Afterwards the little accidents, the natural effect of unequal steps and different pace, so arranged it that the older pair dragged behind, having still some good-byes to make, and that the other two, who had fallen together without any intention, went on before.

Joyce was always shy, but she had never been embarrassed by the presence of Norman Bellendean. She had been able even to laugh with him when the gloom of her arrival in this new sphere, and of her severance from the old, was heaviest upon her. She had the reassuring consciousness that he knew all

about her, and could not be in any way deceived. No need of fictions to account for her, nor apologies for her ignorance, were necessary with him. And she gave him from the first that most flattering proof of preference by being at her ease with him, when she was so with no one else. But there was something in the air to-night which suggested embarrassment—something too familiar, oversweet. Mrs. Hayward and the Colonel did not feel this. They said to each other that it was a lovely evening, and then they talked of their own concerns. Joyce was not like them—the rose-tinted vapours on the sky had got into her very soul.

‘Was there ever such a sunset?’ said Norman Bellendean. ‘And yet, Miss Joyce, you and I remember something better still,—the long, long lingering of the warm days——’

‘In summer,’ she said, with a little catching of her breath, ‘when you never could tell whether there was any night at all.’

‘And when the night was better than the day, if better could be, and morning and evening ran into each other.’

‘And it was all like paradise,’ said Joyce, chiming in. Their voices were full of emotion, though they were speaking only of such unexciting things as the atmosphere and the twilight—two safe subjects surely, if any subjects could be safe.

‘It is not like that,’ Joyce added, with a little reluctance; ‘but still the river when the last flash of the sun is upon it, and all the clouds hanging like roses upon the sky, and the water glimmering like a glass, and making everything double like the swan——’

Norman was one of the unread. He did not know what swan it was that floated ‘double, swan and shadow,’ for ever and ever, since that day the poet saw it: but he understood the scene and the little failure of breath in the enthusiasm of her description with which Joyce spoke.

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘it was like that the other night—but there was a charm wanting.’

‘Oh,’ Joyce said, still breathless; and she added, with an impulse that was involuntary, beyond her power of control, not what she meant or wished to say—‘When you were up the river—the other night—passing——’

Did she mean it as a reproach? He looked at her quickly. 'Yes,' he said; 'it is true I passed—the very lawn, the enchanted place—and looked and looked, but did not see you.'

'Ah,' she said, 'but I saw you, Captain Bellendean. I saw you go below the bridge, steering. It was strange, among all the strange folk, and the boats coming and going, suddenly to see—a kent face.'

She laughed, in a curious embarrassed way, as if laughing at herself, yet with a rising colour, and eyes that did not turn to him, rather avoided him. Norman had a sudden gleam of perception, and understood more or less the little fanciful shock which Joyce had received to see him pass.

'You could not think it more strange than I did,' he said, in an unconscious tone of self-defence, 'nor half so disagreeable. To pass with people I cared nothing for, the same way that has become associated to me with—with—— And to look perhaps as if it were just the same whether it was they or—others.'

He began with self-defence, but ended

with an inflection of half complaint and subdued indignation in his tone.

‘Indeed,’ said Joyce, startled, ‘I did not think——’

‘Perhaps,’ he said, ‘you did not think about me at all, and I am a fool for supposing you did ; but if you thought for a moment that it was any pleasure to me to be there, apart from all that had made it delightful——’

‘Oh,’ cried Joyce, in an anxious effort not to understand this inference which flooded all her veins with a sudden rush of indescribable celestial delight, ‘but the river was as bright as ever I saw it, and the sky like heaven ; and why should you not be happy—with your friends ?’

He had given her a sensation more exquisite than any she had ever known in all her life ; and on her side she was giving him pain, and knew it, and was not ill-pleased to have it so. Such, as the old moralists would say, are the strange contradictions of human feeling ! He turned upon her an aggrieved expostulating glance.

‘You think it was the same, whoever my companions might be ? You don’t under-

stand what it was to me to be bound to the oar like the galley-slaves, to listen to all their inane nonsense and their jokes, when my heart was in—oh, a very different place.'

'You have been all over the world, Captain Bellendean, you must remember so many other places—more beautiful than this.'

'Do you think that is what I mean?' he said quickly, in a tone almost of irritation. Joyce knew very well it was not what he meant. But she had to defend herself with the first weapons that came in her way.

'Don't you know,' he said, after a pause, 'that this has been such a summer as I never had before? I have been a great deal about the world, as you say. I have had many experiences: but never yet have I felt as I have felt this year. I never was romantic, nor had I much poetry in me. But I begin to think the poets are the fellows, after all, who understand best.'

'That is true, I am sure,' said Joyce, in a subdued voice. She was thankful to find something that she could say. She walked along mechanically by the Captain's side, feeling as if she were floating in some vague en-

chantment, not able to pause or realise anything, not able to escape, carried along by the delicious soft air which was breathing within her being as well as without, a rapture that could not be explained.

‘I believe it is true—but I never thought so before. And the cause is that I never knew—you before,’ the Captain said.

Did the people know who were passing? could they see in the faces of those two walking—nay, floating by, surrounded by a golden mist—what was being said between them? A vague wonder stole into Joyce’s mind as she perceived dimly through that mist the face of a wayfarer going by. She herself but vaguely realised the meaning of the words. She understood their sentiment well enough,—felt it in that silent ecstasy that swept her along, but had no power to think or exercise her own faculties at all, only to let herself be carried on, and away.

‘You have been the enchantment to me,’ he said hurriedly; ‘and now it is almost over and I shall have to go away. The charm will be gone from everything. I don’t know how I am to reconcile myself

to the dull world and the long days—
unless——’

‘Captain Bellendean——’ Joyce said faintly, hearing her own voice, as if it came from a long distance, feeling a vague necessity for a pause.

‘Unless I may—come back,’ he said. ‘I must go home and put things in order—but it need not be for very long—if I may come back?’

There was something vaguely defective in these words, she could not tell what. For that very reason they relieved her, because they were not what they might have been. She came to herself as if she had touched the earth after that vague swaying, floating, in realms above the earth, in the soft delicious air.

‘Surely,’ she said, ‘you will come back. There is no reason for not coming back.’

He, it seemed, had not felt that touch of reality which had brought Joyce out of her rapture. He was confused and floating still. ‘I mean,’ he said, ‘not to return merely to town or—but to come back to this moment, to those days. I have never known anything

like them. They have opened a new world to me : Joyce——'

'Captain Bellendean !'

'I mean no familiarity—no want of respect ; could you think so ? The name came out without intention—only because I say it over, and over—— Joyce—I may come back ?'

Surely the passers-by must see ! He had turned and was looking at her with pleading eyes ; while she, with the red of the western sky in her face, with the mist in her eyes, did not look at him, or make him any reply.

'I don't ask you to say more. This is not the place. I don't want to disturb your mind,—only say I may come, and that you will not send me away ?'

Her heart had sprung up and was beating loud. A terror of what the people on the road would think took possession of her. 'No, it is not the place,' she murmured, scarcely knowing what she said.

'What could I do ? there was no other : say I may——'

'Bellendean !' cried Colonel Hayward's cheerful voice from behind ; 'are you coming in to have some dinner ? You had better.

Why, you are taking the way to the river, Joyce and you.'

'I beg your pardon!' cried Captain Bellendean, with a startled air. 'I beg your pardon! I did not observe——'

'Joyce should have observed,' said Mrs. Hayward quietly. 'It is nearly half-past seven. You cannot do less than stay to dinner—especially as I hear you are going away.'

'I will, with many thanks,' said Norman. He looked like a man waked out of a dream; and Mrs. Hayward hastened on, not without a sense of Christian charity, to let them have it out, as she said to herself. But they were now both awakened. The charm was broken, and the golden air dispersed. They walked on behind the elder pair to the door, and went in very gravely both of them, without another word said.

A more extraordinary evening never was. Joyce had known many agitated and unhappy ones within the last six months, but none like this, during which she saw everything through a haze of excitement, with something weighing on her eyelids—something murmuring in

her ears—something which made it impossible for her to meet the light or clearly realise what was going on. There seemed a sort of dumb expectation in the air besides that curious sense of something arrested and untold that was in her own mind. Her step-mother looked at her with a question in her eyes, and even touched her with a half-caress as she went upstairs to prepare for dinner. Joyce did not know why, and yet had a sort of far-off perception of some meaning and kindness in it, which notwithstanding was half an offence. And when she came downstairs the haze had filled the dining-room, so that she could not see clearly the face on the other side of the table—the face which did not look at her any more than she looked at him, and yet was keenly aware of every movement on her part, as she was of his. She herself scarcely spoke a word during the whole meal, and he not much,—not more than was necessary. The others went on with their ordinary conversation, which seemed to drift about upon the haze; names—the names with which Joyce's mind had been busy a little while before—floating

about, falling now and then like stones, catching her vague attention. Sir Sam, the Canon, the Sitwells—who were they, all these people? It seemed so strange that any one could concern themselves with their vague affairs.

The dinner was very long, and yet flew like a dream; and then came the twilight drawing-room, the dimness outside, the evening chilled out of that heavenly warmth and calm. Joyce did not go out to-night as was her wont, though she could not tell why. She kept by Mrs. Hayward, sedately seated near a table, upon which there was work, as if that were her object. Captain Bellendean stood near her when the gentlemen came from the dining-room. There was not much light, and he stood up like a tall pillar, slightly inclining over her, a sort of Pisan tower, leaning, yet firm. If he had anything more to say to her, it was clear *that* was not the place, any more than the road with the Colonel and his wife behind. But he lingered there still, saying little, until Colonel Hayward had to say, ‘I don’t want to hurry you, Bellendean. You’re always welcome, and my wife would

give you a bed with pleasure ; but if you *are* going by that train——' Then Captain Bellendean roused himself like a man startled out of a dream, and shook hands with them all. He said Good-bye, not Good-night ; and when Joyce had seated herself again, all trembling after that pressure of her hand, which almost hurt her, he suddenly came back, and looked in at the door. Mrs. Hayward's back was turned : she had indeed gone out to the verandah to look at the moon, as she said afterwards. He looked in, then made one step to where Joyce was sitting, and took her hand and kissed it. ' Remember I am to come back ! ' he said, and then was gone.

' What did Bellendean forget ? his gloves, or a book, or what was it ? ' the Colonel said, with some curiosity, when the door was closed and the visitor departed.

' I don't know,—I was in the verandah,' said Mrs. Hayward. ' What did he forget, Joyce ? '

Joyce looked at them with a startled, guilty countenance, knowing what they had said, yet not knowing, and made no

reply. She dared not move, nor speak, lest she should betray—what? There was nothing to betray, except that he was coming back, and that was no information—for of course he was coming back. She was very glad to escape to her room when the lawful time came for that, and Mrs. Hayward gave the signal, but had not the strength or courage even to rise from her seat till that signal was given, not knowing whether she would be able to walk straight, or to preserve her ordinary appearance if she relinquished, with both those eyes upon her, the support of her chair. She was vaguely sensible of Mrs. Hayward's inquiring looks, which were half indignant, half angry, as well. When they said good-night, her stepmother took her hand with a quick monitory touch. 'Have you anything to tell me, or would you like to speak to your father?' she said. Joyce gave her a wondering look, and said 'No.' 'I am not thrusting myself into your confidence: but tell your father,' Mrs. Hayward said again imperatively, with a gleam of excitement in her blue eyes. Then as Joyce made no response, her stepmother flung past her, flushed and

indignant. 'I might have known better than to make any such appeal,' she cried angrily, and shut her door with a clang that rang through the silent house.

Joyce stole away very silently into her room, disturbed and full of trouble. What could she tell? there was nothing to tell. She felt guilty without having any reason for it, and very sorry to offend without knowing how to help it. Tell her father!—but when she had nothing to tell him! There was a grieved look on his countenance, too, when he said good-night. It was all a confusion, and wrong somehow; but what could she do? Disturbed by this, there was a moment of troubled uncertainty in Joyce's mind—a longing to be pardoned, to say that she was sorry, that she was concealing nothing, which was, however, contradicted by the desire she had to be alone, and the shrinking even from a look which might penetrate her seclusion, and read the secret of her heart before she had spelled it out to herself. Softly, apologetically, with a sense of asking pardon, she closed her door and then sat down and came face to face with herself.

It was a very strange agitated meeting, as with some one she was unwilling to see and still more unwilling to question—some one who had a story to tell which would crush all the beginnings of peace and all the gleams of happiness that had been in Joyce's life. She thought in the confusion of her mind of De Musset's spectre, whom he had seen sitting by him in all the conjunctions of his life—the being, *qui me ressemblait comme un frère*; but Joyce's meeting with herself was more important than anything recorded by the poet. All trembling with the sensations she had gone through, her nerves vibrating with the strain, her energies all melted in the exquisite sense of happiness which had floated her away, and in the chill check of the real which had brought her to earth again, she had questions to revolve and discoveries to make such as she knew now she had avoided and turned away from. She was afraid to look into those eyes which were her own, and find out the secret there. She sat down, putting her candle on the table, without lighting any other, conscious that she preferred the darkness, and not even to see,

if she could help it, what she must see,—what could not be hidden any more. What had she done? She had meant no harm, thought of nothing that was wrong, nor of injuring any one, nor of failing in her faith. If Joyce had been made to disclose her opinion of herself, she would have described herself as true and faithful—faithful above all things. She would not have claimed excellence, though she might think perhaps that there was that in her which was above the multitude; but she would have claimed to be faithful and constant, not variable in her affections, true to the last, whatever temptation might come upon her.

Oh, strange delusion! oh, failure beyond example! when all the time she had failed, failed without knowing it, without meaning it, helplessly, like a fool and a traitor! It all came upon her in a sudden scathing flash of consciousness, which seemed to scorch her drooping face. She, in whom Joyce had always felt such confidence, herself—she, betrothed and bound and beyond all possibilities of other sentiment—almost as much as a wife already in solemn

promise and engagement—she! heaven help her! what had she done? Her veins all swelled to bursting with the rush of her guilty blood. Horror and darkness enveloped her all around; she hid her face in her hands, and her lips gave forth a low, quivering cry. She—loved another man. It was all the worse for her that she had felt herself superior to all vagaries of passion, thought herself above them, and believed that her own half-shrinking acceptance of love was all that was consistent with a woman's dignity. She had thought this, and she thought it still—yet discovered that she had departed from it, thrown all those restraints to the winds, and loved—loved—Norman Bellendean! The discovery horrified, humiliated, crushed her to the ground, and yet sprang with an impulse of warmer life than she had ever known before through all the throbbing of her veins.

CHAPTER XXX

‘ You must try and get her to tell you when you are out this morning,’ said Mrs. Hayward. ‘ She is probably silent on account of me ; but you are her father, and you ought to know.’

‘ My dear,’ said the Colonel, ‘ why should she be silent on account of you ?’

‘ Oh, we need not enter into that question, Henry. Get her to tell you ; it will be a relief to her own mind when she has got it out.’

‘ Perhaps, Elizabeth, after all, we are going too fast. Bellendean has always been very friendly. He came to see me, and sought me out as his old colonel, before there was any Joyce.’

‘ So you think it’s for you !’ Mrs. Hayward cried. And then she added severely,

‘If we should be going too fast, and there has been no explanation, Henry, you must bring him to book.’

‘Bring him to book? I don’t know what you mean, Elizabeth,’ said the Colonel, with a troubled countenance.

‘You must not allow it to go on—you must put a stop to it—you must let him know that you can’t have your daughter trifled with. You must ask him his intentions, Henry.’

The Colonel’s countenance fell : he grew pale, and horror filled his eyes. ‘Ask him—his intentions! his intentions! Good Lord! I might shoot him if you like; but ask him—his intentions towards my daughter, Elizabeth! Good Lord!’ The Colonel grew red all over, and panted for want of breath. ‘You don’t know what you say.’

‘I—don’t know what I say? As good men as you have had to do it, Henry. You must not let a man come here and trifle with Joyce. Joyce must not be——’

‘I wish you would not bring in her name,’ cried the old soldier—‘a young woman’s name! I know what you say is for—for our

good, Elizabeth ; but I can't, indeed I can't—it's not possible. *I* ask a man—as if I meant to force him into—— My dear, you can't know what that means ; you can't say what you're thinking. I to put shame upon my own child !' The Colonel walked up and down the room in the greatest perturbation. 'I can't—I can't !' he said ; 'you must never think of such a thing again. *I*—Elizabeth ! Good Lord——!' He stopped. 'My dear, I beg your pardon. I don't mean to be profane—but to tell me—oh, good Lord !' the Colonel cried, feeling that no words were adequate to express the horror and incongruity of the suggestion.

Mrs. Hayward had stood watching him without any relaxation of her look. There was a certain vulgar fibre in her which was not moved by that incongruity. A faint disdain of his incapacity, and still more of his delicacy about his daughter's name, as if she were of more importance than any one else, was visible in her face. Who was Joyce that she was not to be warned, that her lover was not to be brought to book ? Mrs. Hayward, in that perpetual secret antagonism

which was in her mind, though she disapproved of it and suffered from it, was more vulgar than her nature. She was ready to scoff at these prejudices about Joyce, though in her natural mind she would have herself shielded a young woman's name from every breath.

'I am speaking in Joyce's interests,' she said. 'I hope you don't want to break her heart.'

'Elizabeth, Elizabeth!' said the Colonel. 'I beseech you, don't talk like that. Why, you can't know, you can't, you don't realise what a girl is to a man, especially when he is her father. It's bad enough to think of her caring for one of those fellows at all; but to break her heart—good Lord!—and for me to interfere, to call up a man to—to the scratch—to—— Oh, good Lord, good Lord!' cried Colonel Hayward, with a blush like a girl. 'I might shoot him and take the penalty, but you might as well ask me to—to shoot myself at once—as to do that: or to acknowledge that my child, that young creature, my Joyce——'

'You can't expect me to follow you in

your raptures, Henry,' said his wife, sitting down at the breakfast-table, for this discussion had been held in the morning, before Joyce appeared: and at that moment the door opened and she came in, putting a stop to the conversation. She was paler than usual, and graver; but the two were confused by her entrance, and for the moment so much taken up in concealing their own embarrassment, that they did not remark her looks. Joyce was very quiet, but she was not unhappy. How could she be with the thrill of Norman Bellendean's voice still in her ears, and his last look, which meant so much, so clear before her? She was wrong, she was guilty; it might be that misery and shame should be her portion. She knew that she had failed to honour, if not to love, and that her way before her was very dark; but do what she would, Joyce could not force herself to be unhappy now. The first thing that had occurred to her when she opened her eyes upon the morning light was not any breach of faith or failure in duty, but that voice and those eyes with their revelation which made her heart bound out of all the

shadows of the night. She was pale with all this agitation, uneasy even when she slept, distracted by spectres ; but in the morning light she could not be wretched, however she tried. She was very quiet, however, much more so than usual ; and the absence of that eager vitality which kept continual light and shadow on her sensitive face gave her a certain dignity, which was again enhanced by her complete unconsciousness of it. Her father cast a glance at her in this composed stateliness of aspect, and had to hasten away to the sideboard and cut at the ham to hide the horrified shame of his countenance. A creature like that to break her heart for any fellow ! to be called upon to ask any man his intentions—*his* intentions—in respect to her ! The Colonel hewed down the ham till his wife had to remonstrate. ‘You are not cutting for a dozen people, Henry.’ ‘Oh, I beg your pardon, my dear,’ he cried, and came back to his seat very shamefaced with a small solitary slice upon his plate.

When the Colonel went out for his usual walk, with Joyce as his companion, Mrs. Hayward came after them to the door, and

laid her hand significantly on her husband's shoulder. 'Now don't forget,' she said. Forget! as if he were likely to forget what weighed upon him like a mountain. He thought to himself that he would put off any allusion till the walk was half over; but the Colonel had not the skill nor the self-control to do this, the uneasy importance of his looks betraying something of his commission even to the dreamy eyes of Joyce. Had she been fully awake and aroused, she must have seen through all his innocent devices at the first glance.

'It was rather a pleasant party, yesterday,' he said, 'especially afterwards, when we were by ourselves.' The Colonel meant no bull, but had lost himself in a confusion of words.

'Yes,' said Joyce very sedately, without even a smile.

'By the way,' said the Colonel briskly, seizing the first means of avoiding for a little longer the evil moment, 'you did great execution, Joyce. I don't know what you said to the Canon, my dear, but I think you accomplished in a minute what all the good people have been trying to

do for weeks and weeks. What did you say ?'

What did she say ? She gave her father a wondering look. Who was the Canon, it seemed to ask, and when was yesterday ? It looked a century ago.

'That is what I like to see a woman do,' cried the Colonel, rousing himself into enthusiasm for the sake of gaining a little time — 'not making any show, but with a word of hers showing what's kind and right, and getting people to do it. That's what I like to see. You have done your friends the best turn they ever had done them in their life.'

'Was it so ?' said Joyce, with a faint smile. 'I am very glad ; but it was the Canon that was good to pay attention to the like of me.'

'The like of you !' cried the Colonel. 'I don't know the man that wouldn't pay attention to the like of you.' Then he got suddenly grave, being thus brought back headlong to the very subject which he had been trying to escape. 'Oh, I was going to say,' he added, with a look that was almost solemn—

‘I am afraid we shall miss him very much—I mean Norman Bellendean.’

‘Yes,’ said Joyce. He spoke slowly, and she had time to steady her voice.

‘Perhaps you knew before that he was going, my dear?’

‘No,’ she replied, feeling all the significance of these monosyllables, yet incapable of more.

‘I thought he had perhaps told you—at least Elizabeth—Elizabeth thought he might have told you.’

‘Why should he have told me?’ said Joyce, with an awakening of surprise.

The Colonel was full of confusion. He did not know what to say. He felt guilty and miserable, like a spy, and yet he was faithful to his *consigne*, and to the task that had been set him to do. ‘Indeed,’ he said, in his troubled voice, ‘my dear, I don’t know; but it was thought—I mean I thought, perhaps, that it would be a comfort to you—if you could have a little confidence in me.’

Joyce began to perceive dimly what he meant, and it brought a flush to her pale face. ‘But I have confidence—a great confidence,’

she said, very low, not looking at him. The Colonel took courage from these words.

‘Your father, you know, Joyce,—that is very proud of you, and to have such a daughter—and that would let no one vex you, not for a moment, my dear—not by a word or a thought—and that would like you to make a friend of him, and tell him—whatever you might like to tell him,’ he added, hastily breaking off in the middle of what he had meant to be a long speech, and giving double force to so much as he had said by these means.

Joyce had gradually aroused herself out of her dreams to understand the meaning in her father’s voice, which trembled and quickened, and then broke with a fulness of tender feeling which penetrated all the mists that were about her. There suddenly came to her a sense of help at hand—a belief in the being nearest to her in the world—a sort of viceroy of God more true than any pope—her father. What no one else could do he might do for her. It would be his place to do it ; and it would be her right to appeal to him, to put her troubles into his hand.

She had never realised this before: her father—who would let no one vex her, who would stand between her and harm, who would have a right to answer for her, and take upon himself her defence. The tears rushed to her eyes, and a sense of relief and lightening to her heart.

‘Oh,’ she said, ‘I will mind that. I will never forget it: my father, that is like God, to know the meaning in my heart, even if I am far wrong: and not to be hard on me, but to see where I was deceived, and to take my cause in hand.’

‘Deceived!’ the Colonel faltered, with mingled consternation and wrath. ‘Show me the man that would deceive you, my dear child, and leave him to me—leave him to me.’

‘What man? There is no man,’ said Joyce, shaking her head. ‘Oh, if it was but that! but when it is me that has been the deceiver—and yet meant no harm!’

Her eyes swimming in tears that made them larger and softer than ever eyes were, the Colonel thought, turned to him with a tender look of trust which went to his heart,

and yet was less comprehensible to him than all that had gone before. He was puzzled beyond expression, and touched, and exalted, and dismayed. He had gained that confidence which he had sought, and yet he knew less than ever what it meant. And she had said he was like God, which confused and troubled the good man, and was very different from the mission that had been given him to find out his child's secret, and to bring to book—what horrible words were these!—to bring to book! But whatever Joyce had on her mind, at least it was not Norman Bellendean.

And here in the emotion of the moment, and the rising of other and profounder emotions, the Colonel dropped his *consigne*, and gave up his investigations. He did not in the least understand what Joyce meant; but she had given him her confidence, and he was touched to the bottom of his tender heart. She had said that he would take her cause in hand, that he was her father like God—a new and curiously impressive view, turning all usual metaphors round about—that he would know her meaning, even if she

were far wrong. Not a word of this did the Colonel comprehend—that is, the matter which called forth these expressions remained entirely dark to him; but it would have been profane, he felt, to ask for further enlightenment after she had thus thrown herself upon him for protection and help. He was glad to relieve the tension by having recourse to common subjects, so that without any further strain upon her, his delightful, tender, incomprehensible child might get rid of the tears in her eyes, and calm down.

The result was that the Colonel talked more than usual on that morning walk, and told Joyce more stories than usual of his old Indian comrades, and of things that had passed in his youth, going back thirty, forty years with at first a kind conscious effort to set her at her ease again, but after a while with his usual enjoyment in the lively recollection of these bright days which the old soldier loved to recall. And Joyce walked by his side in an atmosphere of her own, full of the bewitchment of a new enchanting presence suddenly revealed to her, full of the mystic, half-veiled consciousness of Love—love that

was real love, the love of the poets, not anything she had ever known before. Her father's voice seemed to keep the shadow away, the thought of the wrong she had done and the troth she had broken, but did not interfere with that new revelation, the light and joy with which the world was radiant, the inconceivable new thing which had looked at her out of Norman Bellendean's eyes. She walked along as if she had been buoyed up by air, her heart filled with a great elation which was indescribable, which was not caused by anything, which looked forward to nothing, which was more than happiness, a nameless, causeless delight.

If she had been in a condition to examine what Captain Bellendean had said, or in any way to question what Mrs. Hayward called his intentions, Joyce's feelings might have been very different. But of this she took no thought whatever, nor asked herself any question. What she did ask, with a triumphant yet trembling certainty, was whether this was not the *Vita Nuova* of which she had read? The answer came in

the same breath with that question. She knew it was the *Vita Nuova*—the same which had made the streets of Florence an enchanted land such as never was by sea or shore, and turned the woods of Arden into Paradise. The pride and glory and delight of having come into that company of lovers, and received her inheritance, softly turned her dreaming brain. She had never been so much herself—for all those references to other people and pervading circumstances which shape a young woman's dutiful existence had disappeared altogether from her consciousness—and yet she was not herself at all, but a dream. The accompaniment of her kind father's pleasant voice, running on with his old stories, gave her a delightful shelter and cover for the voiceless song which was going on in her own heart. She had put her cause into his hands, as she felt, though she was not clear how it had been done. He would not blame her, though she was wrong. He would defend her. And thus Joyce escaped from life with all its burdens and penalties, and floated away upon the soft delicious air into the *Vita*

Nuova. Never was such a walk—her feet did not touch the ground, her consciousness was not touched by any vulgar sound or sight. Soft monosyllables of assent dropped from her dreaming lips as the delighted historian by her side went on with the records of his youth. He felt that he had all her interest—he felt how sweet it was to have a dear child, a girl such as he had always wished for, who had given him her full confidence, and who cared for everything that ever had happened to him, and was absorbed in it as if the story had been her own. In all their goings and comings together, there had never been a walk like this.

CHAPTER XXXI

‘WELL?’ said Mrs. Hayward, somewhat sharply, as she followed her husband upstairs.

‘Well, my dear! everything is quite right and sweet and true about her, as I always thought it was.’

‘I daresay. That is all very charming, Henry, and I am delighted that you are so much pleased. But what about Captain Bellendean?’

‘Oh!—about Captain Bellendean,’ said the Colonel, rubbing his hands with an attempt to look quite at his ease and comfortable. Then he added still cheerfully, but with a sinking of his heart, ‘Do you know, I don’t think there was anything quite definitely said between us about Norman Bellendean.’

‘Oh, there was nothing definitely said!’

‘Not by name, you know,’ said Colonel Hayward, with a propitiatory smile, still softly rubbing his hands.

‘And what did you talk of definitely, may I ask? You’ve been a long time out. I suppose something came of it,’ said Mrs. Hayward more sharply than ever.

‘Oh yes, certainly,’ said the Colonel, very conciliatory. ‘Joyce desired nothing better than to give me her full confidence, Elizabeth. She has a heart of gold, my dear. She said at once that she knew I would never misunderstand her—that I would always help her; and nothing could be more true. I think I may say we understand each other perfectly now.’

Elizabeth’s keen eye saw through all this confidence and plausible certainty. ‘What did she tell you then—about last night?’ she said.

‘About last night? Well, my dear, I told you we did not go into things very definitely—we did not put all the dots on the i’s. It was rather what you might call—general. No names, you know,’ he

repeated, looking at her with a still more ingratiating smile.

‘No names, I know! In short, Henry, you are no wiser than when you went out,’ Mrs. Hayward said, with an exasperation that was not unnatural. ‘I knew how it would be,’ she added. ‘She has just thrown dust in your eyes, and made you believe whatever she pleased. I never expected anything else, for my part.’

‘Indeed, my dear, you are quite mistaken. She said to me in the most trusting way that she had the fullest confidence—— My dear Elizabeth, I don’t think you do justice to Joyce.’

‘Oh, justice!’ she cried: perhaps she did well to be angry. ‘I must trust, then, to myself,’ she said, ‘as I generally have to do.’

‘But, Elizabeth—Elizabeth!’

‘Oh, don’t bother me, *please!*’ the angry woman said.

Joyce went upstairs to take off her hat, and as she did so her eyes fell upon certain little closed cases upon her table. One of them was that photograph of old Janet

Matheson in her big shawl and black satin bonnet, with Peter, a wide laugh of self-ridicule yet pleasure on his face, looking over her shoulder. It was from no scorn of those poor old people that the little case was closed. Mrs. Hayward's maid had made some silly remark about 'an old washer-woman,' and Joyce, almost with tears of anger, had shut it from all foolish eyes. She took it up and opened it now, and kissed it with quivering lips—wondering would granny understand her? or would she be so overjoyed, so uplifted, by the thought of the Captain, that everything else would be dim to her. Joyce put down the little homely picture, but in so doing touched another, which lay closed, too, beside it. She did not open that case—she recoiled with a low cry. The outside was enough—it filled her with a sudden repugnance, a kind of horror. She moved even from the side of the table where it was. She thought she saw him standing there looking at her, in the attitude in which he had stood for his portrait; and she remembered, nay, saw with a clearness beyond that of mere vision, his look as he

had presented her with this memorial of himself. 'It is said to be very like,' he had said; 'I am no judge.' She remembered the ineffable little tone with which he had said it—a tone which even then filled her with something between ridicule and shame.

And now—oh, how could Joyce think of it! how could she look back upon that time! Now it was odious to her to recall him at all, to see him spring up and put himself into his attitude—so gentlemanly, as his mother said. Joyce grew crimson, a scorching flush came all over her. She shrank away from the wretched little photograph as if it had been a serpent, and could sting her. She had never liked it. It had always seemed an uncomfortable revelation, fixing him there in black and white, much worse even than he was: *even!* Joyce hid her face in her hands, in an agony of self-horror and shame. Oh, how mean, dishonourable, vulgar, she was! He had been better than all the lads about, who would have thrust their awkward love upon her in the old days. An educated man, able to talk about poetry and beautiful things. She had been honoured by his

regard—it had been a great thing for her to be engaged to such a man—and now! There was nothing, nothing which could excuse the baseness of her desertion of him. What could she say for herself? There was only one thing she could say, and that was what no one would understand. The one thing was, that she had not known what love was, and now love had come. Ah! if it had been love for some one poorer, less desirable than Andrew, her plea might have been believed. But love for Norman Bellendean—love that would put her in the place which was as good as a queen's to all the countryside—love by which she would better herself beyond conception.

Joyce felt a chill come to her heart after that hot rush of shame—how was she to say it, how accept it even in her own heart? Even granny would be ashamed—granny who had prophesied that he would be the first to be cast off—but without thinking that it would be Joyce—Joyce herself, not any proud father—who would cast off the poor schoolmaster. Joyce's honest peasant breeding, with its contempt for the *parvenu*, gave

her a keener horror and shame than would have been possible, perhaps, to any other class. She felt humiliated to the very dust, angry with herself, disgusted at her own treachery. What should she do? — how represent it to those keen cottage critics, who would look at her behaviour with such sharp eyes? To give up Andrew Halliday for the Captain,—the meanest woman might do that—the one that was most ignoble. And who was to know, who was to understand, that it was true love, the first love she had ever known, and not pride or advantage that, before she knew it, had snatched Joyce's heart away.

She was not sufficiently composed to allow herself to think that she had never shown to her rustic suitor any more preference than was natural to the fact that he was more congenial to her than the ploughman. She had accepted sedately his attentions. She had consented vaguely to that half proprietorship which he had claimed in her; but there had been little wooing between them, and Joyce had put aside all those demonstrations of affection which Andrew had attempted.

But she said to herself none of these things. She even did not say that it was a mistake, for which in her youthfulness and ignorance she was scarcely to blame. She took it very seriously, as a sin which she had committed, but meaning no harm, meaning no harm, as she repeated to herself, with tears in her eyes. For the other had come upon her like a flood, like a fire, like some natural accident of which there was no warning. All had been tranquillity in her heart one moment—and in the next she knew that she was a traitor, forsworn. There had been no warning. She had not known of any danger—but in a moment she had discovered that she was a false woman, false and forsworn.

She went down to the luncheon-table after a long interval—long enough to make her late for that meal, which was a fault Mrs. Hayward did not approve. But Joyce had to bathe her hot eyes which could not shed any tears, but burnt in their sockets like fiery coals, she thought, and then to wait till the glaze and flush produced by the bathing had worn off. It had not altogether worn off when she came downstairs, but remained in

a suspicious glow, so that she seemed to have been crying, though she had not been able to afford herself that relief. The Colonel cried, 'Why, Joyce!' when she appeared, and was about to make some further remark, when a look from his wife checked him. This looked like mercy on Mrs. Hayward's part, but perhaps it was only in order to inflict a more telling blow.

For, after some time when all was quiet, and Joyce, taking refuge in the tranquillity, had begun to breathe more freely, Mrs. Hayward all at once introduced a subject of which as yet there had been no discussion. 'By the way,' she said, suddenly and lightly, 'where are we going this autumn? It is nearly August, and we have not yet settled that.'

The Colonel answered, that for his part he was always very well disposed to stay at home; and that he thought, as there had been a great deal of excitement that year——

'No, I don't feel disposed to give up my holiday,' said Mrs. Hayward. 'Where shall we go? I know what you mean, Henry.

You mean to beguile us into staying quietly here, and then when the Twelfth comes you will find some irresistible business that calls you away—to Scotland or somewhere. And you do not care what we are to do in the meantime, Joyce and me.'

The Colonel protested very warmly that this was not what he meant. 'Indeed it is very seldom I get an invitation for the Twelfth, not once in half a dozen years; and as for leaving you behind——'

'We will not be left behind,' said Mrs. Hayward, with that alarming gaiety. 'No. I'll tell you what we will do to suit all parties. You shall go to Scotland for the Twelfth, and Joyce and I will do what I know her heart is set upon. We will go to see her old people in her old home. That will please you, Joyce, I know?'

This terrible suggestion was to Joyce as if a gun had suddenly been fired at her ear. She was entirely unprepared for anything of the kind, and she started so that the very table shook.

'To go to—my old home?'

'Yes, my dear. It would give the old

people a great pleasure. We promised, you know, to bring you back.'

It was a cruel experiment to try. Joyce flushed and paled again with an agitation beyond control. 'It is very kind,' she faltered, 'to think of—but they would not look for me now.'

'Why not now? They don't go away on a round of visits in autumn, I presume.'

'My dear!' said the Colonel, in a shocked admonitory voice.

'Well, Henry! I mean no harm; but one time is the same as another to them, I should suppose. And we all know how fond they are of Joyce, and she of them. What more natural than that she should go to see them when the chance occurs?'

It was natural. There was nothing to reply. If all was true that Joyce had professed of love and reverence for these old people, what could be thought of her refusal, her reluctance to go and see them? She sat there like a frightened wild creature driven into a corner, and not knowing how to escape, or what to do, looking at them with scared eyes.

‘My dear,’ said Colonel Hayward, ‘that all looks reasonable enough, and if Joyce wished it—but she must know best when it would be convenient to them. It might not be convenient at this time of the year, for anything we know.’

‘It would be harvest,’ said Joyce, thankful for the suggestion; ‘they would be busy, busy: another time it would be better. Oh,’ she cried suddenly, in an outburst of despair, ‘how can I go home?’

‘Joyce!’

‘Oh, I’m unnatural! I’m not fit to live! How am I to go home!’ cried the girl, who, less than three months ago, had left old Peter and Janet with, as she thought, a breaking heart. The two calm people at either end of the table put down their knives and forks to look at her—the Colonel with great sympathy, yet a certain pleasure; Mrs. Hayward with suppressed scorn.

‘It is not so very long since you were sighing for it, Joyce,’ she said; ‘but a girl at your age may be allowed to change her mind.’

‘And, my dear,’ said her father, ‘I am

very joyful to think that your own real home is more to you than any other ; for that's how it ought to be.'

Joyce looked at them both with the troubled, dumb stare of helpless panic and stupefied cruel terror which comes to a wild thing in a snare. Her cry had been uttered and was over. She had no more to say ; but she had not sufficient command of herself to perceive that she should not have uttered that cry, or should seek to put some gloss upon it, now that it was beyond recall.

'And now you see that Joyce does not wish it, my dear,' said Colonel Hayward, 'of course you will never press that. It was only because we thought it would please you, Joyce ; but you may be sure she is right, Elizabeth. It would be too soon—too soon.'

'Oh, that's all right, if she thinks so,' said Mrs. Hayward. 'Of course I don't mean to press it. I thought it would delight Joyce ; but it appears I have made a mistake. Let us think of something else, Henry. Let us go abroad.'

‘You would like that, my dear child?’ her father said. He was greatly touched by this clinging to himself, as he thought it—this preference of her new home to the old. To him there was neither variableness, nor the desertion of old ties, nor anything in it which impaired the character of his child, but only a preference for himself, a desire to be with him and near him, her father, upon whom she had made so tender a claim,—who, she had said, would be like God. Naturally she would rather be with him than with any one. He put out his hand and stroked hers caressingly. ‘You would like that? It would be a complete change. We might go to Switzerland, or even to the Italian lakes. You are very fond of Como, Elizabeth. Come now, say you would like that.’

Their eyes were upon her, and how were they to know the tempest of feeling that was in Joyce’s mind? She seemed to see the two old figures rise reproachful, their faces looking at her across the table—oh, so deeply wounded, with long looks of inquiry. Was it possible that already—already her heart

had turned from them? And Janet's words came surging back in the tempest of Joyce's thoughts, how she would mean no harm, yet be parted from them, and find out all the differences. So soon, so soon! Janet's eyes seemed to look at her with deep and grieved reproach; but, on the other hand, who were these two who shut out Janet's face from her? Andrew in the attitude of the photograph, complacent, self-assertive, and Norman Bellendean, stooping, looking down upon her. Oh no, no, no! not home where these two were—not home, not home!

‘I must say I am surprised, Joyce. Still, if that is what you feel, it is not for me to press the visit upon you. And so far as I am concerned, I like home much the best. I am not very fond of Scotland. It's cold, and I hate cold. Of course Joyce would like Como—every girl would like it—so long,’ said Mrs. Hayward, with meaning, ‘as there was not absolutely any other place which they liked best.’

This arrow fell harmlessly upon Joyce, who had fallen into such a storm of troubled thoughts that missiles from without failed to

affect her. Of all places in the world there was but one only which was impossible to her, the beloved home where the man whom she loved was in the high place, and the man who loved her was in the lowly. These two antagonistic figures blurred out the two others—the old pair to whom she owed everything, to whom her heart went out with an aching and longing even while she thus abandoned them; and dear Belleandean, of which she thought with such 'horror and panic, the place she loved best in the world,—the only place in the world to which she dared not, must not go.

'There is no engagement,' said Mrs. Hayward to her husband when Joyce had escaped to her room.

'No engagement?' he repeated, with a surprised question.

'There has been no explanation. He has said nothing to her. And I think, after dangling after her for nearly three months, that he is not treating her well. If he comes back, Henry, I have told you what is your duty. You must ask him what his intentions are.'

‘I would rather shoot him, or myself. You don’t know what you are saying, Elizabeth,’ the Colonel cried.

‘Shooting him, or yourself, would not advance matters at all,’ his wife said.

CHAPTER XXXII

ANDREW HALLIDAY had not spent a pleasant summer, and the winter closed in upon him with still less consolation. His love, his ambition, and all his hopes were centred in Joyce, and his mind was greatly distracted from those occupations which hitherto had filled his life. He no longer took the satisfaction he once had done in perfecting the school at Comely Green, in pushing on his show pupils, and straining every nerve for the approbation of the inspectors, and to acquire the reputation of the best school in the district. All his pleasure in the nice schoolhouse, which he had once inspected with such bright hopes, thinking what a home Joyce would make of it, what a place it would be, superior to all other schoolhouses, under her hands, which embellished every-

thing—was gone. And even his Shakespeare class, and all the intellectual enthusiasms in which he had been stimulated by her, and which were the pride of his life and buoyed him up, with that sense of culture and superiority which is one of the most ineffable and delightful of human sensations, failed to support him now. For that beatific condition requires calm, and Andrew was no longer calm. He kept looking night and day for a summons into higher spheres. He dreamed of headmasterships in the ‘South’ which would be opened to him; of noble English schools where every boy was a little lord, and for which his own intellectual gifts, apart from any vain paraphernalia of university degrees, would, backed by Colonel Hayward’s influence, make him eligible. It may seem strange that a man of any education should have believed in anything so preposterous; but Halliday was very ignorant of the world, though he was entirely unaware of that fact, and had no experience out of his own narrow circle. Little as this is recognised, it is nevertheless true that a clever man in his position is capable of mis-

understandings and mistakes which would be impossible to a dolt in a higher sphere. He did not know that he had as little chance of becoming a headmaster in a great school, by dint even of the greatest of natural gifts, as of becoming Prime Minister—far less, indeed, for political genius might force a way in the one direction, while the most exalted intellectualism would do nothing in the other. Andrew, bewitched by hope and aspiration, and the novel and intoxicating sense of having ‘friends’ in high places, whose greatest object in life must be his advancement, believed and hoped everything which the wildest fancy could conceive.

This made his life much less satisfactory to him in the general, and reduced the efficiency of the parish school at Comely Green, the success of which was less to him than it had ever been, and its routine less interesting. As for the house, and even the new furniture he had bought, he looked at them with scorn, almost with disgust. What was the little parlour, which was all that a set of prejudiced heritors allowed to the schoolmaster, in comparison with the lovely

old-fashioned mansions which he had seen described in books, and which were full of every luxury which a headmaster could desire? This hope, which at first was almost a certainty, of better things, made life as it was very distasteful to Andrew. For the first three months there was scarcely a day when he did not expect to hear something. When he went out he thought it possible that a letter, or better, a telegram, might be waiting for him when he came back—and never stranger approached the school, that his heart did not beat expectant of the messenger who should bring him news of his promotion. When the inspector came for his annual examination, Andrew thought that there was something particular about all that he said and looked, and that this official was testing him and his success, to see how he would do for the higher sphere which was opening to receive him. The inspector happened to have letters to post as he passed through the village, one with the mystic H.M.S. printed upon it, and the unfortunate schoolmaster felt his heart beat, believing that it contained his character, his

certificate, the description of himself, which would justify Government in translating him to a higher and a better sphere; and in this suppressed excitement and expectation he passed his life.

However, when the summer had given place to autumn a curious thing occurred to Andrew. Joyce's letters, which had been short but very regular, and exceedingly nicely written, and so expressed as to trouble his mind with no doubts—for, indeed, Andrew was scarcely capable of doubting the faith of a girl who had the privilege of being chosen for his mate—suddenly stopped. They had come weekly—an arrangement with which he was satisfied—and it was not until for the second time the usual day came and brought him no letter that he began to think her silence strange. When he heard from Janet, whom he visited regularly, with great honesty and faithfulness to his promise—though, as a matter of fact, he was not anxious to be seen to be on terms of intimacy with such very lowly people—that Joyce had gone abroad with her father, this seemed a not inadequate excuse for her.

Andrew's heart swelled with the thought that to him, too, the possibility might soon come of going abroad for his holidays—a dignity and splendour which in anticipation raised him to a kind of ecstasy.

And for a time this satisfied him fully. But time went on, and Joyce, he knew, returned, and yet no communication came. He could not think why this should be, especially as Janet went on receiving letters, of which she would read extracts with a scarcely suppressed sense of superiority which was very galling to the schoolmaster. 'Ou ay, Andrew ; come ben and tak' a seat ; there's been a letter. She never lets an eight days pass without one—she's just as regular as the clock,' Janet would say, not unwilling to inflict that little humiliation ; and then she would read to him a little bit here and there. If it had not been for that still lively hope, Andrew would have been seriously angry and anxious : and even when another month had stolen away, he was, though greatly surprised, yet still willing to believe that she was putting off in order to give him a delightful surprise at last,—in

order to be able to tell him of some wonderful appointment which she was in the meantime straining every energy to obtain. But there was no doubt that this constant suspense did undermine his tranquillity. At the last, his temper began to suffer; he began to grow jealous and irritable. When the Captain came back to Bellendean and went to see Janet, and talked to her for hours about her child—as the old woman reported with as much pride as her dignity permitted—Andrew took heart again for the moment, expecting nothing less than that a similar visit should be paid to him, who certainly, he thought, was much more in the Captain's way—far more able to hold a conversation with him on topics either public or individual than an old ploughman and his wife. But the Captain never came; and there was no letter, no message, nothing but silence, and a darkness in which not only the head-mastership but Joyce—who, to do him justice, was more to him than any promotion—seemed to be vanishing away.

This blank was made all the greater from the fact that Janet in the meantime never

failed to get her letter. Joyce wrote long tender letters to her beloved granny, telling her everything—and nothing; a fact which the keen-witted old woman had long ago discovered, but which naturally she kept to herself, not even confiding to Peter—whose chief amusement it was to hear these letters read over and over—the deficiency which she felt. Joyce described all her travels with a fulness which was delightful to the old people. ‘Ye can read me yon bit again about the bells and the auld man in the kirk,’ Peter would say; or, ‘Yon about the muckle hills and the glaciers—as daftlike a name as ever I heard; for there’s no’ mony glaziers, I’m thinking, yonder away—na, nor plumbers either.’ Janet fumbled for her spectacles, and got the letter out of a work-box which had been a present from Joyce, and prepared to read with every appearance of enthusiasm; but she said to herself, ‘She can tell me about glaciers and snawy hills, but no’ a word about hersel.’ It is doubtful, however, whether Andrew would have perceived this want any more than Peter. He would have been satisfied with letters about the glaciers

and all the wonders she was seeing ; but to have that information only at second-hand was hard upon him, and it was hard to be left out. Even if this silence should be caused by her desire to give him a delightful surprise—even if she were indeed waiting from week to week always expecting to have that piece of news to tell him—even in that case it was very hard to bear.

He came to the cottage one evening when the early winter had set in. The days had grown short and the nights long. The house of Bellendean stood out with a half-naked distinctness among the bare trees, and every path was thick with fallen leaves. Through the village street the wind was careering as though pursuing some one, and breathing with a long sigh that told of coming rain among the houses. A dreary night, with little light and little comfort in it—not a night to come out for pleasure. Andrew Halliday had brought a lantern to light him on various parts of his long walk, and he went in with a gloomy countenance like the night. The scene was a very homely one: the occupants of the cottage

were poor, with none of the interest that attaches to beauty or youth, and yet there was much that was touching in the little interior. The supper was over, the things were all put away; it was nearly time for bed, for they rose early, and were tired with the work of the day. The Bible was on the table for the 'worship,' which was their last waking act. But in the meantime Peter sat in his old arm-chair beside the fire smoking his last pipe, his rugged countenance lit up by its proud smile, and a little moisture in his eyes. The laugh with which he sometimes interrupted the reading had the far-off sound of a sob in it. Janet sat on the other side of the fire holding up the page she was reading to the light. It was Joyce's last letter. No book in the world had so much charm for them. It provided their literature for the week, and Peter had nearly got the current letter by heart before the next came. Out at his work among the dark wintry furrows, he would sometimes burst forth into an explosion of that tremulous laughter, repeating over one of the 'bits' in Joyce's letter, saying to himself, 'It's just extra-

ordinar'! Whaur did she get a' thae remarks, that never would have come into my head, and me her grandfaither?' Of this admiration and emotion and tender love the air of the little room was full.

'Is that you, Andrew? Dear, man, I hope naething's the matter—you have an awfu' troubled countenance,' Janet said.

'There is nothing particular the matter,' said Andrew grimly, 'but I'm tired of waiting for what never comes, and I'm thinking of going up to London. I thought it best to let you know, in case you might have any message. Though, as you're always in correspondence——'

'Ou ay, we're always in correspondence,' said Janet.

'Just read ower that bit again, Janet, my woman,' said her husband. 'It's real diverting,—just like having a book to read that's a' your ain. Whaur she gets it a' is mair than I can tell.'

'No, thank you—I've no time,' said Andrew, 'and most likely it would not divert me; for, to tell the truth, I'm very serious, and things have come to that pass

that I must just come to a settlement one way or other. So if you have any parcel or any message——'

'But you're no' going to throw up the school, or do anything rash? Do nothing rash, Andrew—that would be the warst of a.'

'I hope I'm not an unknown person,' said the schoolmaster; 'if I throw up one I'll get another, for there's plenty that knows my value. But I have no intention to be rash. There's three days' vacation for the preachings, and I am going then.'

'For the preachings! Dear, lad, would ye be away at the preachings?' Janet cried.

'Preachings or no preachings, I'm going to London,' he said, with impatience. 'I'll hear what she has to say; but I'm not a man to be just kept hanging on. She'll have to take me or to want me.' He was much impressed with the tremendous character of the choice that Joyce would have to make. It sobered his tone. 'I hope nobody will think that I would be hard upon her: but she must satisfy me that all's well, or else——' He did not finish the sentence; but the sternness of the determination which

he would not utter was visible in his eyes.

‘I wouldna speak to her in a tone like that, if I was you. Ye may lead Joyce with love and kindness many a mile, but ye’ll no’ drive her an inch—no’ an inch. Though she’s our ain, she has her faults, like every ither mortal creature. If ye wag your finger at her in the way of a threat——’

‘He’ll no’ do that,’ said Peter, in a tone of quiet decision, looking the schoolmaster all over. Andrew was a much younger man, but the arm of the gigantic old labourer could still have laid him low. Andrew, however, was irritable and sore, and he looked up with by no means a conciliatory demeanour.

‘I’ll do what’s becoming,’ he said. ‘I’ll not be dictated to. A man has a right to know what a woman means that has accepted him for her husband. Either she’ll fulfil her contract or—we’ll have to come to other terms.’

‘Oh!’ cried Janet, unable to refrain from that little triumph. ‘Did I no’ tell ye that? Ye were fain to make friends with yon grand gentleman, and leave Peter and me

on the ither side, but I telt ye ye would be the first to feel it—and so it's turned out.'

'That remains to be seen,' said Andrew, buttoning his overcoat. 'It's a very dark night, and without a light I could scarcely have kept the road—though I should know it well enough,' he added, with a little bitterness. 'I was not called upon to take all this trouble to come over and see you. But I would not go without letting you know. I was not asking your opinion. The thing is, if you have any message or parcel—I could take a parcel.'

'I'm sure I canna tell what I could send her, unless it was some fresh eggs, or a bunch of the monthly roses off the wa'. She'll have everything that heart can desire—and the eggs would be a trouble to ye. And nae doot she has far better flowers than a wheen late roses off a cottage wa'.'

Peter had got up while Janet was speaking, and opened his large knife. 'Len' me your lantern, Andrew,' he said, and went out with heavy slow steps to the little garden, or 'yaird' as they called it. He

came in, a minute after, with a branch from the old China rose, which half covered that side of the house. The old man, with his heavy figure and rugged countenance, the lantern in one hand and the cluster of pale roses in the other, might have made a symbolical picture. He set down the lantern and began to trim off the thorns from the long bough with its nodding flowers. There could not have been a more wintry posy. The leaves were curled up and brown with frost; the hips, only half coloured, pale as the flowers, hung in clusters, glistening with cold November dew; and the faint roses gave a sort of plaintive cheer and melancholy prettiness, like the faces of children subdued into unnatural quiet. 'Ye'll take her this from her auld folk,' Peter said.

'Eh, but it'll be hard to carry a lang brainch like that: tak' just the flowers, Andrew; ye can pit them in your hat.'

'I'll take it as it is,' said Andrew. He was not below the level of that tender feeling; and though there was a great deal of angry disappointment, there was love also in

his heart. He took the branch of roses and unripe hips, and frost-bitten leaves, and disappeared into the darkness with it, with a curt 'good-night.' The old couple stood by the fire, listening to his steps as he went quickly out of hearing; then shut the door for the night, and opened the Book, and said their prayers for Joyce,—'her that Thou gavest us, and that Thou hast taken from us, we darena doubt for her good; and oh, that a' the blessings o' the covenant may rest upon her bonnie heid!' It was the petition of every night, and Janet gave the response of nature (though responses, it need not be said, were profoundly contrary to all her principles) in a whispered repetition of the words, and a faint little sob.

Andrew walked the three miles with his lantern in one hand and his long branch of roses in the other, a strange apparition to have met upon the road in the darkness of the November night. And next evening he set out, after having completed all his school work, by the night train, with a great determination in his heart, and yet many softened and wistful thoughts. He was

going to 'put it to the touch, to gain or lose it all,'—repeating to himself over and over Montrose's noble verse. He was going to decide his fate: if there was no hope of that headmastership; if, perhaps, competition and vile interest and patronage—always vile when they are opposed to one's self—had rendered all efforts impossible: to bid them strive no more, since he was content to wait for the reward of a conscious merit which did not, after all, want any foreign aid to gain eventually all that was meet; and in the meantime, to secure his love, to insist upon it that no circumstances should separate him from Joyce. He went over and over in his imagination the interview he would have with her, fancying how she would excuse herself that she had waited for good news, and answering, with a little burst of natural eloquence, 'Do you think I would not rather have a kind word from your hand than all the news in the world? Do you think a grand appointment would make up to me for losing sight of *you*?' A hundred speeches like this floated through his mind, and were said over by his lips in

the little preliminary journey to Edinburgh in the chill afternoon. The thought of going to London was in itself a great excitement too.

END OF VOL. II

