THE RAILWAY MAN

AND

HIS CHILDREN

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CHAPTER I

ARCHIE had not remarked at all the incident which had startled Johnson, and which Eddy Saumarez, alone at present among the relics of the supper, and making a final meal with considerable appetite, was going over and over in his eager and fertile mind, trying to make out its meaning, and in what way it could affect himself, and on the course he ought to pursue. The man in the overcoat, closely buttoned up, coming suddenly out of the cold outside to the lighted and dazzling ball-room, with his pale face and startled air, was as a picture to the mind of Eddy, full of innumerable suggestions and possible fate: but it would have conveyed no idea at all to the intelligence of Archie even had he perceived it. Somebody about business; if not, as was most likely, some invited guest who

had not caught the boat, or had been otherwise detained on the way, was all the son of the house would have thought of. Somebody about business did not mean much to Archie. It could have, he would have been quite sure, nothing whatever to do with him.

The hall in which the dancing took place was separated from the great door by a vestibule and inner door, chiefly made of glass, and half-covered by heavy curtains. The stranger, when he jumped from the dogcart which had brought him round the loch, a long *détour*, had pushed into the vestibule, finding it open and no servants visible. There had been a general withdrawal both of the servants of the house and the many strange footmen, who had attended the guests, to the servants' hall, where a supper was going on, quite as merry, and not much less luxurious, than the other supper in the dining-room: and at this moment there was nobody about to direct the visitor. He had accordingly, his business being urgent, opened the glass door, to find himself in the ball-room, as has been already described. He stood there much surprised, looking round him for some one who could direct him to the master of the house. And, as luck would have it, the master of the house himself was the first to perceive this curious apparition in the midst of his guests. At that end of the hall none of the usual loiterers were standing about. They were all at the other end and along the upper sides of the ball-room, which were free from those draughts which,

as the elder people confided to each other, can never be quite shut out from a room so close to the open air. Mr. Rowland made his way through the dancers, dodging here and there a quickly gyrating pair, with a smile upon his face, towards the man in the greatcoat, who stood helplessly at the door not knowing what to do. He held out his cordial hand to him as if he had been the most welcome of visitors. "I don't remember your face," he said, "excuse me; and you're very late: but the fun, as you see, is still going on."

The newcomer stared at him, with his lips apart.

"You are Mr. Rowland?" he said.

"Well, yes, naturally," said the good-humoured host, with a laugh; "it appears you don't know me any more than I know you."

"I'm from the Bank of Scotland—the Glasgow branch," said the stranger. "I have come, if you please, with a private communication from the manager, very important. If I could speak a word to you by yourself——"

"The Bank of Scotland! Then you have not come to the ball?" said Rowland.

The newcomer looked round with a glance of admiration and awe. He was a young man, and he thought it a scene of enchantment, though his Scotch pride was too great to permit any desire to intrude himself into that dazzling assembly. He drew himself up a little and replied, "I have nothing to do with the ball. I knew nothing about it. I have driven round the head of the loch, a very long

road ; and I've no prospect but to spend the whole night that way, getting back. Ten minutes, sir, if you can give it me, will be enough for what I have to say."

"Come this way," said Rowland, drawing back the curtain that covered the library door. He had preferred to keep his sanctuary uninvaded by the visitors, to whom the rest of the house had been thrown open. He stirred the fire in the grate, which was burning low, and turned up higher the subdued light of the lamp.

"Sit down there," he said, "and get warm ; and tell me what this business is that has brought you so far on a cold night. I suppose you missed the boat?"

"I just missed it by two minutes, so there was nothing to do but to drive ; if I had known that there was a ball, I think I should have stayed on the other side till the morning, whatever the manager said."

"Oh, never mind that," said Rowland, with a genial laugh. "Dancing's not much in my line—a little business will be a diversion. What is it? The Bank of Scotland has not broke, I hope, nor the Bank of England either. Banks have no great reputation, I'm afraid, in these parts."

"The Bank of Scotland, sir, is not like your Glasgow banks," said the visitor, with some severity, for he was an east country man. He paused a little, and then he took from the breast pocket of his overcoat a case, and from that a piece of paper.

"Will you tell me if this is your signature?" he said.

It was a cheque for a thousand pounds—a cheque crumpled and refolded in diverse ways, as if it had already passed through several hands. Rowland took it with great surprise, and held it to the light.

"My signature?" he said.

It was mere bewilderment, not intuition, which kept him silent as he examined the writing; and then there sprang a sudden flutter and dart of anguish through his heart, which he neither understood nor could account for.

"It looks like my signature—why do you ask such a question?"

He said this, scarcely knowing why, to gain time: though he could not have told why he wanted to gain time.

"God be thanked!" said the stranger. "You lift a load from my mind. It was paid yesterday by one of our young clerks; but our attention was not called to it till to-day. On comparing it with your usual signature, we felt a doubt; and the cheque itself was unlike you. It was not crossed—it was drawn to nobody's order; and it's a considerable sum, Mr. Rowland—nothing to you—but to most people a considerable sum. If you say it's all right, you will lift a load from my mind. It was young Farquhar that paid it—a fine young fellow. And his career would be spoiled——"

These words came in a sort of strange mist to Rowland's mind. He was standing all the time with the cheque in his hands, holding it to the light. Everything external was in a mist to him, both what he saw and what he heard. The very cheque, with that signature "James Rowland" sprawling on it as his own signature sprawled, seemed to float in the air. But within his mind, everything was acute and clear—a great anguish rending him as with a serpent's fangs—a dart through all his veins, dull in his heart like a stone, violent in his head, as if all the blood had gone there to throb and knell in his ears, and beat like a hammer in his temples. All the time he was standing with his back to the ill-omened messenger, holding the cheque as if he were examining it, in his hands.

His voice, when he spoke, had a dull and thick sound, and he did not turn round, but remained as if fixed in that position, with the cheque stretched out in both his hands, and his head bent to get the light upon it.

"I needn't trouble you any more," he said; "the cheque's—all right. It was drawn for a special purpose; it is nothing to me, as you say."

Here he broke into a hoarse laugh. "Nothing to me! What's a thousand pounds in comparison with—— You can relieve your friend, young Farquhar's mind. Young Farquhar, is that his name? But he ought to be more careful. That's

a large sum to pay to bearer over the counter without any guarantee. But he did quite right—quite right—my name's enough for many a thousand pounds." He moved from where he was standing to ring the bell, but did not turn round. Then he went back to the lamp and pushed the shade lower down.

"I'll keep the cheque," he said, "to remind me not to do such a thing again. Saunders, will you take this gentleman into the dining-room, and see that he has some supper before he goes. I don't know your name," he added, turning upon the stranger and putting out his hand, "but I highly approve your energy in coming, and I'll take care to say so to the directors."

"My name is Fergusson—and I'm very glad of your approval, Mr. Rowland: and the night journey will be nothing, for I am going back with a light heart."

"Yes, yes," said Rowland, "on account of young Farquhar: but you should tell him to be careful. Take a good supper, and then you're less likely to catch cold. You'll excuse me entrusting you to my butler, for you see for yourself that to-night——"

"I am only grieved I troubled you," said the bank clerk.

"No, no, nothing of the sort—and mind, Saunders, that Mr. Fergusson has a good glass of wine."

He waited until they were gone, and then he dropped heavily into a chair. He had no doubt

none whatever—not for a moment. Who could have done it but one? He took out that fatal scrap of paper again, and laid it out before him on the table in the intense light. It was very like his signature. He would have himself been taken in, had that been possible. Some of the lines were laboured, while his were merely a dash; but it was very like—so like, he thought, that no new hand could have done it, no one uninstructed. He might himself have been taken in, had he not known, as the bank people did, that he never drew a cheque like that—a cheque with no protection—drawn to bearer, not crossed, nothing to ensure its safety. He smiled a little at the ridiculous thought that he could have been capable of doing that—then suddenly flung himself down upon the table, covering his face with his hands.

Oh, pain intolerable! oh anguish not to be shaken off! His boy—Mary's son, who had her eyes—his heir, his successor, the only one to continue his name. Oh burning, gnawing, living pang, that went through and through him like a spear made not of steel, but of fire! He writhed upon it, as we all do in our time, feeling each sharp edge, as well as the fiery point that pins us helpless to the earth. What was Prometheus upon his rock, of whom the ancients raved?—a trifler, a nothing, in comparison with the father, who had just been persuaded of the guilt of his only son.

And all the time the music was sounding outside the door, the sound of the light feet going and

coming in rhythmic waves, the confused hum of voices and laughter. The boy who had put this spear into his father's heart was there, enjoying it all. Rowland had been pleased to see that Archie was enjoying it. He had said to himself that the boy was no such cub after all; that perhaps that failure of his about his comrade might be explained; that he might have been dazzled by the possession of money, and too completely unused to it to understand the spending of it. He might have been afraid to give what was wanted, fearing that he would be blamed. There must be some reason. He had persuaded himself that this must be the case in the sensation of a certain pride in his children, which the sight of them among the others had produced.

And now, and now!—James Rowland had gone through the usual experiences of man—he had known sorrow, and he had known the pangs of repentance. He had not always been satisfied with himself, and he had been disappointed in others from time to time. But what were all these miseries to this?

As he lay there with his face hidden, a hand was suddenly laid upon his shoulder. "James—what is the matter, what is the matter?" his wife said.

He turned at first from her, with a thought that she was the last person who should hear—she who was not the mother, who had nothing to do with the boy; and then he turned towards her: for was not

she bound to be his own comforter, to help him in everything? He raised himself up slowly, and lifted his face from his hands, which had left the mark of their pressure upon his ashy cheeks.

"The matter!" he said; "the worst is the matter!—the worst that can happen. I am afraid of nothing more in this world!"

"James!" she cried,—then with an attempt to smile—"You are trying to frighten me. What is it? A man has been here.—Dear James, it is not the loss of—your money?—for what is that! We will bear it together, and be just as happy."

Evelyn's mind, in spite of herself, was moved by accounts in story-books of catastrophes which were announced in this way. I am not sure that he even heard her suggestion, much less was capable of comprehending the devotion to himself that was in it. He moved his hand to the pink paper which lay stretched upon the table in the full light of the lamp. "Look at that," he said.

She took it up perplexed. A cheque for a thousand pounds, which to Evelyn, unaccustomed to the possession of money, looked, as the bank clerk had said, like a large sum. She looked at it again, turning it over, as if any enlightenment was to be had in that way. Then it occurred to her in the midst of her alarm, that after all her husband's great fortune could not be represented by a cheque for a thousand pounds. "What does it mean?" she said, still holding it vaguely in her hands.

"Can't you see?" He was almost harsh in his impatience, snatching it out of her hand and holding it up to the light. "They were fools to pay it at the bank; and, as for that young Farquhar, I'll—— Can't you see? Look there, and there——"

"I don't know what you mean me to see, James. It is a little laboured, not quite like your hand. You must have been tired when you—— Ah!" said Evelyn, breaking suddenly off, and beginning to examine, fascinated, the terrible document that looked so simple. She looked up in his face, quite pale, her lips dropping apart. "You don't mean me to think——"

"Think! See! look at it; it is forged—that is what it is."

She looked at him, every tint of colour gone from her face, her eyes wide open, her lips trembling. It might have been supposed that she had done it. "Oh, James, James!" she cried in a low voice of terror and dismay. Then there flashed before her eyes a whole panorama of moving scenes: the pale and lowering face of Archie; the lively one of Eddy Saumarez; the disreputable Johnson—all came and went like distracting shadows. In a second she went over a whole picture-gallery of visionary portraits. Her husband looked at her intently, as if to read the name of the culprit in her eyes; but she only repeated, "Oh, James, James!" as if this appeal was all that she could say.

"You see it," he said with a sort of exasperated calm. "Though that young Farquhar—confound him, oh, confound him!——" Here he stopped again, as if the thought were too much. "He's got a father and mother now, no doubt, who can trust him with everything they've got; who look forward to his becoming a director of the bank; whom he goes home to every night self-conceited —Oh, confound them every one!"

"James," she said, laying her hand doubtfully again upon his shoulder, "is it Mr. Farquhar who has got your money? Is it —? Whom do you —suspect?"

He broke out into a loud, harsh laugh. "I haven't much choice, have I?" he said, "there are not many that could have done it. There is only one, so far as I can judge. He's been set on horseback and he's ridden to the devil; and to make it up—though God knows how it's gone, for he has nothing to show for it—he puts his father under a forced contribution—that's about what it is."

"You mean Archie!—no, no, no," cried Evelyn; "it is not Archie—it is not Archie! James, you are angry; you are letting prejudice lead you astray."

"Prejudice—against my only son! If it had been prejudice in his favour, prejudice to look over his faults, to think him better than he is——"

"No, no, no," said Evelyn, "that is not your way. You want perfection, and you can't bear

not to have it, James. There is nothing—nothing vicious about Archie. He must have been vicious to want that money? No, no, no. I am as sure that you are mistaken as that I'm alive."

He shook his head, but he was a little comforted for the moment. "You can send for him if you are so confident," he said; and then there came to them in a sudden gust the sound of the music, the movement of the dancers, which made the floor thrill even where they were apart in that room full of trouble; and the horror of the combination brought from Evelyn a cry of pain, as she put up her hands to her face.

"Oh, don't send for him now! in the middle of all that, where he is doing his best, poor boy—where he has forgotten everything that's been troubling him;—don't, James, don't, for your wife's sake send for the poor boy now——"

"For my wife's sake!—It is you who are my wife, Evelyn."

"If I am it is not to sweep her influence away, but to help it. Have mercy on her boy! Oh, James, you have been hard upon him: you are a good man, but you have been hard upon him. Why did you expose him the other day about that money? There might be a hundred reasons that you never stopped to hear. James, I am in Mary's place; and what she would have done I am doubly bound to do. Don't ruin her boy. Don't, for God's sake, James, even if your anger is just, destroy her boy!"

He rose up and walked about the room in his way, laughing at intervals that hard, dry little laugh which was his signal of distress.

"It shows what you think of me," he said, "that you bid me not to ruin him. What's the meaning of that accursed bit of paper lying there? It means that I have adopted the lie and the guilt to save him. I have said it was all right—not for his sake—but to save an open shame."

"Ah, James! for his sake too."

He put his arm round her, and bent his head down upon her shoulder for a moment. She felt his heart beating like a loud, hard piece of machinery, thumping and labouring in his breast; and she thought she divined the pain that was in him, forcing all his organs into such fierce movement. And so she did, in fact; but who can altogether understand the bitterness in another's heart?

He sat down again after a while, and said again—

"Send for him—he must answer for himself."

"I will have to go and see to the people who are leaving, James; you ought to come too."

"I can't, it is impossible."

"Then Archie must stay to take your place. He has done very well, as well as any boy could have done. He must back me up, and help me to see all the people away."

Rowland made a gesture of disgust at the people, the music, the gaiety, the whole brilliant,

delightful entertainment which he had devised so splendidly, and only an hour or two ago enjoyed so intensely. He could not bear the thought, much less the sight of it now. He remained alone while Evelyn went back to go through the final proceedings—to shake hands with the guests, and receive their acknowledgments. He sat and listened to the music and the sound of the feet keeping time, and the driving up of the carriages outside, and the commotions of the departure. Twice in his impatience, as the reader has seen, he rang for the butler, who was dispensing hospitality on a scale little inferior to that of his master, and who was much annoyed to be disturbed. Saunders took one message after another to Archie, as has been seen, without very much effect. The butler's feelings were all with the young man. He too was of opinion, from his master's aspect and a something in the air which the inferior members of a household are quick to perceive, that there was "a wigging" in store for Archie; and everybody in the servants' hall instinctively took Archie's side, and agreed with Saunders that to keep out of the governor's way as long as he could, was very natural on the part of the young man. Several of them wondered whether the man in the topcoat, who had supper punctually served to him in the dining-room, was the man who had made the row, an opinion to which Mr. Saunders himself privately inclined. But the opinion of these functionaries did not reach to Mr. Rowland in his

library. He sat and listened to all the voices and counted the carriages as they rolled away. There could be but few remaining when he sent the last message to Archie. But when Saunders went out of the library with his errand, he met Mrs. Rowland coming in. She had stolen away from Miss Eliza and her vigorous group of dancers. Evelyn's heart was sick too, in dismal expectation of the interview to come. She knew beforehand how it would be. Rowland would dash the accusation in his son's face, taking everything for granted, while Archie would either retire in sullen offence, or deny violently with as little reason or moderation as his father. They would meet like the clash of angry waves, neither making the smallest impression on the other; and then they would drift afloat with what she felt to be an irremediable wrong between them, something far more grave than had ever appeared on the stormy horizon before. And what could Evelyn do, she who would so fain have taken all the trouble upon her shoulders, and saved them both? Oh, no, there was no such luck in store for her! She could not save her husband from committing himself to a great accusation, or Archie from violent rebellion and denial. If he took it too calmly, Evelyn felt that even her own faith in him would fail, and if he were violent, it would make the breach with his father all the greater. She went and stood by her husband's side, putting her hand upon his arm as he sat at the table with the

shade of the lamp raised, and the light full upon his angry face, waiting till his son should come.

And Archie came in so unconscious, almost self-satisfied, expecting a little approbation, and to find that his exertions had been appreciated! There was a half smile on his mouth which changed the expression of a face so often lowering and heavy with anticipation of evil. He feared no evil this night. His eyes were limpid and blue, without a cloud, though with a faint mist of boyish drowsiness in them just coming over the brightness of excitement. He was excited still, but a little sleepy, the call upon him being almost over: and it was nearly four o'clock in the morning, a sufficient reason for fatigue. "Did you want me, father?" he said, in his fresh, boyish voice. Evelyn stood by her husband's side, holding his arm with a firm significant pressure. She gave one look at the lad who stood there, with his half smile, fearing no one, and then, with a sick heart, turned her face away.

"Yes, sir, I wanted you. I have been waiting for you here for hours," Rowland said.

Archie was startled by this unexpected tone. The smile went away from his mouth. His eyes woke up from that mist of coming slumber and looked a little anxious, a little wondering, ready to be defiant, in his father's face.

Rowland took up the piece of paper that lay on the table in the fierce white light of the lamp. Archie had clearly perceived it was a cheque, but

what it could be for he did not imagine. His father took it up, and once more flung it at him as he had done so often. "Look at that," in a voice of thunder, "and tell me what it means!" he cried.

CHAPTER II

"WHAT is the meaning of it?" said Archie. He was so tired and pleased and sleepy, that he did not even now feel sure that anything was wrong. A faint idea struck his mind that his father, though he did not look amiable, might yet be making him another present, as he had done before. He caught it this time as it whirled towards him, and looked at it puzzled, but without any alarm. "It is a cheque," he said, looking up from it with again that vague, slumbrous smile creeping about the corners of his mouth.

"Is that all you have to say?"

"What should I say?" asked the young man. "Is it—another present you are making me?—but it's a great sum," he added, waking up more and more; "it can't be that."

He was so simple as he stood, almost so childish, taking the awful missive, of the nature of which he had no understanding, which meant ruin, shame, everything that was dreadful, into his hand so innocently, that there came from the breast of the

spectator standing by—the only being whom the boy feared—a suppressed but irrestrainable groan of emotion. Yet Evelyn felt that to her husband his son's ignorance meant nothing but acting, a consummate deceit, got up beforehand, the result of guilty expectation, not of innocent ignorance.

"Mind, how you drive me wild!" Rowland said hoarsely. "I give you yet a place of repentance. For your mother's sake, and for my wife's sake, who is not your mother—own to it like a man even now—and I'll forgive you yet."

Archie's unconsciousness was almost foolish, as he stood there with the thing in his hand. Evelyn, trembling from head to foot in her own impatience and anxiety, could scarcely bear it. "Oh speak, speak!" she cried under her breath.

"Own to what?" the boy said. "A place of repentance—for what?" His consternation and amazement were clear enough; only to his father they seemed the deepest deceit.

"Down upon your knees!" he cried, springing to his feet. "Do you know what that means?—not mere cheating of your father, which perhaps was all you thought of; it means the ruin of your whole life; it means penal servitude—a little while ago it meant death. Go down on your knees and ask my pardon. I will never trust you again, nor will I ever have a happy moment, knowing what you are; but I will forgive you, as far as the world is concerned, and hide your shame."

Evelyn, whom her husband had thrown off in

his hurried movement, stood wringing her hands, her tears dropping upon them, her countenance convulsed with terror and pity. "Oh speak to him, Archie, tell him, tell him!" she said.

Then the poor young fellow came fully to life, though even now he did not quite understand what it was he was accused of. "I don't know what you mean," he said; "for there is nothing in the world that can mean penal servitude to me. You are mad, I think, father. I have done nothing to ruin my life—Me! what could I have done—what has been in my power? If I were as bad in nature as you think me—what, what has been in my power?"

"Archie," said Rowland, recovering his composure by a great effort, "I want no useless talk. Let's understand all that as said. Self-defence is out of the question. If you will tell me as humbly as you can what led you to such a crime as forgery, perhaps—God forgive you, I'll try to think the best—thinking less of it because it was your father——"

"Forgery!" cried Archie with a great shout, as if to earth and heaven.

"You need not proclaim your shame and mine—Forgery. What is the money to me? I would rather than ten thousand pounds, than all I have in the world, that you had come to me and told me—oh, any story you pleased—if it were gambling, if it were some wretched woman—whatever it was. Man," cried the father in his anguish, "you are my only

son. It was my fault, perhaps, that I was disappointed in you. But if you had come to me and said, 'I have been a fool, I have need of a thousand pounds to clear me of my folly,'—do you think I would have refused? I might have been angry then—not knowing what was in store—but if I know myself, I would not have been hard upon you. I would have thought you were but young—I would have thought you were like your mother. God forgive you, boy, you're like your mother there where you stand, a felon, a criminal, subject to the law. And my only son, my only son!"

He turned away with a loud sob, that came from his heart like the report of a pistol, and throwing himself in his chair, covered his face with his hands.

"A felon and a criminal," said Archie, in his turn half mad with passion, and having made a dozen efforts to break in. "Oh, I knew you hated me; but I never thought it would go so far. Me a felon—me subject to the law! It's just a damned cursed lie!" cried the boy, tears of rage in his eyes. "Ay! I never swore in my life, but I'll swear now. It's a damned lie! It's a cursed lie! Oh, publish it to the whole world, if you like; what do I care? it's all over between you and me. You may call me your son if you like, but no more will I call you father. Oh, get a trumpet and tell it all over the world, and see if one will believe you that ever knew Archie Rowland. Shame!" cried the lad; "father! do you not think shame to say it? do you not think shame?"

The innocent face was gone—the look, that almost seemed like imbecility in its unawakened ignorance. His features were distorted and quivering with fury, his eyes full of great hot tears of pain, which splashed upon that paper in his hand in round circles, making the boy's passion wilder still with the shame that he had been made to cry like a girl! But these fierce drops were not the easy tears of a child. He flung the cheque upon the table with a laugh that was more painful still.

"Put it up in a frame," he said, "in your hall, or in the bank, or where folk can see it best; and write on it, 'Forged by Archie Rowland.' And send your policeman out to take me, and bring me to trial, and get me condemned. You're a rich, rich man, and maybe you will be able to do it: for there's nobody will believe that you invented all that to ruin your son, your only son. Oh, what grand words to say! Or maybe it was *her* invention!" cried Archie, as a movement caught his ear, which drew his wild eyes to Evelyn. He stood staring at her for a moment in silence. "It would not be so unnatural if it were her invention," he said.

There was a moment of awful silence—for great though the passion was in Rowland's accusation the fury of the unjustly accused was greater. It was a storm against which no lesser sentiment could stand. The slight untrained figure of the lad rose to strange might and force, no softness in it or pliancy. He stood fiercely at bay, like a wild

animal, panting for breath. And the father made no reply. He sat staring, silenced by the response, which was a kind of fiercer echo of his own passion.

"You have nothing to say it appears," said Archie, with quick breathing, "and I will say nothing. I will go to the place I was brought up in. I will not run away. And then ye can send your warrant, or whatever you call it, to arrest me. I will bide the worst you can do. Not a step will I move till you send to take me. You will find me there night or day. Good-bye to ye," he said abruptly. A momentary wavering, so slight that it was scarcely perceptible, moved him, one of those instantaneous impulses which sometimes change the whole character of life—a temptation he thought it—to cry "father! father," to appeal against this unimaginable wrong. But he crushed it on the threshold of his mind, and turned to the door.

"Archie!" cried Evelyn in despair, rushing after him. "Archie! I believe every word you say."

He took no notice of her, nor of the hand with which she grasped his sleeve, but pausing, looked round for a moment at his father, then he flung open the door: disdaining even to close it after him, and walked quickly away.

"James!—for God's sake go after him, stop him. James! James! for the love of God——"

"Ye mean the devil," said Rowland quickly, "that put all that into his head."

He rose up and took the cheque from the table,

but perceiving the stain of the tear, threw it down again, as if it had stung him. There are some things that flesh and blood cannot bear, and the great blot of moisture upon that guilty paper was one of them. It all but unmanned this angry father. "Put that thing away, lock it up, put it out of my sight," he said, with a quivering in his throat.

He had no doubt of his son's guilt. He had known other cases in which a fury of injured innocence had been the best way of meeting an accusation. And yet there was something in Archie's passion which, while it roused his own, penetrated him with another strange contradictory feeling—was it almost approval, of the bearing of the boy? But not on so slight an argument as that was he shaken in his foregone conclusion. He walked up and down the room, curiously made into a sort of public, comfortless, unprotected place by the flinging open of the door, and presently began to speak, flinging broken sentences from him. The hall with its decorations, the waxed and shining floor, with a broken flower, a fallen card, a scrap of ribbon, dropped upon it here and there, that air of the banquet hall deserted which is always so suggestive, formed the background to his moving figure. And even Evelyn, in her absorption in the wild tragic excitement of this domestic drama, did not think of the stealthy servants moving about, and the eager ears so intent upon picking up some indication of what the trouble might be.

"He knows very well," said Rowland. "Oh, he knows very well that I will never have him arrested or do anything to disgrace my own name. It's cheap, cheap all that bravado about waiting till I send to take him; he might wait till doomsday, as he well knows. Hold your tongue, Evelyn. It's well your part to defend him, when he had the grace to say it was your invention."

"Poor boy, poor boy! he did not know what he was saying."

"Are you so sure of that? He knew what he was saying, every word. He's a bold hand—it's a superior way when the artist can do it—I've seen the thing before. Injured pride, and virtue—oh, virtue rampant! That never had a thought, nor could understand what wickedness meant. I have seen it before. And cheap, cheap all yon about waiting till I send the policeman, when he knows I would not expose my name, not for more than he's worth a thousand times over. Worth! he's worth nothing; and my name, my name that is known over two continents—and more! That's what you would call irony, isn't it?" said Rowland, with his harsh laugh. "Irony! I'm not a man of much reading, but I've seen it in books. Irony!—a name known over half the world; though, perhaps, I shouldn't be the man to say it. And forged! forged by the man's own son that made it."

"James, for God's sake! It was not Archie. I believe every word he said."

"That the whole thing was your invention?"

said Rowland. "That's what he said; the rest was rubbish, I remember that. And you believe every word? You are a fool, like most women—and many men too. That old sage, as ye call him, was right, though people cry out. Mostly fools! It was said before him though. Men walk in a vain show, and disquiet themselves in vain. They lay up riches, and know not who is to gather them. Was there ever such a fool as me to keep thinking of my boy, my little callant, as I thought, and never once to remember that he was growing up into a low-lived lout all the time."

"Archie is not so," said Evelyn. "He is not so; his faults are on the outside. He did not do this. I never believed he did it. James, you will never have been a fool till now if you let the boy go."

"Bah! he has no intention of going. You take the like of that in earnest? He will go to his bed and sleep it off, and then—to-morrow's a new day. I am dead-tired myself," said Rowland, stretching his arms; "as tired as a dog. I'll sleep till one, though I've had enough to murder sleep. No, no, he'll not go; yon's all cheap, cheap, because he knows I will do nothing against him. You are a fine creature, Evelyn, but you are no wiser than the rest. Good-night, my dear, I am going to bed."

"Without a word of comfort to him, James?"

"Comfort! he wants no comfort. And if he did," said Rowland, with a smile of misery, "it would be hard to come to me for it, who have none to give. If you know anybody that has that commodity to

part with, send them to that boy's father,—send them to the man that has had the heart taken out of him. I am going to my bed."

He went slowly up stairs, and then, for the first time, Evelyn saw the butler, Saunders, within hearing, though busily employed, with one or two subordinates, in putting out the lights and closing the shutters. She watched her husband, with his slow, unelastic step, going one by one up the long flight of steps. He had never learned to subdue his energetic step, and take them less than two together before. She was almost glad to see those signs of exhaustion. The fervour of his passion had dropped. He would, perhaps, turn aside, she thought, to Archie's room, and would understand his son, and the two might meet heart to heart at last.

Evelyn waited a long time, shivering and chill in those dismal hours of the morning. She saw the servants conclude their work and go away unwillingly to their rest. She sat down in the library, with the room open to the dark desolated hall, in which only a faint light was left burning, and listened to all the creakings and rustlings that seemed to run through the still and sleeping house. No one came. Had his father, after all, gone to his door and made peace? Had the tired boy fallen asleep in spite of himself? Had it all been vapouring, as James said? She waited in her ball dress, with a rough woollen shawl, the first she could find, wrapped about her; and the lamp, burning with a

steady, monotonous light, throwing a lengthened gleam upon the dark curtains of the glass door.

It had all been almost as she thought. Rowland had paused, his feet had almost carried him, his heart, yearning, had almost forced him to Archie's room to make a last appeal, perhaps to listen, perhaps to understand. But he would not allow himself to be moved by impulse, and turned heavily in the other direction to his own room, where he fell, as he had prophesied, heavily asleep. And Archie, tired beyond description, his very passion unable to resist the creeping languor in his brain, had almost gone to sleep too, leaning his head against the bed, in the attitude in which he had thrown himself down in order that he might try to understand this new mystery. But in this he was not successful, for after a minute or two, the sound of the heavy step, which was his father's, startled him, and he became more wide awake than ever, listening with a beating heart, wondering would he come. He heard the pause, and wondered more and more. When Rowland took the other direction, Archie sprang to his feet and began hurriedly to change his dress. It took him a considerable time to do this, for his fingers were trembling, and his whole being shaken. He had to pull everything out of his drawers to find the old shabby coat which he had worn when he first came to Rosmore. The room looked as if it had been scattered in scorn or frenzy with everything he possessed. But that was not Archie's meaning. He got his old

suit at last, and put it on, tossing his evening clothes into a corner. He took off the watch his father had given him, and denuded himself of everything that had come to him since Rowland returned home. Poor Archie, his humiliation was complete. The old clothes seemed to bring back the old mien, and it was the lad of the Sauchiehall Road, and not the young gentleman of Rosmore, who, seeing that the lights were out and all the house silent, stepped out of the chaos of his desolated bedchamber and took his way down stairs.

There was a jar upon the great staircase, the sound thrilling through the silence, of a slip upon some hardened plank, and Evelyn awoke with a start from a troubled doze. She drew her shawl close round her, for it was very cold, the coldest moment of the night just before dawn. She had drawn the curtain half over the library door, that the light might not betray her, and it was only by the dim rays of the night lamp in the hall that she could distinguish the dark figure going softly towards the door. He had his hand upon it when she stole out quietly and caught his arm in her hands.

"Archie! where are you going? You are not going out at this hour of the night?"

"Is it you, Mrs. Rowland?" he said with a start. "If I had known that anybody was up, I should not have come this way."

"Thank God you did not know. Archie, where are you going out of your father's house?"

"My father's house!" he said with a faint laugh. "But why go over it again? you were there and you heard the whole."

"And you heard me?"

"You! I was not thinking of you," he said with a contempt which was purely matter of fact and natural, meaning no offence.

"Nevertheless you heard what I said."

He paused a little and then said, "Yes, I suppose I did. I remember something, but what does all that matter now?"

"It matters having a friend always at hand, to note everything. Oh, my boy, don't go. Stay and work it out—stay and prove who has done it. Archie, take my advice."

"Why should I, Mrs. Rowland? I have always thought you were my enemy."

"Very falsely, very falsely!" she cried. "Archie, I promised to your mother I would do all to you that a woman who was not your mother could do."

"You promised to my mother! What do you know about my mother? It is getting late and I should be on the road: let me go."

She was holding his arm with both her hands. And she was not his enemy. His heart was charged with wrath, and grievous against her, but he would not think she was his enemy any more—and his mother—the name startled him, and there was something in the close contact with this beautiful lady and the pressure of her hands, that gave Archie a bewildered new sensation in the midst of his rage

and misery. The very sense of her superiority—that superiority that had been so humiliating, so sore a subject, and her beauty which he had never appreciated, but which somehow came in to amaze yet touch him, as with the deep curves round her anxious eyes, pale with watching and trouble, she held him and kept him back on the threshold of the friendless world, all evident in the surprise which penetrated through Archie's wretchedness. Was it a promise of something better at the bottom of the deepest wrong of them all?

"I don't know what you mean—about my mother—" he said.

"I promised her," said Evelyn, the tears dropping from her eyes, "when I first caught sight of this house, which should have been hers,—I promised her, that you should be cared for, as if she were here."

"What was that?" he said; "something touched me—what was that? Who is it? Is there some one playing tricks here?"

He worked himself out of her grasp, turning to the other side, where there was no one nor anything to be seen. It was the darkest hour of the night, and the coldest and most dreary, though indeed, it was already morning, and in many a humble house about the inhabitants were already awake and stirring. But there was a stillness in the deserted hall, as if some one had died there, and all the revellers had fled from the deserted place. He searched about the side of the hall, peering and

groping in the feeble miserable light, but came back to where Evelyn stood, coming close to her, shivering, with a scared and blanched face.

"Somebody touched me, on my shoulder," he said in a very low voice.

"You have had no sleep. Your nerves are excited. Go back, go back, my poor boy, to your bed and sleep."

"No, never when that has been said against me—never—if there was not another house in the world."

"Archie, my dear, we must keep our sense and our heads clear. Whoever has done it, must know and be on the watch to escape, and you must see that you must be cleared: it must be made quite plain as the light of day."

"I will never be cleared," he said shaking his head. "My father will never say that he was wrong, and how should I find out? I am not clever to be a detective. There are things that are never found out. No, there's no light of day for me. Aunt Jean will take me in, and I will go to the foundry and work, as he did. But I will never be the man he was," the boy said with a sort of forlorn pride in the father who had thrown him off. "Mark you, I think maybe you are good as well as bonnie, and far better than the like of us. If I had known sooner, it might have been different. Let me go."

"Oh boy, boy! you must be cleared, and you won't stay and do it," she cried, grasping his arm again.

He unloosed her hands with a certain roughness yet tenderness. "Let me go," he said. "I will go, there is nobody on earth that can stop me." He undid the iron bar that held the door with fierce haste, paying no attention to her pleadings, and flung the big door open, letting in the chill morning air, which sped like a messenger unseen swiftly through the hall and up the stairs, and driving Mrs. Rowland back with a chill that went to her heart.

Archie stepped out into the dark world. Over the mouth of the loch where the current of the great river swept its waters in, there was a faint trembling of whiteness, which meant a new day. He did not feel the cold or any shock from it, but instead of hurrying forth as might have been looked for, lingered, standing outside a moment, with his face turned towards that lightness in the east. Evelyn wrapped her shawl more closely round her and followed him, standing upon the step of the door to make a last effort. But he paid no attention to what she said. He stood lingering on the gravel absorbed in his own thoughts. Then he came up to her again close, as if he had for the first time remarked her presence. "Do you think," he said, "it could be *her*, to give me heart?" and then without waiting for a reply, he turned away.

Cold and startled and shivering, Evelyn watched his retiring figure till it was lost in the darkness, and then closed the door, with a heart that was fluttering and sick in her breast. He had said

many strange things—things which almost made it possible that he was not so innocent as she thought, and yet he was innocent, he must be innocent! She crossed the dark hall with a tremor in her weariness and exhaustion. It needed not the darkness to veil an ethereal spirit. Had Mary been there?

CHAPTER III

NOT a word was said of Archie in the house of Rosmore until the tired and still sleepy party assembled to breakfast. Evelyn, who had not closed her eyes till daylight, had slept late, and had not been disturbed ; and her husband had no opportunity of questioning her, had he been disposed, until they met at the breakfast-table. The rest of the party were all assembled when she came in—Rowland himself invisible behind his newspaper, and taking no notice, while the others were talking as gaily as usual, without any sign of being moved by any knowledge of a catastrophe. Eddy Saumarez indeed had dark lines under his eyes, but his talk was endless as ever. He gave Mrs. Rowland a quick and keen look of investigation as she came in, but Eddy was the last person in her thoughts, and she did not even observe the glance. The conversation, in due course of the table, ran on without much interruption from the strangers, who dropped in one by one, and to whom the mistress of the house gave all her care.

"Archie was magnificent with Lady Jean," said Eddy. "I never saw anything so good as his bow. He put his feet together like a French dandy of the last century. We've lost the art in our degenerate days."

"Oh," said Marion, "that was nothing wonderful, for it was a Frenchman that we got our dancing from, Archie and me. He used to play a little fiddle and caper about. Some people thought he was old-fashioned—the MacColls—but they were just as ignorant! He taught me that way of doing my steps, you know"—And Marion sprang up, lifting a fold of her dress to exhibit a neat foot pointed in a manner which presumably her former partner had admired.

"Oh, yes, I know—you danced young Cameron's heart away. As for mine, it is well known I have got none. But did you see him in the reel? By Jove, he sprang a foot from the floor."

"Who is him?" said Rosamond—"Mr. Rowland or Mr. Cameron—you might make your descriptions more clear."

"Oh, Archie! No. He wanted lightness perhaps a little in the waltzes, but the reels he performed like one to the manner born."

"Oh, I don't know," said Marion, "that he was more born to one than to the other. We've danced very few reels, if that is what you mean. Waltzes and polkas, and so forth, is what we were learned to dance—just like other people. But it is true that Archie was never so good at it as—"

Marion paused with a feeling of her stepmother's eyes upon her, though indeed Mrs. Rowland was far too much occupied by the other guests, even had her mind been less troubled, to have any perception of the chatter going on at her side.

"It is savage," said Rosamond, "but it has a kind of sense in it; whereas going round and round is delirious, but it has none. One enjoys dancing very much, but one is rather ashamed of it after it is over. Why should one spend hours doing nothing but go round and round? When you look on and don't dance, it is silly beyond anything in the world."

"I dare say the wall-flowers think so," said Eddy. "But they would not if they could get partners."

"That is the worst of it," said Rosamond reflectively. "Probably they are far the nicest people in the room. I thought last night we were all like the little figures on the barrel-organ that used to play under our nursery windows, going round and round till it made one giddy to see them. And to think that people with other things in their minds should go like that a whole evening; and all the trouble that was taken to prepare for them, and all the trouble to make things rational again, and only know perhaps in the midst of all the nonsense—"

"What—in the midst of all the nonsense, Miss Saumarez?" said Mr. Rowland, suddenly laying down his paper, which had much the effect of a gun suddenly fired into the midst of them, for it was very rarely that he interfered in the conversation of

the young members of the party. His face, which always had a weather-beaten tone, was flushed and redder than usual, which is the unattractive way in which some middle-aged people show their trouble, instead of the more interesting method of young folk.

"Oh, nothing," said Rosamond a little startled, and answering like any shy girl suddenly finding herself called to book. She recovered her courage, however, and continued: "I mean it looks silly to see everybody twirling and twirling as if they had nothing to do or think of, when they must have things to think of, even in the midst of a ball."

Rowland threw down his paper and rose from his seat. "You are about right, however you came about your knowledge," he said, and walking to the window stood with his large back turned towards them, staring out and seeing nothing; indeed as the windows of the dining-room looked only into the shrubberies, there was nothing but trees and bushes to see.

"It is not the fashion," said Eddy, "to wear your heart on your sleeve, thank heaven. And society's the best of discipline in that way. When a man's hit, he must blubber out loud before the crowd like a child. I am always at my funniest when I'm hardest hit—and as for the governor, Rose, you know when he's bad by the way he laughs at everything. By the way," cried Eddy, "what's become of Rowland, the lazy beggar? doesn't he mean to come down stairs to-day?"

"Archie was always lazy in the morning," said Marion, "we never could get him up."

"Young Mr. Rowland should have a long allowance," said a lady who had been absorbed in her letters, "for he had double work last night. He was ubiquitous, finding partners, finding places, doing everything. You should have heard Lady Jean. He fairly won her heart."

"And mine too," cried Lady Marchbanks from the other end of the table, who was known to copy Lady Jean faithfully in all her strongly expressed opinions.

"That would show, according to Saumarez," said a young man laughing, "that to show himself so lively, he must have had something on his mind."

Rowland turned round from the window at which he stood, and gave a keen look at the careless young speaker who had just appeared, then returned to his contemplation of the somewhat gloomy landscape without.

"Are you studying the weather, James?" said Evelyn from her place at the head of the table.

"That's not a subject that repays contemplation in this country, Mrs. Rowland," said Sir John Marchbanks with his mouth full.

"It wants variety, it's always raining: the glass may say what it likes, but you're sure of that."

"The glass," said another gentleman, strolling towards the window to join the laird, "has little effect in this district. But just for the fun of the thing, Rowland, what does it say?"

James Rowland was not a man who wore his heart on his sleeve, but neither had he that super-admirable discipline of society which rouses the spirits to special force in order to conceal a calamity. He turned round upon the inquirer somewhat sharply: "The fun of the thing? I see no fun in the thing. Corn still out on those high-lying fields, and frost in the air, and the glass falling: it's not funny to me."

Nothing was funny to him at that moment, to look at his flushed and clouded face. He had held himself in for some time, but the tension was unbearable. Was Archie coming, and all as usual? was he sulking in his room? was he—terrible question—gone; gone for ever out of his father's house? His trouble took, as in so many middle-aged minds, the form of acute irritation. And yet he did his best to restrain himself.

"Oh, that's true," said the other, somewhat disconcerted. "Perhaps we don't think enough of the poor bodies' bit fields. But they should learn better than to put corn there. You will find no decent farmer doing that."

"Corn's but a delusion at the best, in these days," said a country gentleman with a sigh.

"But if we are going out to take you your luncheons to the hill," cried the pretty Miss Marchbanks, "we must be sure of the weather. Oh, I am not going out upon the hill if it rains, to go over my ankles in every bog."

Rowland had turned from the window and was

looking round the table with a faint hope of finding his son there. He had tried to smooth out his troubled countenance, and at this speech he contrived to smile. "I will go and consult the big glass in the hall for your satisfaction, Miss Marchbanks," he said.

"Oh, do, do! how kind you are! and we'll all come too," cried the girl. But he did not wait for this undesirable result. What a relief it was to escape, to get beyond reach of all those inquisitive looks, to reach the shelter of the room which no one invaded. He hid himself behind the heavy curtains and the closed door, only in time to escape the invasion of the light-hearted company, whose voices and footsteps he could hear coming after him. He had purposely refrained from asking any questions about Archie, not willing to betray his uneasiness to the servants. His wife had remained long down stairs after him, but even with her, who knew everything, he was reluctant to ask any questions; and she had been asleep when he was roused by the movement in the house to the shining of a new day. He knew nothing—nothing from the time when, with angry despair, he had gone up stairs and wavered for a moment at Archie's door. All he had wanted then was to pour out upon the boy the bitterness of his heart. But now the snatches of broken sleep which had come to him refreshing him against his will, and the enforced quiet of the night, and the new beginning of the day, had worked their natural effect. A longing

came into his mind to dream it all over again, to see if perhaps there might be any fact to support the boy's vehement and impassioned denial. No, no, he said to himself, there could be no proof—none! Some disgraceful secret must lie beneath. It was not in Archie's nature (which was kind enough—the fool had a good heart and faithful enough to his friends) to have refused to help his old comrade without some reason. Perhaps, Rowland thought, this was to do that—the fool! he had no sense about money. It might have been for this purpose—a good purpose; a thing he had himself taunted him for not doing. The perspiration came out in great beads on his brow—a cold dew of pain. Could it be for this that he had made himself a criminal? or had he not done it at all? But that was impossible. Who else could have done it? It would be easy for him whose own handwriting resembled his father's, whose appearance with so large a cheque would have occasioned no suspicion. It had been a little pleasure to Rowland, and warmed his heart with a sensation of the mysterious bond of nature, to find that, though he had nothing to do with his son's education, Archie's handwriting had resembled his. And now the recollection struck him like a sharp blow. And then the son—who could wonder that he came with so large a cheque? But no, it was not he that had cashed the cheque, for it had been wondered over, and young Farquhar—confound young Farquhar!—no doubt some shady puppy

doing well, good as they always are these fellows to contrast with—— He had thrown himself into his chair, but now he got up again and walked about the room. That the bank people should be so anxious to cover young Farquhar at the cost of Archie—— It was not that; he knew there was something wanted to complete the logic of that, but it came to the same thing. To transfix his own heart with ten thousand wounds, to ruin the boy—for what was it but ruin to the boy, whatever came of it, not a trick and frolic as the young fool pretended to think, but ruin, ruin, all the same—for the sake of young Farquhar, to save a little delay in his advancement! Good Lord! how disproportioned things were in this life!

He was standing by the fire, idly looking at the calendar on his mantelpiece, which marked the date 25th of October, a date he never forgot, when the door was cautiously opened and Saunders, the butler, came in, closing it again carefully after him. There was something in the man's eyes which already told half his tale.

> "Lo, this man's face, like to a title leaf,
> Foretells the nature of the tragic volume."

Rowland did not probably know these lines or anything like them, but he watched Saunders's approach with the same feeling. The butler came quite up to him and spoke in a low voice, as if he were afraid of being heard. "I beg your pardon, sir," he said; "I thought I had better let you know;

Mr. Archibald, sir,—I'm thinking he has been called away suddenly."

"What?" cried Rowland, holding by the marble of the chimney-piece, and feeling as if a touch would bring him down.

"Mr. Archibald, sir—I'm thinking he must have had some sudden call. His room is lying in great disorder, and his bed has not been slept in this night."

He held by the marble of the chimney-piece for a full minute before he came to himself; and then his lips hanging a little loose, his voice a little thick—"Do you mean that my son—is not in the house?"

"He's had some sudden call," said the man, with instinctive endeavours to lessen the shock. "He's left no message. And there's the gentlemen all intent upon the shooting, and the ladies to go with their luncheon——"

Rowland paused for another minute before he spoke. Then he said, "Mr. Archie had to start very early for Glasgow on business. It was only settled last night—something about that messenger, you remember, Saunders, that came in the middle of the ball and looked so frightened." His voice became easier as it went on, and he laughed at this recollection. "As I could not go myself, I sent my son. He may be detained a day or two. Just go to Mr. Saumarez and ask him, with my compliments, if he would take Mr. Archie's place. Is Roderick ready?"

"Oh, yes, sir; quite ready and waiting. It's a thought late: all the gentlemen have been a little late this morning."

"What can you expect, Saunders, after a ball? You can tell Mrs. Rowland I would like to see her as soon as she has a moment to spare."

It was so then; without remedy. Archie had gone—gone—not fled; that could never be said of him; gone to wait for the police coming to arrest him for forgery, as if that would ever be. God! his boy—Mary's boy—the only son; whom the ladies had been praising so for his conduct last night; whom Lady Jean, they said—Lady Jean who was so ill to please, who was not an easy person—and he was gone. Rowland felt his heart in his breast as heavy as a stone. It had been beating very irregularly, sometimes loudly, sometimes quieted down for a moment, now it seemed to stop and lie heavy, like a stone. He waited till he heard the ladies' voices die away, the men come out to the door where Roderick was awaiting them, and saw the start from his window, himself unseen, feeling a kind of contempt in his misery for the men who are so easily amused. Old men, too: Sir John, as old as himself, so easily amused! but then, perhaps, there was no son in this case to make his father's life a burden to him. "Has he daughters?" old Lear said, as if a man had no right to be mad who had not. As for Sir John, tramping along in his knickerbockers, an older man than Rowland, he had no son; and yet the father unhappy felt a sort

of contempt for him so easily amused, while others were too sick at heart to bear the light. He went out of his room when the coast was clear, and went to Archie's room, which lay in the disorder it had been found in by the servant who went to call him in the morning: the drawers all open, the things thrown about. Nothing could be more dismal than the aspect of the room in this abandonment. It is terrible at all times to enter the empty room of any one whom we love, especially when its owner is sick or in trouble. The unused bed cold, as if it were never to be employed more; the air of vacancy; the emptiness and silence, have an effect of suggestion more overwhelming than any simple fact. And Archie's room was not only empty, it was abandoned. His father turned over the things upon the table in the miserable preoccupation of his mind, not knowing what he did, and then lifted a handful of papers, including Archie's cheque-book which was lying there. How careless of Archie, he said, mechanically, as he carried them away. There was no real intention of carrying them away. He had not, indeed, thought on the subject at all, but took them up almost unawares.

Evelyn put her hand within his arm as he crossed the hall to his room and accompanied him there. She told him that Archie had gone, but in what temper and disposition, softened, as she thought and hoped, and he listened with his head bent down, saying nothing. He was angry, yet he was soothed that she should be on Archie's side.

"You take his part against your husband," he said roughly, but he loved her better for it than if she had taken his part against his son. There are artifices of the heart which it is well to know. And he sat heavily thinking for some time after she had ended her tale. Then he said abruptly, "I gave you yon cheque to keep. Give it me back, please."

Evelyn opened the drawer of a little ornamental escritoire, in which she had locked that fatal paper, and gave it to her husband. Rowland was a strong man, and he was not emotional, but the sight of the two round marks which were on the paper with broken edges, when the tears had pleaded unawares with their weight of saltness and bitterness the rage and horror of the boy accused, was more than he could bear. He put it down hastily on the table, and for a moment covered his face with his hands. Those tears which anguish and shame had forced from his boy's eyes—who could have seen them unmoved? There was a relenting, a melting, a thawing of horrible ice about his heart. "If he was guilty," he said, in a faltering voice. "Evelyn, if he was guilty, do you think——"

She went and stood behind him, drawing his head against her breast. "You could but forgive him," she said, very low; "at the worst—at the worst."

"Come," he said, after that moment of emotion, "it is just a question of business after all. *This* was never taken from any book of mine. You see the

difference—" He opened a drawer and drew out his cheque-book, pointing to her the numbers. The cheque was numbered in much more advanced numerals than Mr. Rowland's book. "That's nothing in itself," he added, "for I might have borrowed a cheque from some one, or got it at the bank, if I had been wanting for money then. I might have got it from—anybody that banks there. Archie—I might have got it from Archie." As he spoke his eye fell suddenly upon his son's cheque-book which he had brought from the empty room. He took it up and opened it almost with a smile. But the first glance struck him with a strange alarm He gave a frightened look up at her, throwing back his head for a moment, then began slowly to turn over the pages. What an office that was! Evelyn stood behind, looking over his shoulder, feeling that the moment of intolerable crisis had come.

The smile was fixed upon his face; it changed its character, and got to be the cynical smile of a demon upon that honest face. Over and over went the quivering long leaves of the pink cheques in his trembling fingers, and then——

"James, James!"

He put it in the place from which it had been torn, a scrap of the perforated line had been left on the side of the foil, and fitted with the horrible precision of such things. He laid it there exact, rag to rag, then gave her a triumphant glance, and broke into a fit of dry and awful laughter, such as the trembling woman, whom he pushed away from him, had never heard before.

"There!" he said, "there! and what do you think of that, and your brave young hero now?"

It seemed to Evelyn as if her spirit and courage were entirely gone from her, and she could never hold up her head again. She had recoiled when he pushed her away, but now came tremblingly back, and looked at it as at a death warrant. Ah! no delusion—no fancy—it was as clear as the cold dreary daylight that poured in upon them through the great window—as clear as that Mary's boy, who had looked so honest, who had faced his accuser with such rage of upright indignation, who had approached with such an unsuspecting look of innocence, as clear as that the boy——

"No, no, no!" she cried out. "I will not believe my senses, James! There is something in it more than we know."

"Ay!" he said, "ay, I well believe that—something more than you and me know, or perhaps could understand—though he's but twenty. Do you hear, Evelyn—only twenty, with plenty of time——"

"Yes," she cried, clasping her husband's hand, upon which her tears fell heavily, "plenty, plenty of time, thank God, to repent."

"To do more, and to do worse," he said, "repent! I believe in that when I see it—but never before. Plenty of time to drag down my honour to the dust—to make my name a byword—to lay my pride low. Oh, plenty of time for that, and a good beginning."

He took a large envelope out of one of the

drawers of the table at which he was sitting, and methodically arranging the cheque in the place from which it had been torn, at the end of the book, placed the cheque-book in the envelope, and fastening it up, locked it into a private drawer.

"There!" he said, "that is done with, Evelyn. We'll say no more about it. We'll just disperse, my dear, you to your farm and me to my merchandize. The incident is over. It's ended and done with. If we can forget it, so much the better. It's not very long to have had the delusion of a—a—son in the house. It's well it has been so short a time. Now that chapter's closed, and there's no more to be said."

"James! you will not abandon the boy for the first error—the first slip!"

"Error—slip! I would like to know what kind of a moral code you have?" he said with a smirk. "An error would be—perhaps staying out too late at night—perhaps forgetting himself after dinner. I would not cast him off for a slip like that. And if he asks me for money, he shall have it, enough to keep him. But as for the slip of a lad of twenty who signs another man's name to a cheque for a thousand pounds——"

"Oh, what does the sum matter!" she cried.

"The sum matters—nothing. I would have made a coat of thousand pounds, like old Jacob in the Bible. Ay, that and more. But never mind, it's all passed and over, Evelyn. My dear, you have behaved through it all like an angel. God bless you

for it. Now go away and leave me to my business, and we will never mention it again."

"I do not consent to that, James. I will mention him many times again."

"Then you will force me to keep out of your reach, my dear," her husband cried. And yet he was thankful to her for what she said, thankful to the bottom of his heart.

Thus Archie disappeared, and the waters closed over his head—but not silently or without commotion. The men went out to the hill and made tolerable but not very good bags; the ladies took them their luncheon, and there was a very merry party among the heather, but when two came together they asked each other, "What has become of the son?" or "What have they done with Archie?" and the incident was as far from being ended as human incident ever was.

CHAPTER IV

If any one thinks that such events can come to pass in a house, and the servants remain unaware of the movement and commotion, I can only say that these persons are little acquainted either with human nature, or the peculiar emotions and interests called forth by domestic service. As certain members are kept in exercise by certain kinds of action, so there are certain sets of mental and moral fibres that are moved by the differing conditions of existence, and no one is more completely and continuously in operation than those of interest, curiosity, and that mixture of liking and opposition which naturally actuate one set of human creatures towards the other set of human creatures who are immediately over them, and control and occupy all their movements. It gives something of the interest of a continual drama to life, to watch the complicated play of human fate going on so near, in circumstances so intimate that it is scarcely possible not to enter into a certain partizanship, and take sides. Thus there were some

of the servants who were all for Mr. Archie, and had an instinctive certainty that he was being unjustly treated and ill-used, and some who held for the master, with a conviction that a young son was never to be trusted, and was apt to go astray, as the sparks fly upward, by force of nature. Singularly enough, though Mrs. Rowland was a considerate and kind mistress, good to everybody, and taking a much greater interest in the members of her household than either father or son, nobody took her side: partly because she was, more or less, like themselves, a sort of spectator, not one of the first actors in the drama; and still more because she was the stepmother, and naturally, according to all traditions, a malignant element doing harm to both. The items of fresh information which were brought to the upper servants by Saunders, and which percolated through the house by means of an observant footman, were eagerly seized by the attendant crowd, and rapidly classified under fact or guess, according to its kind, until the superstructure was very remarkable. Naturally, the servants' hall knew far better what Mr. Rowland was going to do than he himself did, and had settled the career of Archie in every particular before he had more than the most rudimentary idea of it himself.

It is a very poor and shabby thing to gossip with servants as to the habits and peculiarities of their masters: nothing can be more true than this. But it is very difficult for a lady not to hear, as she can

scarcely help hearing, the word dropt by her maid —or for a man to arrest in time the revelation that falls from his attendant in respect to the disturbed condition of a house. "How could there be much comfort in the house, my lady, when there was such a terrible scene in the middle of the night, and poor Mr. Archie never in his bed at all, but gone out of the house by break of day." You have to be quick indeed, and very much on your guard, to prevent the woman, as she stands behind you, from letting loose such an expression as this before you can stop her. And still less is a man able to check the valet who thinks it so very queer that a gentleman should have arrived late on business, and come scared-like into the ball-room all in his travelling things. "And they do say, sir, that that's why young Mr. Rowland has disappeared this morning, though the house is full of company." How can you restrain or ignore these communications from the backstairs? Consequent upon a number of such communications was the resolution taken by everybody at Rosmore to arrange their departure as early as possible on the second day. All felt confused and troubled in the dreary rooms in the evening, where there was nobody to lead the revels, and where the master of the house scarcely took any pains to conceal the preoccupation of his mind. Nobody could have known, except by the anxious glance she threw now and then at her husband, by Mrs. Rowland's bearing that anything was wrong, and Marion was in her usual spirits,

ready to do a little solid flirtation (for the young men complained of Marion that she was far from being light in hand) with any candidate: but Rowland gave so broken an attention to what was going on, mingled in the conversation so abruptly, and fell into such silences between, that it was easy to see how little accomplished he was in the art of living, according to its highest social sense. Whether it was that, or the hints from below stairs, which had reached more or less every member of the party, it was certain that it was a party very little at its ease. One or two of the bolder guests asked directly for Archie, if he was expected home that evening, if he was likely to be long detained by his business, etc.; the more timid did not mention his name. "What is the best thing to do," they asked each other privately, "when there is trouble of that kind in a house?" Lady Marchbanks, who was not generally supposed to be a very wise woman, here spoke with authority out of the depths of a great experience, being a woman with many brothers, sons, and nephews, and full of knowledge on such points. "I always ask," she said, "just as if I were sensible of nothing—just as if it were the most natural thing in the world for a young man to be suddenly called away on business, when it is well known he has no business, and his father's house full of guests. It's the kindest way," Lady Marchbanks said, and she had occasion to know. But they were all unanimous in finding reasons why they must

depart next morning after their delightful visit. Interesting as human complications are to all spectators, there are few people who think it right to stay on in manifest presence of trouble in the house.

There was one, however, who excelled himself in friendly devotion to his hosts, and that was Eddy Saumarez, who took upon himself, only with far great ability than Archie could have shown, the work of the son of the house. There was every appearance that it would have been a very dull and embarrassing evening but for Eddy, who flung himself into the middle of affairs like a hero. He sang, he talked, he arranged a rubber in one corner, a game in another, of that semi-intellectual kind which is such a blessed resource in a country-house, and has the happy effect of making dull people think themselves clever. Eddy himself was too clever not to be infinitely bored by such contrivances, but he forgot himself and stood up like a hero, asking the most amusing questions and giving the wittiest answers when it was his turn to be badgered, and keeping the company in such a state of stimulation that even the heaviest grew venturesome, and made themselves ridiculous with delight, for the amusement of the rest. He even drew a smile from Rowland, who was too restless for whist, but who came more than once within Eddy's wilder circle of merriment, and was cheated into a momentary forgetfulness. When the party dispersed, having passed, instead of the dull hours they had most of them anticipated, an

unusually animated evening, Rowland came up and laid his heavy hand on Eddy's shoulder. The young man started like a criminal, grew red and grew pale, and for once in his life was so disconcerted that he had not a word to say. And yet Rowland's address was of the most flattering kind. "I can't tell how much I'm obliged to you," his host said. "You've been the life of the house since ever you came, Eddy, my man. And to-night I don't know what we should have done without you. My wife will tell you the same thing. You've been the saving of us to-night. If ever I can serve you in anything—Lord! I would have done that for her, on account of her interest in you. But remember now, that on your own account, if I ever can be of any service——"

Eddy shrank back from that touch. He would not meet Rowland's eye. He faltered in his answer, he that was always so ready. "I don't deserve that you should speak to me so," he stammered out. "I—I've done nothing, sir. All that I can ask is your forgiveness for—for—inflicting so long a visit upon you."

"Is that all?" said Rowland, with a laugh. "Then I hope you'll make your offence double, and give me twice as much to forgive you. Are you bound for the smoking-room now?"

"Perhaps I had better go," said Eddy, carefully watching the other's eyes.

"Do, my good lad. I had a disturbed night, and I'm out of the habit of keeping late hours. I will

not appear myself, if you are going—though I dare say they will all go soon to their beds to-night."

"Good-night, sir," said Eddy, "I hope you'll sleep well." There was almost a tender tone in the youth's voice.

"Oh, I'll sleep well enough. I always sleep. Good-night—and thank you again, Eddy, for backing me up."

As for Evelyn, she pressed his hand with a grateful look, and said also, "Thank you, Eddy," in a soft tone, which, for some reason or other, seemed more than Eddy could bear. He almost tore his hand from hers, and turned his back upon her as though she had insulted him, which filled Mrs. Rowland with astonishment; but when there were so many things of importance to think of, what did Eddy's look matter? She was glad when the girls too said good-night, and left her alone with her husband—who, however, was in no humour for conversation.

"I'm going to bed," he said. "I can always sleep, thank God. Evelyn, if you ever write to that lad's father——"

"I never do, James."

"Well, you might, my dear. It would have been no offence to me. I'm not one to sin against my mercies, as if I did not know when I had got a good woman. But you might say the lad had been a real standby. When you have a son, and the like of that can be said, it's a pity that a man should not have the satisfaction——"

He broke off with a sigh, and walked up and down the room with his hands deeply thrust into his pockets, and then pulled the heavy curtains aside and looked out. It was one of the windows under the colonnade just where the view was—the view through the trees over the triumphant Clyde, with its towns and hills beyond. There was a faint glimmer of light in sky and water, which showed where the opening was. Ah! this, which had been the star of his life for so many years—to what had it turned when it was granted to his eager desire?

"James! there is nothing to prevent you from having that satisfaction—yet."

He looked at her and burst into a hoarse laugh —then, as she essayed to speak again, stamped his foot on the carpet in impatience and hurried away.

An hour later there was a knock at Rosamond's door in the stillness of the early withdrawal which last night's dissipation had made general throughout the house. Rosamond was sitting in her dressing-gown before her fire—thinking of many things, and particularly of her father's last letter, which lay open upon the little table beside her.

"Stay as long as you can," Mr. Saumarez said. "It's the best chance you can have at present to see a little society, and keep Eddy on the straight."

Rosamond was not happy, she could not have told why. It was not that Archie was of any importance to her, but there is something in the atmosphere of a disturbed and unhappy house which reflects itself in the consciousness of the most

indifferent guest. She could not think what he could have done. The offence of which his father had convicted him the other day in the hall, of having refused money to a friend, was of all reproaches in the world the most extraordinary to Rosamond. She thought with a laugh that was irrestrainable, of what her own father's remark would have been, and the high tone of indignation he would have assumed at the folly, nay the criminality, of throwing money away. "Where do you expect to get more?" he would have asked with righteous wrath, had his son been suspected of such a miserable weakness. But, to do him justice, Eddy had no guilty inclinations that way. Curiously enough, while Rosamond laughed with the surprised contempt, yet respect, of the poor for Rowland's liberality, which had, in spite of herself the aspect of "swagger" in the girl's eyes—she felt, at the same time, something of the same astonishment, mingled with disappointment, that Archie should have laid himself open to such a reproach. "I should have thought he would have given away —everything he had," Rosamond said to herself—not as praise, but as a characteristic feature of Archie's nature, as she conceived it—and she was disappointed that he had not carried out her idea of him, notwithstanding that she believed such a procedure to be folly of the deepest dye.

She was considerably startled by the knock at the door, and still more by seeing Eddy in the silk smoking-suit, which was too thin for this locality.

It was perhaps that flimsy dress which made him look so pinched and cold, and he came in with eager demonstration of his delight at the sight of her fire.

"Mine's gone out an hour ago," he said, "let's get a good warm before we go to bed."

"You have come from the smoking room," she said; "you will fill my room with the smell of your cigarettes. I hate the smell of the paper worse than the tobacco."

"Oh, you're always hating something," said Eddy vaguely. And then he added, standing with his back to the fire, looking down upon her in her low chair—"It won't matter how it smells, for to-morrow we ought to go."

"To go!" she cried in astonishment. "What new light have you got on the subject? for I have heard nothing of this before."

"Never mind what you've heard," said Eddy. "Circumstances have arisen—altogether beyond my control," he added with a laugh at the familiar words. "In short, if you must know it, Rose, I can't stay here any longer, and that is all there is about it," he said.

"Do you mean now that Archie has got into disgrace? How has he got into disgrace? I can't, think what he can have done."

"I mean—that and other things. How should I know what he has done? Some of his father's fads. But in every way we'd better go: everybody is going, and I'm dead-tired of the place. There is not a single thing to do. We shot every bird on

the hill to-day, and more—and after this burst there won't be a soul in the house for months. Probably they have themselves visits to pay. I tell you we'd better go to-morrow, Rose."

"They say nothing about visits to pay," said Rosamond, bewildered. "Mrs. Rowland said to-day she hoped we would stay as long as we pleased: and father is of opinion that if we can hang on for another month—well, he says so. It saves so much expense when the house is shut up."

"But I tell you I am not going to do it," said Eddy, "whatever the governor chooses to say. You can if you please, but I sha'n't. You may stay altogether if you please. Marry Archie, it would not perhaps be such a bad spec; and become the daughter of the house." He laughed, but there was not much mirth in his laugh.

"You need not be insulting at least," said his sister. "And as for the daughter of the house—the less there is said on that subject the better, if you are going away."

"Why! do you think she would mind?" he asked. "Mind you, she is not so simple as you think. I don't believe she cares. If she did, that might be a sort of a way: but mind what I say, Rose—that girl will not marry anybody till she's been at court and seen the world. She might like me a little perhaps—but if she saw her way to anything better—as heaven knows she might do easily enough. Oh, I don't make myself any illusions on that subject! She would drop me like a shot."

"As you would her," said Rosamond, with an air of scorn.

"Precisely so; but unless I'm very far mistaken we meet—that little Glasgow girl and I, that am the fine flower of civilization—on equal ground."

"So much the better for her if it is so," said Rosamond.

"Am I saying anything different? only I don't think there's the least occasion to be nervous about little May."

There was a pause here, and for a moment or two nothing was said. A little hot colour had come on Rosamond's face. Was she perhaps asking herself whether Archie was as easily to be let down as his sister, and likely to emancipate himself as lightly? But on this subject, at least, she never said a word. She broke silence at last by saying, with a sigh—

"We have nowhere to go."

"Nonsense: we have the house to go to. I don't say it will be very comfortable. Old Sarah is not a *cordon bleu*."

"As if I cared about the cooking!"

"But I do," said Eddy; "and the one that does will naturally have more to suffer than the one that doesn't; but thank heaven, there's the club—and I dare say we shall get on. The end of October is not so bad in town. There's always some theatre open—and a sort of people have come back."

"Nobody we know—and we have not a penny; —and father will be so angry he will send us nothing

And they are so willing to have us here; why, I heard Mr. Rowland say to you——"

"Never mind what you heard Rowland say," said Eddy, almost sullenly. "You can stay if you like. But I won't, and I can't stop here. Oh! its been bad enough to-day! I wouldn't go through another, not for——" Here he stopped and broke forth into a laugh, which stopped again suddenly, leaving him with a dark and clouded countenance —"a thousand pounds!"

"I don't understand you, Eddy," said Rosamond, with an anxious look. "You have not been borrowing money? What do you mean by a thousand pounds?"

"Do you think," said Eddy with a short laugh, "that any one would lend me a thousand pounds? That shows how little you girls know."

"If I don't know, it would be strange," said Rosamond, with a sigh, "seeing how dreadfully hard it has been to get money since ever I can remember. And there is no telling with people like Mr. Rowland. Didn't you hear him coming down upon Archie for not giving his money to some one who was ill? Fancy father talking like that to one of us!"

"The circumstances have no analogy," said Eddy. "In the first place, we have no money to give: and we want hundreds of things that money could buy. Archie and fellows like him are quite different—they want nothing, and they've got balances at their bankers; not that he has much of that, poor beggar, after all."

"What do you mean, Eddy?"

"Well, I mean he's a good sort of fellow if he weren't such a fool;—and I could have thrown some light on his refusal, perhaps, if they had asked me."

"Oh, why didn't you, Eddy!—when his father was so vexed and so severe."

"It was none of my business," said the young man. "And Archie is not a fellow who likes to be interfered with. If I had suggested anything, he would probably have turned upon me."

"And what was it?" said Rosamond; "what was the light you could have thrown?"

"Oh, I don't mean to tell you," cried Eddy; "you have nothing to do with it that I can see. And it is of no use telling his father, for he's in a far deeper hole onw. Poor old Archie—he is an ass, though, or he would never have got into such a mess as he is in now. He never can strike a blow in his own defence, and never will; but look here, Rose," cried Eddy, "all this jawing will make it no better; I am going to-morrow, whatever you may choose to do. I can't stop another night here."

"You *must* have something to do with it. I am sure you have something on your conscience, Eddy. You have got a conscience somewhere, though you pretend not. It is you that has got Archie into trouble!—you have been tempting him and leading him away. That day in Glasgow! Ah, now I see!"

"What do you see?" cried Eddy, contemp-

tuously; but his sallow face betrayed a sharp, sudden rising of colour. He did not look at her, but kicked away a footstool with some vehemence, on which a moment before he had rested his foot.

"Let's hear!" he said, "what fine thing do you see?"

"You must have got—gambling, or something," she said, feeling to her heart the inadequacy of the words to express the great terror and incoherent suggestion of evil that had come into her mind, she knew not how.

"Gambling—with Archie!" her brother burst into a loud laugh. "One might as well try to gamble with Ben Ros, or whatever that beast of a hill is called. I broke all my toes going up him to-day. No, my dear Rose; you will have to try again," Eddy said.

She looked at him with eyes full of consternation and horror. It was incredible to Rosamond that Archie should have done anything to merit such condemnation: but it was not at all incredible to her that Eddy should have got him into mischief. She looked at her brother as if she could have burst through the envelope of his thoughts with her intent and searching eyes.

"Eddy, I *know* you have something to do with it," she said.

"That proves nothing," said Eddy; "you know what you think only."

"I don't know what I think! I think terrible things, but I can't tell what they are. Oh, Eddy,

this was such a quiet house when we came into it! They might not be very happy, but there was no harm. And Archie had begun to please his father. I know he tried. And they have been very kind to us—the ball last night was as much for us as for their own children."

"It was to get themselves into favour in the county—it was neither for us nor for them."

Rosamond was herself so much accustomed to measure everything in this way, and to have it so measured, that she had no protest to make.

"But we had all the benefit," she said. "We were made the chief along with Marion and Archie. And Mr. Rowland has shown how much he thinks of you, Eddy—he has made you his deputy."

"Yes, to save himself trouble," said Eddy; "to amuse his guests—is that a great sign of kindness? It was kindness to himself. But if they had been as kind as—whatever you please, what would that matter? I cannot stand any more of it, and I am going away."

"But you have no money," she said.

"Oh yes; I have a little—enough to take us back to town, if you please—and to get me a few chops at the club till the governor turns up—who has a right to feed me at least until I come of age."

"You must have got it out of Archie," said Rosamond, her cheeks burning, springing from her seat, and standing between him and the door,

as if to force an explanation. But Eddy only smiled.

"For a right down odious supposition—an idea that has neither sense nor possibility in it, commend me to a girl and a sister! How could I get it out of Archie? What had Archie to give? I think you must be taking leave of your senses," he said.

Was it so?—Was it merely a sympathetic sense of the trouble in the house, and sorrow for Archie, whatever might be the cause of his banishment? Or was it some sense of guilt, some feeling that it was he who had led Archie away, and who ought to share in the penalty? But, to tell the truth, Rosamond could not identify any of these fine feelings with Eddy. He was not apt to feel compunctions: perhaps to take him at his word was the safest way.

CHAPTER V

NEXT morning, a rattle of pebbles thrown against the window roused Marion, who was by nature an early riser, and who had been dressed for some time, though she had not gone down stairs. She opened the window, and saw Eddy below, making signs to her and pointing towards a path which led into the woods, across a broad stripe of sunshine. Eddy stood and basked in this light, making gestures, as if in adoration of the sun. He did not call to her, for in the clear morning air his voice might have reached other ears than hers. But Marion called to him lightly, "I'm coming, I'm coming," with no fear of anything that could be said. She was not disturbed by the unceremonious character of his appeal to her attention. Marion's antecedents made it a very natural thing, and no way to be reprehended, that a lad should call to his lass in this way. She ran down stairs, delighted with the summons, and joined him, almost hoping that Miss Marchbanks might see from her window and feel the superiority of the daughter of the house.

"What might you be wanting, rousing people when perhaps they were in their beds?" said Marion.

"You were not in your bed. I know you get up early. Let's have a ramble," said Eddy, "before any one knows."

"Oh, is that all? but we can ramble wherever you please; and when the people are gone," said Marion, with a sigh, "we'll have it all to ourselves."

"Do you wish that the people were not going, May?"

"I never said, sir, that you were to call me May."

"No, but you did not prohibit it. I cannot call you Miss Marion, like the servants, or Miss Rowland, like young Marchbanks."

As he assumed the tone of young Marchbanks when he said this, Marion received it with a burst of laughter. There was nothing particularly amusing in the tone or manners of young Marchbanks, but a mimic has always an easy triumph.

"Alas," said Eddy, instantly changing his tone, and taking her hand to draw it through his arm, "though they were all going away this moment, it would not be much advantage to us, May, for I must go too, this very day."

"You, going, Eddy!" this exclamation burst from her in spite of herself. She hastened to add, "Mr. Saumarez, I did not know you were going. Do you really—really mean—" the tears came into her eyes.

He had drawn her hand through his arm, and held it with his other hand. "I can't stay longer," he said. "How can I stay longer? There is Archie gone, who might be supposed my attraction: and I daren't go and say to your father what my real attraction is."

"Oh, that is nothing to me," said Marion, with a toss of her head, "about your real attraction. Nobody is asking you—you are just welcome to stay or—welcome to go: it is whatever you please."

"You know very well," he said, resisting her attempt to snatch away her hand, "that I would never go if I could help it, unless I could carry you off with me; if I could do that, I should not mind."

"And you know very well," said Marion, "that you will never do that."

"I suppose I ought to know; but there are some things that one never can learn. When a man thinks of a girl night and day, he naturally feels that the girl might give a moment now and then to thoughts of him."

"Oh, as for that," said Marion, tossing her head, "I've had people that thought about me before now, but I never troubled my head to think of them."

"You are as heartless as a stone," said Eddy; "it is of no use speaking to you, for you are past feeling. One might as well fall in love with a picture, or a dummy in a milliner's shop."

"Dummy yourself!" cried Marion, highly indignant, giving him a shake with the hand that was on his arm.

And then they both burst out laughing together. As a matter of fact, though they understood each other extraordinarily well, and made no false representations of each other as lovers are in the habit of doing, there was a little love at bottom between this curious pair.

"Do you know what has been the row about Archie?" said Eddy, after a little pause.

"It's something about money," said Marion; "he has been spending his own money that was given him to spend—and he has not sent it to a poor student, as papa thought he would. But I would like to know why he should? The student should have stayed at home, and then his own people would have been obliged to help him. If Archie were to give up his money to all the poor students, what would be the use of giving him money at all? If I were in his place I am sure I would just give what I please, and keep a good share to myself. It is just ridiculous to give you money, and then say you are to give it away."

"Is that the only reason?" said Eddy; "I thought there had been enough of that."

"Oh, I don't know if it's the only reason. I will go back to the house if it's only Archie you want to hear about. You can ask Mrs. Rowland, she is your great friend, or Saunders, that looks so wise

and knows everything. But for me, I am going back to the house."

"I only ask," said Eddy, tightening his hold on her hand, "to keep it off a little longer; for how am I to say good-bye—not knowing how we may meet again—for I know what's in your thoughts, May. You think I'm well enough to play with while there's nobody here, but when you come up to town and everybody is at your feet——"

"Oh, such ridiculous nonsense,—everybody at my feet! who would be at my feet? no person! You speak as if I were a Duke's daughter."

"You are better than most Duke's daughters. You will marry a Duke if you please, with that little saucy face of yours, and mints of money."

"I hope I will not be married for my money," said Marion: "though of course there's something in that," she added seriously. "I'll not deny that it has to be reckoned with. Papa would not be pleased if all his work came to nothing, and I got just a nobody."

"Like me," said Eddy.

"I never said like you. There might be other things—Papa likes you, you see."

"And you, May? Oh, May, you little witch! I wish—I wish I only wanted to marry you for your money—then I should not feel it as I do now."

"You wouldn't like to marry me without my money," Marion said.

"Wouldn't I,—try me! though all the same I

don't know very well how we should live," Eddy said.

"And I never said I would marry you at all—or any person," said Marion. "May be I will never marry at all."

"Oh, that's so likely!"

"Well, it is not likely," Marion admitted candidly, "but you never know what may happen. And," she added, "if Archie is to be put out of his share, and everything come to me, then whether I liked it or not, I would have to think first what was doing most justice to papa."

Eddy, in spite of his self-control, turned pale. "Archie," he said, in a tone of horror, "put out of his share!"

Marion gave him a keen, investigating look. "When a man has two children," she said, "and one of them flies in his face every time he can, and the other is very careful always to do her duty, whether it is pleasing herself or not, I would not wonder at anything, for my part. He might like the son best, for the name and all that, but if the lassie would do him most justice? I am not saying if it would be a good thing or not. But the man might see that in the one there would be no credit, but plenty in the other. I am thinking of it just in a general way," Marion said

"Then good-bye to me," said Eddy, "if you were to be a great heiress—and Archie! Good life!" he let her hand go, and, cold though the morning air was, wiped the moisture from his forehead. "I'd

better take a header into the loch and be done with it," he said.

"You will not do that, Mr. Eddy, for you like yourself best: though perhaps you may like Archie a little—or, perhaps, me."

"Perhaps even you!" cried Eddy. "Perhaps I do, or I shouldn't have stayed down here in the north for a month with nothing to do. You are a dreadful little thing to talk quietly of tossing me over after all that has passed like an old glove. And to take Archie's place, as if it were nothing, as if it were the most natural thing in the world!"

"And is it not?" said Marion. "I never would have done a thing to harm Archie. It is none of my doing; but if it opens papa's eyes, and makes him ask who will do him the most credit—him, that would never be anything but a common lad at the best, or me, that might be at the Queen's court, and do him great justice."

Eddy clapped his hands together with a quick laugh. "Marry the Duke," he said.

"Well," said Marion, with dignity, "and if I did that? What more would it be than I would deserve, and doing great justice to papa!"

Eddy stood for a moment looking at her, with a curious mixture of pain which was quite new to him, in being thus left out of Marion's cold-blooded philosophy, and of cynical amusement, tempered by wonder at the progress this very young and apparently simple person had made in the mystery of worldliness. He had the sensation, too, o

having done it all, of having wrought that ruin to Archie which might place Archie's sister in a position to balk his own plans and humiliate himself. He had meant to have the upper hand himself in all the arrangements between them. He had meant, indeed, this very morning to bind her by a quasi-engagement, while leaving himself free for whatever eventualities might come. But Marion, with these cool, matter-of-fact dispositions, had turned the tables upon Eddy. And he was discomposed besides to find that it actually hurt him. He, the accomplished man of the world that he was, so infinitely above Marion in experience and knowledge! it gave him a confused pang which he could not understand, to find that he was no more to her than half an hour before he had believed her to be to him. He was more or less stunned by that sensation, which was unexpected, and stood vaguely gazing at her, coming to himself before he could reply. "I don't find much place for me in all this," he said, ruefully. He could have laughed at his own discomfiture if he had not been so ridiculously wounded and sore.

It was perhaps a sign that she was not very sure of herself, but she did not look at him, which also took away one of Eddy's weapons. She walked on quite calmly by his side, looking straight before her, neither to the right hand nor the left.

"What was your place in it, Mr. Eddy?" she said, "except just as a friend: and there is no

difference in that. You're still a friend—unless you have changed your mind."

"May! you are a little witch! you're a—Come, you know this is all nonsense," said Eddy; "I never pretended to be a friend."

"Well, perhaps you never were—to Archie, at least," said Marion.

"What do you know about Archie? What have I done to Archie? I never intended—I never thought of harming him: I could swear it," cried Eddy, in great excitement; "never! never! I've done a heap of wrong things," he put up his hand to his throat with a gasp as for breath, "I've done enough to—sink me for ever. I know I have: you needn't say anything with your little set face that I was silly enough to care for. But I never meant to ruin Archie, nor harm him, never! I'll go to your father, and tell him——"

"What will you tell him?" cried Marion, to whom nothing but her own share in Eddy's expressions seemed of any importance. "That we've perhaps been very silly, you and me?—but you the most, for I was never meaning what you thought. I am not a person to let myself go," said the girl, folding her hands. "I was just willing to be very friendly—but no more. All the rest was just—your fun. I thought you cared for nothing but fun. And I'm not averse to that myself," she said, turning her face to his with the provoking and saucy smile which Eddy had so completely understood, yet which—was it possible—he had fallen a victim to

all the same. It was Marion who had the upper hand. She was not averse to the fun, but she did not mean to compromise her future for Eddy, any more than Eddy up to this moment had intended to do for her. But Marion thought it best now to conciliate him, that he might not rush off and compromise matters by making proposals to her father, which was all she thought of. As for those wild words about Archie, Marion did not even pretend to inquire what they meant.

He went to Mrs. Rowland as soon as he could get a chance after the leave-taking of so many of her guests. "You will have to shake hands with me, too, presently," he said. "I am going off to-night."

"You, Eddy?" Evelyn's face grew longer and graver with a certain dismay. "I was calculating upon you to keep us cheerful," she said. "Why must you go?"

"I have so many reasons I couldn't tell you all. In the first place I must, which perhaps will do: like the fool that had a hundred reasons for not saluting—but first of all because he had neither powder nor shot."

"What is the *must?*" said Evelyn, "your father perhaps coming back——"

"Oh, I know," said Eddy, "that the governor would refuse you nothing, Mrs. Rowland—though I am next to nothing in his estimation, to be sure. No, there's other reasons, pecuniary and otherwise."

"I am afraid, Eddy, you are a very reckless boy."

"Rather," he said, with an uneasy and embarrassed laugh; "but I am going to turn over a new leaf, and not be so any more."

A tender impulse moved the woman, who had a faint underlying recollection which she could not quite quench, though she was ashamed of it, that she might have been Eddy's mother. "I am not very rich in my own person," she said, "though my husband is: but if there is anything, Eddy, that I could do, or James either, I am sure——"

"Oh, good heavens!" cried Eddy, under his breath. "Don't, for pity's sake, say such a thing to me," he cried. "You don't know how it hurts—what an unutterable cad it makes me feel."

"Why?" she asked, with a smile; but she did not pursue the subject. "I wish you could stay a little longer. If Archie does not come home in a day or two, my husband will sadly want some one to cheer him. I wish you could stay."

"Is Archie coming home in a day or two?"

"I don't know," she said, faltering. "I can't tell—I hope so with all my heart. I need not try to hide from you, Eddy, that his father and he—have had a disagreement."

"Mrs. Rowland, don't think me impertinent: can you tell me what it was about?"

"It is their secret, not mine," she said; then with a troubled smile, "You know what fathers and sons most generally disagree about."

"Money," he said, with so disturbed a look, that Mrs. Rowland felt in her heart she had been unjust

in thinking Eddy callous to anything that did not concern himself.

"My husband—is too suspicious. I believe in him, poor boy. I hope time," she said, with a sigh, "will clear it up and bring everything right."

It gave her pleasure to think better of Eddy after that interview. The boy, after all, she thought, must have a heart.

But he was not like himself: his face, which was usually so full of fun and mischief, was clouded and unhappy. When it was understood, though not without a struggle, that he must go that evening—and even Mr. Rowland resisted it with a certain terror (though he was very glad at the same time to get all the strangers out of the way) of being left alone with his trouble and his wife and daughter, who could so ill soothe it—Eddy's aspect startled everybody. He seemed, he who was so easy-minded, to be troubled by some doubt, and unable to make up his mind what he ought to do. A dozen times during the afternoon he was seen to cross the hall towards the library, where Rowland had shut himself up. But his courage failed him by the time he reached the door. Marion, who kept her eyes upon his movements, knew, she flattered herself, perfectly what Eddy meant. He wanted to lay his hopes before her father, to find out whether his consent was possible, to lay a sort of embargo upon herself before she was even seen in society, or had her chance. Marion had quite made up her mind what to say

in case she should be called in to the library and questioned on the subject. She would say that she was not a person averse to a little fun when it presented itself. But that as for serious meaning, she never had thought there was anything in it. Marion did not at all dislike the idea of being called in, and having to say this; and she was not angry with Eddy for the supposed appeal against her cruelty, which she believed him about to make. She did not want him to be permanently dismissed, either, nor was she unwilling that her father should be warned as to future contingencies, for, after all, there was no telling how things might turn out.

The question was solved so far as Eddy was concerned by the sudden exit of Rowland from his room, just as the young man was summoning up all his courage to enter it.

"Are you ready, my boy?" Rowland said; "your things packed—since you will go; for the steamboat, you know, will wait for no man. Come out, and take a turn with me."

They walked together across the lawn to the spot where the trees opened and the Clyde below the bank weltered, gray in the afternoon light—a composition of neutral tones. Rowland said nothing for a minute. He stood looking at his favourite view, and then he gave vent to a long and deep sigh.

"Here's a lesson for you, Eddy, my man," he said. "For as many years as you've been in being I've coveted this bonnie house, and that

view among the trees. And a proud man I was when I got them—proud; and everybody ready to take up my parable and say, 'See what a man's exertions, when he has set his heart upon a thing, will do.' Oh, laddie, the vanity of riches! I have not had them half a year nor near it. And now I would give the half of my substance I had never come nigh the place or heard its name."

"I am very sorry," said Eddy; "but had the place anything to do with it? Would things have gone better if you had not been here?"

Rowland gave him a quick look, and stopped in what he seemed about to say. Then he resumed after a moment.

"That's true too; you are right in what you say. It has nothing to do with the place, or any place. It was fixed, I suppose, before the beginning of the earth, that so it was to be."

"Mr. Rowland," said Eddy, "I've been wanting to say something, and I have never had the chance—that is, I am frightened to say it in case you should think it impudent or—presuming. When Archie refused the money to that poor beggar, I ought to have spoken: I was a wretched coward; it was because he had given all his money—to me."

"Ah!" cried the father, with a slight start; "he had given his money—to you?" He had almost forgot, in the strain and stress of the other question, which was so much more important, what this meant about the poor beggar whom Archie had refused.

"Every penny," said Eddy, with considerable emotion. If that avowal would only do, if it would be enough without any other! "He found me down on my luck about some bets and things, and he immediately offered to help me. I had not the courage to tell you when you spoke to him—that night; and he, like the fine fellow he is——"

"Ah!" said Rowland again; and then he gripped Eddy's slight hand, and wrung it till the lad thought the blood must come. "And you're a fine fellow," he said, "to stand up for him you think your friend."

A cold dew came out on Eddy's brow: oh how miserable, what a caitiff he felt—a fine fellow—he! If the man only knew!

"But," said Rowland, "if that had been all! I had forgotten that offence. Thank you, though, for speaking. If I can find any ground for a more favourable judgment, I'll remember what you have said. Let's think of your own affairs: if you will allow me to speak—so recent a friend; but my wife knew you before you were born." He stopped to laugh at this jest, but in reality to recover a little from his embarrassment. "My lad, you spoke of bets. You shouldn't bet, a young fellow of your age."

A gleam of mischievous light shot from Eddy's eyes.

"I am aware of that, sir," he said, with much humility; "and if you knew all the good resolutions I have made——"

"Never mind making them: you can't keep them. Just do it, and don't amuse yourself with saying you will do it. From all I can learn, your family is not rich, and you will have a place to keep up. Mind, that's a great responsibility. You must eschew betting as you would eschew the devil."

"I'll try, sir, to get the better of them both," said Eddy, much relieved by this change of subject.

"I hope you'll continue in that mind; and recollect this: you have been very friendly and pleasant in this house at a time when I was scarcely my own man, and took the entertainment on your shoulders, and were just the life and soul ——If I can give you a day in harvest, as the country folks say, another time—" He smote Eddy on the shoulders a genial blow, but it made his slight figure quiver. "You may not understand that homely form of speech; but if I can serve you, my boy, at a pinch——I never grudge anything I can do for a man that's served me in time of need. What's the matter with you, boy? Are you ill?"

"No," said Eddy, after a pause. "No—I'm not ill; it was only something in my throat. You're too good, sir. I can't look you in the face when I think——"

"Well, well," said Rowland. It pleases a man to make an impression—to bring repentance to a careless soul. "You must just never do it again,

as the children say. It's a bad thing from beginning to end: even gambling in business I never could agree with. Honest work, that's the only salvation—in this world. Don't forget what I've said. And now we'll go in to the ladies, who are waiting to give you your tea, and purr over you. For the steamboat will wait for no man, and you should leave here when we see her starting from the head of the loch."

They went in together with a wonderful look of friendship, and there were curious signs of emotion in Eddy's face. Had he spoken to papa? Marion asked herself. If he had done so, it was clear that the answer had not been unfavourable; but in that case, why was Eddy in so dreadful a hurry to get away?

CHAPTER VI

EDDY had gone, and a silence, that seemed to radiate round the house like a special atmosphere, fell upon Rosmore. Winter, which had been only threatening, dropped all at once in torrents of sweeping rain and wild winds that shook the house. It requires a lively spirit at any time to stand up against the pale downpour which falls in sheets from the colourless sky between the large dull windows and the cowering trees, and shuts out every other prospect; but when there is misery within, the climax afforded by that dismal monotony without is appalling. The two girls scarcely knew what it was; it was the re-action after the ball, which had been such a great thing to look forward to, and now was over, and everything connected with it: no more preparations or consultations—everything swept away and ended. It was the departure of everybody, even "the boys," as Marion called them, Archie and Eddy, who had been the constant companions of "the girls" in all their walks and talks: quite enough to account for

the dismal dullness which fell over these two unfortunate young women like a pall. Rosamond had not gone with her brother, partly because she was under her father's orders to remain, and partly because a great fear of some discovery, she did not know what, which might be made after Eddy was gone, and for which he would need an advocate and champion on the spot, was in her mind. Eddy had so often wanted a defender; there had been so often discoveries made after he had got himself out of reach of censure; and it was so much more likely in this particular matter, which was disturbing the house, whatever it might be, that it was Eddy and not Archie who was to blame. Rosamond thought, with a little contempt of Archie, that it was so little likely he would be to blame. He had not spirit enough to go wrong. He was so tame, so unaccustomed to do anything—and to do something, even if it were wrong, seemed so much better than the nullity of such a limited life. It seemed to Rosamond that Eddy, who was always in scrapes, always doing something, and mostly wrong things, was twenty times more interesting than the other, but far more likely to be the author of this trouble which hung so heavy on the house than Archie was. It seemed to the experienced sister that something was sure to happen in a day or two to prove this; to bring back Archie and place her in her accustomed position as her brother's defender. That anticipation, and a deep knowledge of the dreariness of the London house, all

shut up and dusty, with the dreadful ministrations of the charwoman, and the gloom of the closed rooms from which she could not escape to any cheerfulness of a club, kept her at Rosmore, though she was exceedingly tired of it and of the society of Marion, now her chief companion. They were as unlike each other as girls could be. Rosamond's aspirations were not perhaps very lofty, but that hope of departing from all the conventionality (as she thought) of life, and setting up with Madeline Leighton in lodgings like two young men, to work together at whatever fantasy might be uppermost, was an opening at least to the imagination which Marion's limited commonplace had no conception of. Marion thought of the glories of the coming spring, of going to Court and the dress she should wear, and the suitors who would come to her feet. That duke!—she had not made acquaintance with any dukes, and wondered whether there was one young enough and free, so as to realize Eddy's prophecy. She did not even know that all that information could be acquired from *Debrett*, nor was there a *Debrett* in the house, had she been aware of its qualities. The duke was a sort of Prince Charming,—always possible. If it could only come about by any combination of fortune that Eddy should turn out to be one! but that was a contingency which Marion knew to be impossible, and upon which she did not suffer herself to dwell.

It was in reality a sign of her simplicity and unsophisticated mind that she gave herself up so

unhesitatingly to this dream. Rosamond knew a great deal better: she knew for one thing that there was no duke in the market—a fact hidden from poor Marion—and that suitors do not precipitate themselves at the feet even of a rich young woman in society, unless she is a fabulously rich young woman. Rosamond was also much too experienced to imagine for a moment, as the simple Marion did, that whatever Archie had done he would be summarily disinherited and all his advantages handed over to his sister. There had been a row, Rosamond was aware, but it would pass over as rows did in families, and the son would have his natural place, and May would but be a prettyish underbred girl the more, with a good deal of money, but not that fabulous fortune which alone works miracles. Rosamond did not think very highly of Marion's chances; and all that she thought about Archie was a hope that her father might not see him and build any plans upon him in respect to herself.

While, however, the girls, in waterproofs, took occasional walks together, not knowing how to make conversation, two creatures speaking different languages, and found time hang very heavy on their hands—indoors the elder pair also passed the days heavily, with an absence of all meaning and motive in their life, such as aggravates every trouble. It is always a difficult matter for a man who has led a busy life, full of work and its excitements, to settle down in the country, es-

pecially if he has no estate to manage,—nothing to do, as people say, but enjoy himself. And no doubt this first setting in of winter and the virtual separation from the world caused by the persistent bad weather, would have been, under any circumstances, a trial of James Rowland's cheerfulness and patience. But enhanced as this was by the horror and shame of such a discovery —one that turned the wavering balance of disappointment and hope, sometimes swaying to one side and sometimes to the other, into an immovable bar of sharp despair and bitter rage against his only son, the unworthy and shameless boy who had left him so little in doubt as to his character and qualities—the effect was terrible. Sometimes Evelyn persuaded him to go out with her down the glistening gravel paths towards the woods, or even to the Manse and the village: for he now loathed "the view" which he had loved, and avoided that favourite peep of Clyde, as if it had a voice to taunt him with the disappointment of his hopes. The minister and his wife received them indeed with open arms, with the cordial "Come away in" of Scotch hospitality, and brewed, or rather "masked" (or perhaps Mrs. Dean, an advanced person, "infused") the genial tea, and spread the steaming scones, which are a simple (and inexpensive) substitute for the fatted calf, gone out of fashion, for those rare guests. "Indeed, I thought we were never to see you again," said the minister's wife, not without a

touch of offence. And when Evelyn put forward a hesitating excuse as to the bad weather, the west-country lady took her up a little sharply. "Lady Jean used never to mind. We are well used to the rain here, and it does no harm. You just put on a waterproof and you are quite safe. Indeed, I have heard people from the South say that though we have a great deal of rain, it's very rare to find a day that you can't go out sooner or later."

"Mrs. Rowland will think, my dear," said the minister, "that you are less glad to see her now than to upbraid her with not coming before."

"That means that I am interfering with his department," said Mrs. Dean. "I will not do that; and indeed, I have not seen you since the ball. Such a success as it was! I have seen very grand doings in the old times, when Lord Clydesdale had more heart to make a stir."

"What was it that took away his heart?" said Rowland; "the old reason—want of money, I suppose?" It revived a little spirit in him, and the impulse of wealth to plume itself on its own advantages when he heard of this. It pleased him to think that he could do so easily without feeling it at all, what had cost Lord Clydesdale an effort which he no longer cared to make.

The Deans, husband and wife, regarded the other pair before them with that mild disdain which people in society feel for those who do not know everything that everybody knows about the families and persons who form the "world." They

were not perhaps exactly in society themselves, but they did know at least about the Clydesdale family and all that had happened to them. "It was not precisely want of money," Mr. Dean said cautiously, "though we all know, more's the pity, that they are not rich."

"Oh! nonsense, Alexander," said his wife, "as if everybody didn't know the whole story! It might be a struggle, but they always held up their heads, and never made a poor mouth. What it was that took the heart out of the Earl was a great disappointment in his family. Young Lord Gourock was a very fine boy: you would never have thought it of him, but he just fell into the hands of some woman. That's the great danger with young lads of family. You must surely have heard of it?"

"You forget that we have been in India, both of us, for years," Evelyn said quickly.

"Ah! that would account for it: but even in India these things are known among——" Mrs. Dean was about to say the right kind of people—but she remembered to have heard that Mrs. Rowland *was* a lady—one of the somethings of Northamptonshire—and forbore. "At all events," she said, "it was well known here. I wonder you have not heard the whole story from Miss Eliza. She is a very clever person at finding out, and she always knows every detail, but all in the kindest spirit. I have always had a warm heart for poor young Gourock myself. He was such a nice boy!

I believe his father and Lady Jean don't even know where he is," she added in a lower voice.

"Oh," said the minister, "they will easily find out where he is when he is wanted. You can always trace a man with a handle to his name."

"When he has to come to take up the succession —which will be a great comfort to his poor father!" said Mrs. Dean scornfully. "But this," she added, "is but a melancholy kind of conversation; and your ball was just beyond everything—such luxury —and the decorations—and the band—and——"

Even Evelyn could scarcely bear any more, and Rowland did not even pretend to pay any attention; he put away the scones (though they were excellent) with a gesture that looked like disgust, and listened most impatiently to something the minister had to say about the Teinds, and the earnest need of an augmentation, and the objections of the heritors to do anything. He had a vague sense that money was wanted, and that he himself might get free if he made a large offer. "If there is anything I can do, command me," he said. "I may not be of much use in other ways, but so far as money goes—Evelyn, don't you think we should go before the rain comes on?"

"But you have had no tea!" said the minister's wife, "and the sky is clearing beautifully over the hills, which is just the quarter the rain comes from. Let Mrs. Rowland finish her tea."

"We must be going," said Rowland, and he went out first, leaving his wife to follow. He said

nothing till they had walked far along the edge of the bay, and were once more in Rosmore woods, in a path overhung with low trees, from which occasionally came a big cold drop on their faces or on their shoulders. He had put his arm within his wife's according to his usual fashion, and half-pushed her before him in the preoccupation of his thoughts. At last he spoke. He had made little or no reply to her remarks, scarcely wishing, it seemed, to hear them as they came along.

"It will just be some vile woman that has got possession of him," he said abruptly, "like yon young lord."

"Oh, James, we know nothing. I don't believe that he is guilty at all."

"Some vile woman," he repeated, "just like yon young lord." It seemed to give him a sort of comfort that it was like the young lord. Is it not indeed a kind of terrible comfort always to hear of other cases worse than our own?

"I won't repeat what I said," said Evelyn, "but you know what I think."

"Think!—think!" he said impatiently, "of what use is thinking? The thing's done: it was not done without hands. It will perhaps be something in the house."

"Something in the house!"

"Well!" he said querulously, "you need not repeat what I say. I have heard of a curse upon a house, and that nothing throve that ever was in

it." He paused with an effort, and then said with his hard laugh, "I am speaking like a fool, but people used to believe in that in the old times. What's that fellow wanting?" he added angrily; "a man from the stables! What right has he to speak to you?"

It was Sandy the groom, who touched his cap, and stood on the edge of the path, desiring an audience. Sandy had no fear of being supposed impertinent. He had spoken to Lady Jean, wherever he had met her, with the familiarity of a respect which required no proof, and he regarded Mrs. Rowland, who had shown claims to a similar treatment, with much of the same confident and friendly feeling. Accordingly he paid no attention to his master's threatening looks ("The auld man was in a very ill key: he was giving it to her, het and strong, puir leddy," was his after comment). "It's just auld Rankine, mem," said Sandy, who spoke a little thick, turning over his words like a sweet morsel under his tongue, as the minister said in his prayer, "he's awfu' anxious just to have a word wi' your leddyship."

"Old Rankine!" said Evelyn surprised; "a word with me?"

"What do you want with Mrs. Rowland?" cried Rowland angrily; "do you think she has time to go after every fool in the place? You can tell your wants to me."

"Oh, ay, sir, I could do that," said Sandy, "but it's no you he's wanting, it's the leddy—he's

terrible keen to see the leddy. We wad be nae satisfaction to him, neither you nor me."

"Tell him I'll come and see him," said Evelyn hurriedly. "You know he is a very uncommon person, James. I will just walk with you as far as the house, and then I will come back."

"You had better go now," he said, loosing his arm. "You are getting like all the other Rosmore people, taking every crow for a dove. I can go home very well by myself."

"But, James!—"

He waved his hand to her, walking quickly away. Her company was a consolation; and then to be without her company was a relief. He had got to that restless stage.

"It's just the gospel truth," said Sandy, "the maister would have been nae comfort to the auld man. It's just the leddy, the leddy, he's been deaving us a' with the haill day."

"Is he ill, Sandy?"

"Na, nae waur than usual. He's very frail, but nae waur nor usual. Hey, Janet, here's the leddy. She's just coming, and I had nae trouble with her ava."

The cold drops on the trees came in a little deluge over Evelyn as she crossed the little glen under the ash tree: she was half amused in the midst of her trouble by the summons, thinking it might be a demand for some comfort, or a complaint of some inconvenience which was about to be made to her, things to which she had been ac-

customed in the country life of old. Rankine lay, as usual, with his picturesque head and beard rising from the mass of covering. He held out the large hand with which he fished in the nest beside him for puppies, and gave it to Evelyn to shake.

"I am sorry to hear you are not well," she said.

"Oh, I'm just in my ordinar'," said Rankine, "naething to brag of, but naething to find fault with either—just warstling on as pleases the Lord, and I dinna complain. Give the leddy a chair, Janet, woman, and just go ben the house yoursel', and bring me particular word what the thermometer was last night. You can take a pencil and a bit of paper and write it down, for I'm very particular to have the figures exact."

"Oh, you needna make any of your fuil's errands for me," said Janet. "I ken what you mean weel enough;" and the brisk little wife went away, carefully shutting the door behind her. What did he mean? Evelyn grew a little alarmed in spite of herself.

"I hear, mem," said Rankine, confidentially leaning towards her out of his bed, "that you're in some trouble at the Hoose?"

"You hear—that we're in trouble!" cried Evelyn in the last astonishment. "If we are," she said, "which I don't allow, you would not expect me to come and speak of it to you."

"Wherefore no?" said Rankine. "Do you think,

madam, that because I'm held fast here, I'm no a man with sympathies, and a heart to feel for my neebours? You'll maybe think I'm taking too much upon me, calling the like of you my neighbours. But it was One greater than any of us that did that. We're a' neebors in the sight of God."

"That is quite true, no doubt," said Evelyn, with a gleam of faint amusement in the midst of her trouble, "but I don't know—"

"Madam," said Rankine, "I would take it very ill if ye kent something to my advantage or that would maybe save a heart-break, and keepit it to yoursel'."

"I hope I would not do so in any circumstance," said Evelyn.

"I think you wad not, and therefore I'm fain to speak. I'm a real observant person, and given to muckle study of my fellow-creatures. I've taken a great notion of you, Mistress Rowland. My opinion is that you're no the stepmother familiar to us in fiction, but a person with a real good meaning towards your good gentleman and all belonging to him."

"I hope so," said Evelyn, half-amused, half-disturbed, by this strange address.

"And we've heard you're in trouble up bye, and Mr. Archie, a fine quiet lad, sent out o' the house in disgrace."

"Mr. Rankine," said Evelyn, "you really must excuse me for saying that any gossip about my house——"

He held up his hand, bidding her to silence, and made a gesture as of putting her back in her chair. "Whisht," he said, "never mind that;" then bending forward, in a tone so low as to be almost a whisper: "It's a' lees," he said, "it's not true; it's just a' a parcel of lees."

"What do you know about it?" cried Evelyn, greatly excited. "For God's sake, if you know anything, tell me," she added, forgetting her precautions in the shock. What use was there in pretending that his information was not correct? He did not ask anything—he knew.

"I will do that," said Rankine. "There is a young gentleman at the house that is called Mr. Sawmaries, a very queer name."

"Saumarez—yes—but he is gone."

"Oh, he is gone? to rejoin the ither no doubt. I might have expected that."

"What other?" cried Evelyn, in great excitement.

"There was another," said Rankine, "but not at the house; not a person, maadam, to be presented to you—though I was muckle astonished to hear of him at the ball: but nae doubt he just slippit in, favoured by yon lad, when nobody was looking. Well, as I was saying, there was another, a shabby creature, just a bit little disreputable Jew, or something of that kind. What gave me a kind of insight into the Saumarez lad (that was a clever laddie and no an ill callant, but ill guided) was his trying to foist off this creature upon me as Maister

Johnson of St. Chad's—a mistaken man, and very confused in his philology, but still, I have nae reason to doubt, a gentleman, and maybe a kind of a scholar too, in his way."

"Johnson! yes: but I have seen him; he was asked to the ball; I never doubted—"

"Na, mem," said Rankine, "I could swear ye doubted; but being a real lady, and no suspicious as the like of me is always, you couldna believe he was cheating. He might mean it only as a kind of a joke, ye never can tell with these callants. But, maadam, this is all very indifferent and not to the purpose; what I'm wanting to tell is, that there was something going on that was no building kirks between these young men."

Evelyn was not acquainted with the figurative language of the humble Scot, but she divined what he meant. She made a hurried gesture of entreaty that he would go on: "Well! that's just about all I know; there was something the one wanted and the other was loath to give. The shabby body was just full of threats, and no blate about saying them before me, a stranger; and young Saumarez, he was holding off, trying his jokes, and to take his attention with the dowgs and various devices. And syne they went out of my house in close colloquy. The wife is not a woman of much book-learning, but she has a wonderful judgment. She said to me, when she came in from showing them to the door, 'Take you my word, John Rankine,' says she, 'if there's

ony mischief comes to pass, thae twa will have the wyte of it,' which agreed entirely with my ain precognition. I wouldna say but we thought of mair vulgar crimes, being of the practical order ourselves. And I hear the trouble's about a cheque, whether stolen or what I cannot tell. But my advice to you, maadam, as one educated person with another, is—just look for it there."

"Eddy!" Evelyn said below her breath, "Eddy!" Long before Rankine's speech had come to an end, her quick mind had realized the shock, felt it to the bottom of her heart, staggered out of the course of her thoughts for a moment in sheer dismay and horror; then with the sudden spring of intellectual power quickened by pain had returned to the simple question. Eddy! Eddy! who had been so sympathetic, so affectionate, such true feeling in his eyes, such real zeal for the house, so good to James, so generous about Archie. Ah! Generous! then she began to think and remember. If Rankine was right, he had introduced that man on a false pretence to her house, and it had been difficult to her to realize that Eddy was really so sympathetic. And surely there were things he had said! Her head began to buzz and ache with the rapid throng of thoughts, thoughts half understood, half seen only in the hurry and rush of bewildering and confusing suggestion. The old gamekeeper went on talking, but she did not hear him, and he perceived what processes he

had set in motion, and for a moment was silent too.

"There is just one thing, mem," he said, "before you go,"—when Evelyn rose, still bewildered, wading through the chaos of her own thoughts. "The night o' the ball—there's aye een on the watch in a house like yours—the body Johnson disappeared as soon as the gentleman arrived that came from the bank, him that arrived in a coach all the way round the land road. There was one that saw him leave go of the leddy that was dancing with him—the nasty toad to daur to ask a leddy to dance!—and jump out of the window behind the curtain, and was never seen more. And Mr. Archie to get the wyte of it, a fine, ceevil, well-spoken young man! Na, na, we will not bide that. Just you look in that direction, Mistress Rowland, for there the true culprit's to be found."

"I will—I will think of what you say," cried Evelyn, faltering. "It is a dreadful light, but if it is a light—You are proud people, you Scotch, you don't like your own secrets to be exposed to all the world. And you don't know all the story, Rankine, only a bit of it. Stop these people talking! you can surely do it, you who are so clever; think how you would like it. And my husband, my poor husband!"

"I feel for Maister Rowland," said Rankine, "but a house with a score of servants a' on the watch, how are ye to keep a thing secret? There are nae

secrets in this world. If there's a thing ye wish to keep quiet, that's just the thing the haill country-side will jabber about. I'll do what I can. I'll do what I can," he added hurriedly, "but the only thing to stop it is to bring the lad hame."

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Evelyn returned to the house she found her husband engaged with a visitor—no less a person than Sir John Marchbanks—who had some works going on near Kilrossie, drainages and such like, on which he was very anxious to have Mr. Rowland's opinion. And Rowland, recalled to himself by the touch of the practical, had recovered his spirits and energy for the moment at least. He agreed to go and inspect the work, and to add to that kindness, as Sir John said, with a little pompous politeness, by staying to dinner afterwards, as country neighbours use. Evelyn had therefore no means of confiding Rankine's revelation to her husband, even had she wished; and she was not sure that she wished to do so. The whole matter wanted more thinking over than she could give it in the agitated walk home and the hurried interval before he left with his visitor to walk to Kilrossie and see the works. "I warn you, Mrs. Rowland, that I will keep him as long as I can," said Sir John. "We have great schemes of

public work before us in the peninsula, and there is nobody here whose opinion is worth a button in comparison with his."

"I shall make no objection; it will do him good," said Evelyn: but she followed her husband into the library, where he went for a moment to fetch some papers. "James," she said, with a little timidity, "may I send for Archie home?"

"May you send for—the devil!" said James Rowland. "What do you mean? What's the boy to you?"

"He is Mary's son——"

"You seem to think more of that," he said with his angry laugh, "than that he's mine—and has brought shame on my name."

"We don't know that; you cannot prove that. It is being talked of among the servants. Let me send for him. If he comes while you are away, it will be easier. Even if it were true," cried Evelyn, "you would have to forgive him some time, James."

"I am not so sure of that," said her husband, grimly. "Anyhow, he is gone, and there's an end——"

"There can never be an end. Let me write; let me send——"

"And do you think, you simple woman," said Rowland, "that a dour fellow like that, a lad that swore at me, and flew in my very face from the first, will come back for the holding up of your little finger?" He took her hand in his, with admiring affection; there was something like a gleam of

moisture in his eyes. "It is a bonnie little finger," he said, "and a kind—and I would follow it over the world: but you must not think to triumph over a young brute like *yon*, as you do over me."

"Oh, James, you are mistaken; he is not, he is not——"

"What is he not? I wish he was not a son of mine," said the father, with darkening brow.

And he said nothing more, neither to forbid nor to permit. Perhaps there was an undercurrent in his heart of hope that she would try what that signal made with her little finger would do. He did not forbid it. His heart gave a heavy thump in his bosom at the proposal. She could do for them both what neither could do for himself—and if she might be right? Women, they say, have intuitions; perhaps she might be right! and the thundercloud might pass over, and he might yet live to believe, in time, that nothing had happened. But he shook his head as he went away. Anyhow, the little absence would be a good thing. It would break the spell of misery; he might be better able to think, to settle something that could be done, when he was away.

When the master of the house goes away, there is often a little sense of relief among the women, however beloved and prized he may be. It leaves them a great deal of freedom—freedom from the control of hours and seasons which, it is a law of the Medes and Persians, can never be

infringed when he is at home. He may be no more punctual than the rest, but punctuality is imposed while he is there; and he may be as irregular as he pleases in his way, but the strictest regularity is enforced upon everybody else, out of respect to papa. When he goes away, there is a little slackening all round. Perhaps the mistress lingers in her room in the morning, does not come down to breakfast—and luncheon shades off into puddings and fruit instead of the copious meal of ordinary custom, or else is abolished altogether, the girls staying out, without warning, at some friendly neighbouring house. This was what happened at Rosmore on the morning after James Rowland's departure. His wife did not come down stairs till it was late, feeling herself more safe to carry on her own thoughts in the seclusion of her own room, and when she appeared at lunch Marion's chair was empty, and Rosamond, alone, appeared to share that meal. The conversation languished between the two ladies, each of whom had questions to ask, which could not be put as long as Saunders and his satellite were in the room.

"I hope you have heard from Eddy," Mrs. Rowland said.

"Oh, yes, I have heard from him. He has got back all right," said Rosamond.

And then there was a silence, broken only by Evelyn's recommendation of the pudding, which was one of Mrs. Wright's best.

"Is your brother—very lonely, with nobody at home?" at length she said again.

"Eddy is never lonely, he has such heaps of friends; when one set is not in town, he falls back on another. When there's no opera there's a music-hall—that sort of thing," said Rosamond.

"I am afraid that means he is not very particular."

"Not particular at all, so long as he is amused."

"But that, unfortunately, my dear, is not the best rule in life."

"Oh, I never thought it was a rule at all," said Rosamond. "If it were, Eddy would detest it, you may be sure. He likes to do—what no one else does, or what he has never done before."

"Did you know this Mr. Johnson—or some such name—Rosamond, whom he brought here?"

"Oh, Mrs. Rowland," cried the girl, "I hope you will forgive him! He is such a little wretch for that. It must have been one of his silly practical jokes to bring that man here."

"It is not the sort of practical joke which will get him friends," said Evelyn seriously; the man was gone, and the embargo was removed. "He ought not to have brought him here. And did *you* know him, Rosamond?"

"*I* know him! but I know this, that Eddy told me not to dance with him; and I will say this much for Eddy," said Rosamond, with a hot blush, "that he warned Marion too."

"But both of you——"

"Yes, it is true. I did—that nobody might say I left my brother in the lurch—offered to dance when I saw him standing there, Eddy taking no notice. Even a—beast—like that, if you get him asked, you ought to be civil to him." Rosamond's cheeks were flushed, and she held her head very high. "But Marion did it out of contradiction, because he had told her not——"

"There is not much to commend in the whole matter," said Evelyn, with a sigh. "But I think, on the whole, you were the least wrong. And has he dealings with people like these? Would that man have been likely to get your brother—under his power?"

"I don't know what you mean, Mrs. Rowland," said Rosamond, with a glow on her cheeks.

"And yet it is plain enough, my dear. Is it possible that—about money or betting or anything of the kind, Eddy might have got under that man's influence—in his power?"

Rosamond held her head higher than words could describe. "If you mean that he took money to introduce him into society——"

"I did not mean that," said Evelyn in a parenthesis, but Rosamond did not pause to hear.

"——as some people do," the girl went on. "Oh, the men one knows! There was Algy Holt, went about with an American, getting him asked out to places. Everybody knew it, and no one was so very severe! But if you think Eddy would do that,

Mrs. Rowland! He may be silly—oh, I know he is—and spends money when he has not got it, and has to do all kinds of dreadful things to pay up;—but if you think he would do that——"

"My dear Rosamond, if you prefer to think it was a practical joke—but I don't wish to be severe—I should like to know, if you know, what dreadful things he has to do to pay up, as you say?"

"Oh, he has to buy carriage wheels, and cigar-holders, and pictures, and one time he had a lot of paving-stones——"

Evelyn, who was very much wound up by this time, expecting terrible revelations without thinking how very unlikely it was that Rosamond would be the confidant of any guilty practices—here burst into a fit of unsteady laughter.

"There is nothing very dreadful in all that; though it is very ridiculous, and, I dare say, a horrid imposition," she said.

"It is enough to break one's heart!" cried Rosamond striking her hands together: "he borrows a certain sum and he gets the half of it or less, and that—and then he has to pay back the whole—— Oh how awful it is to be poor! for there is no end to it—it is going on for ever. And when he gets Gilston, he will have to sell it, and where will he be then? He sees it as well as I, but what can he do? Of course," added Rosamond, drying her eyes which were shining with fierce tears, "if he could marry somebody with a great deal of money it might all come right."

This was all that she got from Rosamond, with much sense of guilt in thus endeavouring to persuade the sister into betrayal of the brother's secrets. And presently Marion returned, who had been amusing herself at Miss Eliza's house with the young people there, and came back escorted by a large party, for whom it was necessary to provide tea and amusement till the early darkness had fallen. Evelyn, who could not rest, and who felt that the two or three days of her husband's absence was all the time she had at her disposal to solve this problem in, threw a shawl over her head and followed the merry party down the avenue, when Marion re-escorted them to the first gate. She could not have told what help she expected to get from Marion, and yet it was possible that some spark might fall from the girl's careless discourse. She met her coming quickly back, her white and pink cheeks glowing with the cold and the fun, echoes of which had scarcely yet died on the frosty air. It was almost dark, though a grey light still lingered in the sky, and the lamps were shining on the other side of the water in the villages and scattered houses along the opposite shore.

"Mamma!" cried Marion—a flush of anxiety came upon her face though it was scarcely visible—"did you hear how they were going on? But you must not think it was my fault."

"I heard nothing," said Evelyn, to Marion's evident relief; "but I came out—to speak to you. Have you heard anything of—your brother?"

"Archie?—oh, no," said the girl. "He would not write to me, for he would know I could not approve of him, when he has gone like that and affronted papa."

"Like what?" said Mrs. Rowland anxiously.

"Oh!" said Marion, with a pause for reflection, —"well, just like that! The servants have got a story that it's about money, but Archie is not a spender, and I don't know how it could be about money. But if papa has turned him out of the house, it could not be without reason, and that is enough for me."

This was true enough and yet was not true, for Marion secretly had made a great many more investigations about Archie than anybody knew; and was quite aware where he was, and that Aunt Jean was profoundly indignant, and considered, as was not unnatural, that the whole matter was the stepmother's doing from beginning to end.

"I have written to him," said Evelyn, "but he has not replied. My dear, you are his only sister; you ought to help to make it up. Will you write to him and beg him to come home?"

"But I would maybe be flying in papa's face if I did that."

"Your father would not blame you. Don't you see he is very unhappy?—his only son! May, you are prejudiced against me, both of you. It is perhaps not unnatural; never mind that; but try and help me with Archie, to bring him back—to bring him home."

"And how am I to know," said Marion, "that it is not just to ruin me too with papa, and get me sent away as well, that you are giving me that advice?"

Evelyn had derived much temporal advantage from her union with James Rowland. She had been made the mistress of a great house, with much authority and surrounded with honour, instead of a poor dependent woman; but she paid for it dearly in this moment, while the girl stood with her little impertinent head lifted, discharging this little poisoned arrow straight into Mrs. Rowland's heart.

There was a moment of intense silence, to which all the dulling influences of nature,—the night, the frost, the darkness—gave additional effect. The panting of Evelyn's breath, which she could not conceal, was the only sound. Marion was cool as the air and entirely self-possessed, waiting to see how her missile told, and noting with triumph that quickened breath.

"Of course after these words I can ask nothing more of you," said Mrs. Rowland when she had attained the command of her own voice.

'Oh, I was not meaning to be disagreeable," said Marion lightly; "but as I have nobody to take care of me, I am just obliged to take care of myself. In an ordinary way I will just do whatever you bid me, mamma: but when it's to commit myself with papa, that is different. He might get the idea that both his children were turning upon him. And I will

not do that, not for Archie or any person. Every herring," said Marion sententiously, with a recollection of her Aunt Jean's wise sentiments, "must just hang by its own head."

"It is time to go in, I think," said Mrs. Rowland shivering; her cold, however, was moral rather than physical. This cautious, much-regarding young person of nineteen bewildered all her elder ideas. Was it pure selfishness, or was it some recondite covering of affection to scare the unfamiliar gazer? Evelyn made a movement aside to let the uncomprehended being pass before her into the house.

And it may be supposed that the evening circle formed by these three was not very sympathetic. Mrs. Rowland was full of the most painful uncertainty as to what she should do: or rather what could she do? she asked herself. Nothing but proof would content or in any way move her husband: and how was proof to be had, and what would move Archie, who would probably resent the very evidence which exculpated him, feeling it almost an additional grievance? What was she to do among all these conflicting objects? The natural thing, as it would have appeared to most women in her circumstances, would have been to sit still and wait, and do nothing. No one desired her interposition, not even her husband, who had laughed over the impotence of that little finger which she thought Archie would have obeyed. A reasonable woman does not like to be told, how-

ever tenderly, that she thinks she can move the world by the signal of her little finger. Would it not, she asked herself, be more dignified, more seemly to keep silence, and be patient and wait? But then, on the other hand, there was the possibility that the crime would sink into the pit of the undiscovered and never be found out. It had not even that chance of being found out which thorough examination and search after the criminal would give. Rowland had adopted it, homologated it, as the Scotch lawyers say, accepted the false cheque as his own to save his son: so that no questions could be asked at the bank to throw light upon the manner in which it was drawn, or the person from whom it came. If she only dared to go there herself to find out! if she only might venture to make certain inquiries!—but it was impossible. Archie was not to be appealed to, for he would not stir a step to clear himself. What then could she do?—she who alone possessed a clue. And then what a clue was that—the suppositions of a servant, the inferences of a half-instructed person, half-acquainted with the story! She sat through the long evening, pretending to read, in the great drawing-room, which was full of ruddy firelight and lamplight, the most sheltered and warm and cheerful place, while the wind blew fierce outside. In the inner room, Rosamond was playing chords upon the piano in a kind of grand but simple symphony, while Marion, by the table, in the light of the lamp, in a white dress, with a

face not unlike a flower, insignificant but pretty, a little thing, innocent and simple, to all external appearances, the ideal of guileless youth—sat working at a piece of bright-coloured "fancy work," as she called it. Who could have dreamt that so dark a problem lay between them, and that the question, what to do in so complex a matter, involving so much, should be rending in sunder the heart of the dignified and graceful mistress of the house?

"Mamma!" said Marion softly. It may be supposed that Mrs. Rowland was not particularly disposed at this moment to hear any such appeal, and silence fell again on the party, broken only by the low but splendid rumble of the long-drawn notes.

"Mamma!" said Marion again. She edged her chair a little closer, and gave a look over her shoulder towards the piano, where Rosamond sat unseen. "Did you ever think of asking Mr. ——, her brother, about that cheque?"

"What cheque?" said Mrs. Rowland coldly.

"Oh," said Marion, "it is all over the parish that it was a cheque, and the servants all know. If I were you, as you take so great an interest, I would just ask Eddy. He knows a lot of things."

"I do not see how he could know what is your father's business."

"Hush, you needn't speak so loud! he knows a lot of things," said Marion, with a little sigh. "He is far, far cleverer than Archie. He might find out. If it were me, I would ask him," the girl said.

"Your brother's interests," said Evelyn quietly, "are surely your business as much as mine."

"I am not saying," said Marion, "one way or another: but just it is him that I would ask if it were me."

"About what—about what?" cried Evelyn, pressing her hands together. "If you know anything, tell me at least what he has to do with it? What can I find out from him? What——"

"She has stopped playing," said Marion, and she added with a little severity, "You will see, if you think, that whether or no——it's best she should not hear."

They said good-night to her shortly after, kissing her both of them, according to the formula which girls are trained to go through: and went up stairs, one after the other, slim girlish creatures, innocent neophytes in life, as one would have thought, devoid of its saddening knowledge, its disenchanting experiences—leaving behind them a woman who had seen much sorrow and trouble, yet who was less acquainted than either of them, it seemed, with certain mysteries and problems.

May left her in a state of agitation and excitement, such as Evelyn had not yet known in the trials of her own life. She felt that Archie's future was in her hands, though he rejected her interposition so bitterly; and what was more, her husband's future, the happiness of the good man who had so much trust in her. If she could restore his son to him and did not, because of any reluctance

of hers, any shrinking from exertion, and mean or secondary feeling, as for instance, that no one would be grateful to her for what she did, how unworthy would that be. Gratitude ! what is gratitude but a repayment, the return for which no generous spirit looks ? It is as mercenary to insist upon gratitude as upon money or any other recompense. What would it matter if no one ever knew, if no one ever said, " Thank you ? " What was that when Archie's young life, and still closer and dearer, her good husband's happiness, were at stake ?

Evelyn walked about the drawing-room for a long time with her hands clasped, and her head bent, and thoughts pursuing thoughts, a host of quickly succeeding and often conflicting resolutions and questionings, hurrying through her mind. The butler, weary of waiting, peeped in by a half-open door, and retreated again, overawed by her absorption, which neither saw nor heard. Her maid up stairs yawned and waited, astonished and indignant. She was not in the habit of keeping the household out of bed by any caprice of hers, and all the less could they excuse her for her forgetfulness now. It was almost midnight before she was roused with a start by the chiming of the clock, and hurrying out, found Saunders, respectful but displeased, outside, to whom she proffered a hasty apology, which had to be repeated when her maid confronted her half asleep yet wholly indignant. For a ball, which the servants enjoy as much as their master, allowance may be made ; but on a night when nothing was

happening, when the master was away, and the ladies expected to be more easy to serve, less exacting, keeping earlier hours than usual! And next day consternation still more deep struck the house: for Mrs. Rowland went away, taking only a bag with her, and explaining briefly that she had business in London, but would be back on the third day. Rosamond proposed to go with her, and so did Marion. She only smiled at them both, and declared that she would be back again before they had packed their things. She did not even take her maid! which was a sort of insult to the house. A mistress who can "do" for herself, who can travel unattached, and dress her own hair, &c., is a disappointment in a house like Rosmore.

She went away on Tuesday, and late on Wednesday night James Rowland came home, a day or two earlier than he had been expected. To describe his astonishment and disappointment when he arrived, and found her gone, is more than words are capable of. He had almost turned back from his own door and disappeared again into the darkness, from which he had looked out with such a rising of comfort and happiness in his home-coming, and of hope for what might have happened while he was away. "Mrs. Rowland not at home!" he said, stumbling across his own threshold as though the place was strange to him: "why, you must be dreaming," but Saunders would not be driven from his

explanation. The mistress had received news that she had to act upon at once, and the master being away, she had gone up to London instead of him, Saunders supposed. She expected to be home on Friday at the latest, which was the day on which he too was expected home. Rowland appeared at the dinner-table, to the great astonishment of the girls, and with a countenance of disgust and impatience difficult to describe. "So she has left you planted," he said with a sharp laugh. It was impossible, indeed, that a man could return home much wanting his wife, calculating upon her, and find her gone, without feeling himself an injured man. He called Marion into the library after and questioned her. "Where has she gone? What has come over her? There is not a line, not a word to explain."

"She was going to London on business—whatever that may mean," said Marion. "She did not open her lips to me."

"But at least you know where she is gone?"

"Papa," said Marion, "you can have observed very little if you have not observed that mamma does not give her confidence to me."

"Oh, confound your confidence. Where is my wife?" Rowland cried.

"I do not know," said Marion primly. She added after a moment, *staccato*—"But I might give a guess; she was awfully taken up—about Archie, papa."

He uttered a sort of groan, looking fiercely at her, not missing a shade of meaning in Marion's face.

"And she wanted me to interfere: but I just said that what papa decided must be right, and I would have nothing to do with it—against you. And then she was in great thought. Did you ever hear, papa, that before she was married, mamma and Mr. Saumarez, *their* father, were great friends?"

"What has that to do with it?" he cried angrily.

"Well—there was some story Eddy always said and he used to laugh; but he never would tell me right out: and he said he could make her do whatever he liked on that account. And last night she asked Rosamond a great many questions about when he was coming home and so forth, and I heard her say something about 'your father's advice.'"

James Rowland sprang to his feet with the suppressed roar of feeling, which in men of his kind does duty for the sigh or outcry of milder natures. There was something of the wild beast in it—an impulse of rage, almost frenzy. Advise with that man on *his* affairs! Take that vile cynic, that false traitor, that diseased atomy into her confidence on her husband's decent concerns! His looks terrified his daughter: and as he paced about the room up and down, Marion took advantage of the first occasion on which he turned his back to her to escape. But Rowland did not even remark that she

was gone. Oh, Evelyn ! Evelyn ! whom he trusted to the bottom of his heart, had she gone to expose the secrets of his house, his shame, and the breaking of his heart to *that* man ! This shaft went to his very soul.

CHAPTER VIII

EVELYN arrived in London on a dark morning of early November, having travelled all night; but she scarcely so much as thought of her fatigue, and still less of the heavy yellow atmosphere, as she drove to the hotel where she had lived with her husband on their first arrival in England, when she knew nothing of the difficulties that were to rise like lions in her way. It had been June then, and everything was fresh and fair. And though even then she had thought with apprehension of the children, wondering whether they would receive her with prejudice, or what she could do to disarm opposition, no thought of anything more serious than the little contrarieties of household intercourse had ever come into her mind. What floods of experience—unthought of, unexpected, had come upon her since that time. Now she had learned to know herself and others, to realize a hundred dangers and difficulties which never had appeared upon her horizon before. Nothing that had happened in her previous life could have made it seem possible to her that she

should come back again alone to London, on a sort of detective enterprise in the interests of her husband's son—who did not love, but distrusted and feared her, though she had thus dared the very real dangers of her husband's displeasure and her own uneasy sense of unfitness and incapacity, on his behalf. She had thought and thought during the long sleepless night, turning the matter over in every possible view ; sometimes appalled at her own hardihood in making such a venture ; sometimes feeling that it was the only course she could have pursued ; sometimes with a cold shade of self-distrust, asking herself how she could have undertaken it at all, how she could hope to carry it out. And, unfortunately, the more Evelyn thought, the stronger became this latter sentiment: how she was to find Eddy ; how she was to begin such an inquiry ; how she could put it to him in so many words that it was he who was guilty and not Archie. She had not entered with herself into these details until she had committed herself to this attempt. The question before had been, should she do it ? should she take this chance of enlightenment ? should she try at least what seemed the only way of attaining any certainty ? It had seemed to her before she started, that she had but to be brought face to face with Eddy, to appeal to him and his better impulses in order to know. "If you can throw any light upon it," she had meant to say ; "if you know anything !" And it did not occur to her that he would hesitate to reply. He

was lazy, light, unsettled, uncertain—badly trained, poor boy, without much moral sense, not careful to discriminate between right and wrong; but yet at the bottom of all a gentleman, with an instinctive sense of loyalty and truth. The difficulty at first was merely that of going, finding him, venturing upon the solitary journey, acting in her husband's absence, without his knowledge: all of them very appalling things—for she had never been accustomed to act for herself in any practical emergency, although well enough accustomed to passive endurance of things she could not mend. The sudden sense that here was a thing which perhaps she could mend by sudden action had at first taken away her breath. It had seemed to her inexperience a mighty thing to do, to start off to London all by herself in James's absence, as if she were running away. It looked like waiting till he was gone, and then taking advantage! She laughed at the suggestion, yet held her breath at the strange risk. He might think—and yet more, the servants might think, who were so apt to find out everything, and a great deal more than there was to find out. These conflicting thoughts had kept her mind in a ferment of anxiety, until she had actually taken that great step and started. And then they had dropped suddenly and given place to a new kind of trouble.

How was she to bring Eddy Saumarez to the bar, to put him to the question, to ask him to incriminate himself or his friends, to demand—What do you know? This new side of the matter rose up as

soon as she had fairly begun her journey and caught her by the throat. The face of Eddy rose before her in the partial darkness behind the veiled lamp of the compartment in which she travelled alone. Oh, not an easy face to confront, to over-awe, to reach the meaning of! A face that could pucker into humorous lines, that could put on veils of assumed incomprehension, that could look satirically amused, or innocently unconscious, or wildly merry, as it pleased! "What could make you think, dear Mrs. Rowland, that I knew anything?" he would say; or, "It is too delightful that you should have such an opinion of my insight;" or, perhaps, "You know I never learned the very alphabet of Archie, and how can I tell what he would do?" Such expressions she had heard from him often on other subjects, upon which he could baffle her smilingly, looking in her face all the time. And how could she hope to keep him to the point now, to bring him to a serious answer, to convince him of the importance of the position and the need there was that he should speak? In the middle of the journey her courage had so evaporated that she had almost determined to return again without making this unhopeful attempt. But there are always as many, or perhaps more, difficulties in the way of going back than there are in going forward, and Evelyn felt that she had committed herself too much to make it possible that she should go back. She drove to the hotel, and had her bath and changed her dress, and swallowed hurriedly that

cup of tea which is the only sustenance possible in a moment of anxiety to so many women. And then she walked from the hotel to the insignificant fashionable street in which the house of Mr. Saumarez was. It was a small house, though the locality was irreproachable, and the blinds of the first floor were all carefully drawn down, though there were indications of life in the other parts. Evelyn's knock was answered after a considerable interval by the old woman caretaker or charwoman, who was left in charge when "the family" were absent. "Mr. Edward?" she said; "Mr. Eddy! —yes'm, he's at 'ome; but he's not up yet, and won't be this three or four hours."

"Oh!" Evelyn was so startled in her breathless expectancy that she could scarcely answer this which was half a disappointment and more than half a relief. There are moments when a brief postponement, even of the thing we most desire, is a certain ease to the strained faculties. She asked at what time Eddy would be visible and went away, turning towards Kensington Gardens, where she thought she might be able to spend the time until she must return. The park, of course, was empty, and though Kensington Gardens had still that cheerful number of comers and goers, which marks the vicinity of a district in which people live the whole year round, it was not otherwise than a place of "retired leisure" as it generally is. She walked up and down under the tall, bare trees, which stood about like ghosts in the

yellow atmosphere, and sat down here and there and waited, looking at her watch from time to time, looking at the groups of children, and the old people and young girls who were taking their morning walk, and who looked at her with not much less curiosity than a stranger unknown calls forth in a village. She was not one of the *habitués*, and perhaps, she thought, some sense of the tumult in her soul might have stolen into the calm foggy air around her, and startled the quiet promenaders with a consciousness of an uneasy spirit in their midst. She would not have been remarked in the adjoining park, where uneasy spirits abound, and all kinds of strange meetings, interviews, and revolutions take place. When she had waited as she thought long enough, she went back again to Blank Street. "Oh, it's you again, miss," said the old woman. "Master Edward's gone—I forgot to tell him as some one had been here; and he went out in a hurry, for he was going out to 'is breakfast. I'm sure, miss, I'm very sorry I forgot; but he wouldn't have paid no attention, he was in such a hurry to get away."

Evelyn pressed her hands tightly together, as if she had been pressing her heart between them. She ceased to feel the relief: the sickening suspense and delay made the light for a moment swim in her eyes.

"I am very anxious to see him," she said. "At what time will he return?"

"Oh, miss, I can't tell," said the old woman.

"Sometimes he'll come in to dress for dinner sometimes not. I does for them in other ways, but not cooking, except just a cup of tea."

"At what time," said Evelyn; "six or seven? tell me! I am very anxious to see him."

"Well, miss, it's just a chance," the caretaker said.

And with this she was dismissed to wait the livelong day, with nothing to do, in that forced inaction which is the most miserable of all things. I do not know a more dreadful ordeal to go through than to go to a strange place upon one special mission, which is your only errand there, and not to be able to accomplish it, and to have a whole dreary day to get over in forced patience, until you can try again. Mrs. Rowland went back to the hotel, and spent the greater part of the day staring through the window, with some sort of hope that she might see Eddy's face, and be able to rush after him, and stop him in the midst of the crowd. At six o'clock she went back, and at seven, and at eight, walking about and about in the intervals, so as to keep the door in sight: but nobody came. It was not any attempt on Eddy's part to elude her, for he did not know anything about her. He did not come home on that evening to dine, that was all. The next day she waited until a later hour before she went. Alas! he had gone out earlier on that particular morning! The old woman had said that a lady from Scotland had been inquiring for him; but he had flung away with a contemptuous outcry "Confound all ladies from Scotland!" which

Mrs. Jones was too polite to repeat. In the evening Evelyn had no better luck; but she left her card with an entreaty pencilled upon it that he would come to see her in her hotel, and sat through the evening watching for every step. But no one came. The third day was the day on which she ought to have gone home; but it was impossible to go away now leaving this quest unaccomplished, whatever might happen. She wrote a hurried letter to her husband explaining something, though not all, and with a determined resolve that this day should not pass in the same inactivity, went out again. The old woman received her like an old acquaintance. "He's in, miss, but he's in bed," she said. Evelyn stepped quickly into the house. "I must see him," she said. "Lawks, miss!" said the woman, "you won't go up to a young gentleman in his bedroom." Evelyn only repeated "I must see him." She did not perceive an air of greater bustle and movement about the house. What was it to her who was there, if she could but see Eddy?

"My good woman," she said, "my business is very important. Mr. Saumarez has just left my house in the country, and something has happened that may hurt him—that may most seriously hurt him. Show me where his room is: I will take the responsibility on myself."

"Oh, miss, it isn't my place to show in a lady. I couldn't do it; I daren't do it; and you're too nice and too respectable for such a thing—oh, lady!" cried the old woman, as the visitor went on

passing her. Evelyn met a man-servant on the stairs with a cup of soup in his hand. Except that he was a servant, and in a dark livery, she made no other note in respect to him. She said in the calm of the excitement which had now taken hold of her like a giant, "Tell me which is Mr. Edward's room?"

"Mr. Edward's room?—he is not up, madam," said the man.

"It does not matter; I must see him—which is his room?"

She was so determined that she pushed past him, quite pale, and with a desperation which the man, more experienced than the old charwoman, recognized. He followed her up stairs, and opened a door. "If you will go in there, I will send him to you." It was a small sitting-room, Eddy's no doubt, from the pipes and foils and riding-whips and other mannish, boyish articles that hung on the walls. Evelyn would have turned back when she saw that he was not there. "I am not to be foiled," she said; "I must see him; take me to his room, or else I will find it for myself!"

"Ma'am," said the man, "I know you're a lady and a friend of the family. I have seen you before. I give you my word I'll bring him to you, if you'll wait here."

She sat down and waited close by the open door. She was determined that he should not escape her, whatever his desire might be. The man, after a vain attempt to close the door upon her, opened

the next door and went in. She heard the blinds drawn up, something said softly, then an astonished cry. At all events, whatever might come of it, she had at least secured her opportunity at last.

It was half an hour, however, before, after many movements and much commotion in the next room, Eddy came forth hurried and breathless, with a face that looked old and wan in the light of the morning, a light he was not much accustomed to face. Poor little pale, old-young face, something between the shrivelled countenance of an old man and that of a pinched, unwholesome child! To think that he should not yet be of age, and yet wear that look: but Mrs. Rowland had no time for such reflections. She rose up quickly, just within the open door, and put out an eager hand. He might even now have escaped her, she felt, had she not been standing there, where he was obliged to pass; and his tremor and anxiety at the sight of her were evident. He cried, "Mrs. Rowland!" letting fall a book which was in his hand.

"Yes; I have come down direct from Scotland to speak to you. I have been three days trying to see you." She had scarcely breath enough to say so many words.

"The old woman," said Eddy, "told me something about a lady from Scotland; but I thought it bosh; she is such an old fool. I did not flatter myself there was any lady in Scotland who would take the trouble to come after me; and you Mrs. Rowland——"

"You did not think of seeing me? Can you imagine no reason why I should come?" she said.

To Evelyn's astonishment—for her enigmatical question had really been put at pure hazard—Eddy's sallow and careworn face flushed over with a violent red, and then became more than sallow, cadaverous, and a cold moisture came out upon his forehead.

"Let me shut the door," he said, "it's cold; and can I order you anything: a cup of tea—breakfast? Ah!" he said with a laugh, "of course you've breakfasted hours ago; but I'm sure you will not mind if I order my tea: one wants it in a morning when one has been late overnight."

"You look—as if you had been very late overnight, Eddy."

"Oh, I acknowledge I was; who denies it?" said Eddy, with again an attempt at a laugh. "It's the nature of the beast: one minds one's manners, at a place like Rosmore; but in town one can't help one's self, not even when town's out of town, and it's only the *débris* that are left."

"You would have done better to stay at Rosmore," she said gently; "you do not look the same person."

"I am not the same person. Who would not be better there?" he said. And here he burst into an uneasy laugh. "You have not come at this hour in the morning, and dragged an unlucky wretch out of bed, only that we should exchange compliments about Rosmore?"

"No, indeed. I have a little history to give you Eddy, and an appeal to make. You know, or you, divined, I cannot tell which, something of what happened before you left?"

"The night of the ball?—oh I divined: that is to say, I saw. A man does not arrive in hot haste at nearly midnight, when a ball is going on, and demand the master of the house; and the master of the house does not send in equal haste for his son, who is closeted with him for a long time, then comes out looking conscious and distracted, and finally disappears, without the instructed spectator forming an idea that something must have happened. I am a very instructed spectator, Mrs. Rowland. I have seen various things of the kind. The sons have disappeared for shorter or longer times, and the fathers have remained masters of the field. Here, Rogers, put it on this little table, and take away those things to eat. I want nothing but some tea."

There was a moment's pause, during which the little table was covered with a shining white polished cloth, which reflected the fire in a surface made semi-transparent by starch and borax and a glittering silver tea-pot placed upon it; which made a still warmer reflection in the foggy yellow of the morning air. Eddy poured himself out his tea with his usual air of easy composure, a little overdone. But this Mrs. Rowland was not herself of a sufficiently easy mind to see.

"Eddy," she said, "I have been told—I don't

know how to say it to you." It had never till this moment occurred to her how difficult it would be to say, nor did she even know what she meant to imply, or how he could be connected with the matter. "I have been told," she repeated rather breathlessly, "that you, perhaps, might know something of—that in the dreadful position of affairs I might ask—you—"

"Ask me—what?" he said with a smile. The corners of his mouth trembled a little. He spilt the cream which he was pouring into his tea, but she did not observe these incidents, and indeed what could they have had to do with the question—but it was no question—which she asked? "Of course, if I can tell you anything, Mrs. Rowland, or throw any light—But tell me first. Ask me—what?"

She gazed at him a moment, and then poor Evelyn acknowledged her own impotence by a sudden burst of tears. "I have come down from Scotland," she said, "without my husband's knowledge. I have wandered to and fro—this is now the third day—trying to see you, Eddy. I am worn out, and my nerves have gone all wrong. I can't be sure of the step I am taking, if I am mistaken or not. The only thing I can do is to ask you simply—do you know anything about it? I don't know what. I have nothing clear in my head, only a sort of despair of making anything of it, ever. I was told that you might know something—that you might help me. If you can, for

God's sake do it, Eddy! I will be grateful to you all my life."

He spilt a little of his tea as he carried it to his lips. After all, though nothing can be so hardened as youth, nothing is at the same time so soft. Eddy was not invulnerable as some people of his age, as Marion, for instance, appeared to be. He had never in his life been subjected to this sort of appeal. A young man who has a mother and other anxious friends is, perhaps, subjected to it over much, and at last comes to regard the appeal to his emotional nature—the argument against going wrong, that it will break some one else's heart—as a bore rather than a touching plea. But Eddy, who had never had any mother, and to whom no one had ever appealed thus, was moved—more than he could have imagined it possible that he should be moved. He put down his tea-cup with a trembling hand. He could not look in the face of the woman who had been so kind to him, and who looked at him with the utmost eloquence of which eyes were capable, eyes full of emotion and of tears, to back up her words. He did not know what reply to make to her. He had been already mightily shaken by the success of that great *coup* of his. When an error or crime is a failure, the conscience is quiet: we do not take upon ourselves the guilt of a thing by which we have gained nothing; but when, as in the present case, it succeeds perfectly, then the inexperienced spirit trembles. Eddy was only at this stage.

He had received his proportion of the money, and he had still the remains of the hundred-and-fifty pounds which Archie had given him. Never had he known what it was to have so much in his pockets. He had been throwing it away in handfuls, as was natural, and as the excitement lessened, the compunction grew. It was not so much compunction, as it was a horrible sense of the insignificant value of a thing for which he had risked so much. He had, indeed, freed himself from the money-lender's hands, and was no longer in his power; yet never in his life would he be sure that he was not in somebody's power. And presently the money, the curse, and the payment of his act, would be exhausted, and he no better, how much worse than before! These thoughts had been in Eddy's mind before this appeal was made to him. He had banished them, but they were ever waiting at his door, ready to catch him at an unguarded moment. And now here was this lady, this dear woman who had been kind to him! He could not swallow that tea, much as he wanted it or some restorative. He set it down again with a trembling hand. That had happened to Eddy, which some of the old Puritans meant when they described Satan as flinging so big a stone at the head of his victim, that it recoiled upon himself.

"Mrs. Rowland," he said, "we are speaking parables, and though we both know something, we don't understand what we each know. Will

you tell me simply what has happened to Archie, and why? I guessed at it. I might not be right in my guess. Tell me as if I had never heard anything of it, and did not know."

Evelyn dried her eyes, and recovered her calm. She obeyed him literally without a word of preface. "On the night of the ball a messenger arrived from the bank, bringing with him a cheque, purporting to be my husband's, for a thousand pounds. It was a forged cheque."

Eddy, in spite of himself, shivered as if with a sudden chill. He put his hands up to his eyes. It might have been merely a gesture of wonder and dismay.

"Mr. Rowland, I think wrongly, had been suspicious and uneasy about Archie before. He sent for him, and he was the more angry that Archie could not come till all the guests were gone. He held out the cheque to his son, and accused him of having done it."

Eddy withdrew his hands from his face and looked up. "Which he did not, which he never did, which he was not capable of," he cried quickly.

"Oh, Eddy, God bless you! I knew you would say so. And so did I—from the bottom of my heart."

"He was not," cried Eddy, with a sort of hysterical laugh, "clever enough—not half! He had not got it in him—nor bold enough—a fellow like that! He could not have done it if he had tried."

"Oh, Eddy! but that was not my husband's view. Archie was so astonished at first that he thought it something to laugh at. And then he was angry, furious, as passionate as his father. And then—he shook the dust from off his feet, as the Bible says, and left the house. And God knows if he will ever come back. Never, I think, till his innocence is proved. And his father—he is inexorable, he thinks, but he is very unhappy, Eddy!"

The tone of appeal in that last word was indescribable. She raised her voice a little and her eyes, and looked at him. And Eddy, unaccustomed, could not bear the look in those eyes.

"You speak of proving his innocence," he said; "was there any proof of his guilt?"

"Nothing: but that his handwriting is like his father's."

"And do you know," said Eddy looking away, "have you found out to whom, for instance, it was paid?"

"My husband," said Evelyn, "is à very proud man. His honour is his life. He accepted the cheque, though he knew at once what it was. He would allow no questions. Therefore, it is impossible to inquire, to get any particulars. And the plan he devised to serve Archie will be his ruin. Imagine such a thing! We dare not ask lest he should be suspected; and so he must lie under suspicion all his life!"

"Oh, not so bad as that—fathers are not so bad as that: he will forgive him."

"But he will never ask to be forgiven—nor accept forgiveness; how should he, being innocent?" said Evelyn.

"I should not be so particular," said Eddy, with a momentary gleam of humour in his eyes. He could not be serious for long together without some such relief. "And so Mr. Rowland has got the cheque," he said; then, after a pause, "And may I ask, dear Mrs. Rowland, who was so kind as to suggest that you should ask me?"

"Marion for one: I can't tell why," Evelyn said.

("Oh," Eddy said within himself, with another twinkle in his eyes, "I owe you one for that, my little May.")

"And a very different person—a man whom perhaps you scarcely know, who suggested that your friend Johnson——"

"Oh, my friend Johnson! the beast—to call that fellow my friend!" cried Eddy in a more audible parenthesis.

"Eddy," said Evelyn gravely, "in that respect you were very much to blame."

"Oh, in every respect I am much to blame!" cried the young man, springing from his chair. The vehemence of his motion was such that Evelyn had to put up her hand to save the table against which he kicked in his rapid movement. He went across the room, and stood with his back

to her, his shoulders up to his ears, his hands in his pockets, absorbed in his thoughts. And they were not pleasant thoughts: and they ranged over the widest space, the whole course of the future through which that cloud might ever be ready to fall: the horror of the consequences should they overtake him, the ruin of name and fame, the scandal and the catastrophe. It was not a thing which could be lived down, or which people could forget. All those arguments which are of so little use in the face of temptation, are of tremendous force when the deed is done, and nothing remains but the penalty to pay. His lively, quick intelligence, roused to rapid action, made its calculations with lightning speed: not unmoved by the thought of Archie in the strange jumble of selfish and unselfish motives—not untouched by the misery which had been produced on all sides.

He turned round again at the end of a few minutes, which seemed to Evelyn like so many years.

"Mr. Rowland has the cheque?" he said. "Would he give it to you, and could you burn it?"

"Eddy?"

"Do you think I am going out of my senses? But I am not. If he will give you the cheque and let you burn it, I will—clear it all up," said Eddy with a gasp; "and make Archie's innocence as clear as the day."

"Eddy! Eddy!"

"Ah, you speak to me in a different tone now: your voice sounds like a blessing. But wait till you know, Mrs. Rowland; perhaps it will change again. I will not take your kind hand till after. I am not going to cheat you out of your sympathy. Look here," he said, standing by her, "this is what you must do. Telegraph at once, 'If you will give me cheque to destroy, full information will be given from quite different quarter.' There," he said, "that's as concise as it can be made. I will come to your hotel at five, when you will have your answer, and bring—all that you want."

"The proof," she said, "that it was not Archie?"

"The proof," he replied, with a long-drawn breath, "who it was."

CHAPTER IX

EVELYN left the little sitting-room and went down stairs with a quickly-beating heart. She did not quite see the meaning of what she was bidden to do. It was like the formula of a doctor's prescription, obscure yet authoritative, and to be obeyed without doubt or delay. Her heart was beating high, and her brain throbbing in sympathy. She had no thought but to get as quickly as possible to the nearest telegraph office; the only thing that restrained her was the thought that she was not quite sure where her husband was. It had been settled that he should return home that day, on which she had determined to return too so as to meet him. That part of her intention she evidently could not carry out, but in her absorption she did not reflect that, if he had arrived it would be to the disappointment and surprise of finding her gone, without any explanation; that he would probably be annoyed and displeased, and not in a mood to receive her laconic and unexplained question graciously. This did not enter into Evelyn's mind

at all. She was given up to one thought. That Rowland should be harsh to her or misunderstand her did not occur to her as possible.

She hurried down stairs to fulfil her mission, bidding Eddy remain and take his breakfast. "You look as if you wanted it, my poor boy," she said, patting him on the shoulder.

"Oh, I want it—and something stronger!" he said, with a laugh.

"No, my dear; oh, no, my dear," she said anxiously. She even came back from the door hurried and eager as she was, to deliver, like a true woman, a few very broken words on the subject. "Be content with the tea, dear Eddy," she said. A great tenderness for the boy had risen in her breast. He had never known his mother; how much there was to be excused in him! And he might have been her own son! though she thanked God that it was not so, and reflected with horror what her life would have been, had her youthful hopes been fulfilled, with such a man as Edward Saumarez had turned out to be, and with such a son: yet the very thought that she might have been the boy's mother always softened Evelyn. He was such a boy, too, still! though he had run the course of so many unknown ills—young enough to be taken into his mother's arms, if he had one, and coaxed and persuaded back to innocence, Eddy had no such feeling in the roused and excited state of his mind; he would not laugh as she left him so as she could hear, but waited till, as he

thought, she had left the house before he allowed that unsteady peal to burst forth. Be content with the tea! Oh, the natural preacher, the all-advising woman! but with the sound of that "dear Eddy!" in his ears the young man laughed till he cried—only because it was so good a joke, he said to himself: but in this there was a certain self-deception too.

Evelyn was hurrying out, waiting for no one to open the door for her, when she was suddenly stopped by Rogers, the servant who, she now recollected suddenly, was the personal attendant of Saumarez himself. She had not attempted to account for his presence, nor indeed thought of him in the hurry of her thoughts. But it now flashed upon her, with sudden surprise and vexation, in the enlightenment of his words—"My master, ma'am," he said, "would like to see you before you go."

"Your master!" It was with a gasp of alarm that Evelyn replied. "I did not know," she said, "that Mr. Saumarez was here."

"We came home—sudden," said the man, "yesterday. My master will often take a fancy like that. And he hopes, ma'am, that you will not go out of the house without giving him the pleasure of seeing you."

"I am in great haste," Mrs. Rowland said. "I came to Mr. Edward entirely on business. I am very sorry Mr. Saumarez was told that I was here: for indeed I have no time——"

"Mr. Saumarez bade me say, ma'am, that as you knew he was unable to come to you he hoped as you would overlook the liberty and come to him." Rogers stood respectfully but firmly between Evelyn and the door. Not, of course, to prevent her going, which was an impossibility, but with a moral impulse that she felt incapable of resisting. "He has been in a deal of suffering, and it will cheer him up, ma'am," the man said.

With a pang of disappointment she yielded to the delay. It could only be for a few minutes, after all. She was exceedingly unwilling not only to be delayed, but to encounter Eddy's father under any circumstances, and above all in his own house. She followed the attendant with great suppressed impatience and reluctance. The sitting-room occupied by Saumarez was close to the door, with a window upon the street. It was the dining-room of the little London house, the back part, which was separated from the front by folding-doors, half-covered with curtains, being Saumarez's bedroom. He was seated in his invalid chair between the fire and the window, and though the foggy morning had very little light in it, a blind of much the same colour as the fog, yellowish and grimy, was drawn down half over the window. Out of this obscurity, upon which the red light of the fire shed at one side an illumination which looked smoky in the atmosphere of the fog, the long thin countenance, peaked beard, and gleaming eyes of the invalid were visible with the most striking

Rembrandt effect. He held out to Evelyn a very thin, very white hand.

"Thanks, dear lady," he said, "for this gracious visit. I scarcely hoped for anything so good. In London, at this time of the year, a fair visitor of any kind is a rarity; but you!—I believed you to be dispensing hospitality in marble halls," he added, with a little laugh of the veiled satire which implied to Evelyn all that scorn of her late marriage, and *parvenu* husband, and vulgar wealth, which he did not put into words.

"You wonder, perhaps, what I have done with Rosamond," she said; "but she is perfectly well and perfectly safe. My own absence from home is one of three days only. I return to-night."

"Ah, Rosamond," he said; "poor child! To tell the truth I did not think of Rosamond. She is quite safe, I have no doubt. But you? What is my friend Rowland about that he allows his beautiful wife to come up to London, even in the dead season, on business, by herself?"

"The business," she said, hurriedly, "was my own, and he could not have done it for me. I hope you are better, and that the waters——"

"The waters," he said, with a smile, "are good to amuse people with an idea that something is being done for them. That is the best of medical science nowadays. It does amuse one somehow, however vain one knows it to be, to think that something is being done. And so your business, my dear lady, concerned my son? Happy Eddy

to be mixed up in the affairs of such a woman as you."

"There was a question I had to ask him," said Evelyn, faltering.

"Of so much importance that you have tried to find him vainly for two days. I say again, happy Eddy! I wish these were questions which his father could answer: but alas! all that is over with me."

"The question did not personally concern either him or me," said Evelyn, "but the well-being of a third person, for whom I am very closely concerned."

"Happy third person!" said the invalid with a gleam of those wolfish, eager eyes out of the partial gloom. "I would I were one of those third persons. And Rowland, my good friend, does he know all about it, and of a necessity so strong that a lovely lady had almost forced her way into Eddy's room?"

"Mr. Saumarez," said Evelyn, feeling her cheeks burn, "my husband knows, or will know, exactly in every particular what I have done, and will approve it. You know what a boy of Eddy's age, and lately a visitor in my own house, the companion of my husband's son, must be to me."

"Age is very deceitful," said Saumarez with a laugh, "especially in Eddy's case, if you will permit me to say it. He is not a boy, as you will call him, to be judged by mere numerals. Eddy is one of the sons occasionally to be met with in highly

civilized life who are older than their fathers. Even a husband's son, dear lady, has been known to be not over-safe," he added with again that mocking laugh.

"There is no question of safety," said Evelyn. She felt the blaze of shame to be so addressed, enveloping her from head to foot like a fire. "You must pardon me if I say that this is a kind of conversation very unpleasing to me," she said with spirit, "and most uncalled for." His laugh sounded like the laugh of a devil in her ears.

"Nay," he said, "you must not let my precious balms break your head. I speak as a friend, and in your best interests, Evelyn."

"My name is Mrs. Rowland, Mr. Saumarez."

"Oh! if I could ever forget the time when you were not Mrs. Rowland, but my Evelyn! But that, of course, is not to the purpose," he added with a sigh, at which he presently laughed. "We get sentimental. Dear lady, if you will let me say it, your age is precisely the one which is most dangerous, and in which a taste for youth has been often shown, in various conspicuous examples."

Evelyn rose to her feet with a start of offence and shame. She had not known it was in her to be so wildly, almost fiercely angry. "Not another word!" she said. "You abuse your privileges as a sick man, I will not hear another word."

"And what," he said in a low voice, stretching out his hand to detain her, "if I—or Rogers—were to let my good friend Rowland know that he had

difficulty in preventing the trusted and honoured wife from making a forcible entrance into a young man's room?"

If Evelyn had been a weak or unreasoning woman, had she been without trust in her husband or herself, had she been apt to concealment, or to believe, as so many do, that an evil motive is always the most readily believed in—it is possible that she might at this odious moment, a moment she could never bear to think of after—have been lost one way or other, bound as a miserable thrall under this man's power, whose malignant mouth could have done her such vile and frightful injury. But fortunately she was none of these things. It had not even once occurred to her that her determination to see Eddy, wherever she might find him, would have been made the subject of any remark. And if she now perceived that it was a foolish and imprudent thing, the discovery was made in a moment of such extreme excitement that it had no effect upon her. She stood by him for a second, towering over him in a wrath which possessed and inspired her. "Do so," she said, "at once: or rather let Rogers do so, Mr. Saumarez. It will not be so degrading to him, a man without instruction, possibly knowing no better, as it would be to you. And besides, he could speak from personal knowledge. His letter will find my husband at Rosmore. Good-bye."

"And do you think you are to silence the world in this way?" said Saumarez. "Myself, or Rogers

perhaps, and your husband if he is such a fool—but—"

"Good-bye," she said once more.

"Evelyn!" he cried.

"Good-bye." Mrs. Rowland went out of the house like an arrow from a bow, drawing the door behind her, with a sound that rang through the sleepy street. She came so quickly that she almost discovered a watcher on the other side, intent upon all her movements; that is, she gave him the shock of a possible discovery; for, as for Evelyn, she saw nothing. Her eyes were dim and misty with the heat of indignation that seemed to rise up from her flushed cheeks and panting breath to blind her. She walked away with the impulse of that wrath, at a pace that would have been impossible under other circumstances, walking far and fast, incapable of thinking even where it was that she wanted to go.

The pure air, however, and the rapid movement, soon brought Mrs. Rowland to herself, and she turned back upon her rapid course so suddenly that again— But she did not observe any one, or anything in the road, which, even in this dead season, was sufficiently full to confuse an unaccustomed visitor. She went at once to the telegraph office and sent off the message, as a matter of precaution, sending it to Rosmore, and in duplicate to the house of Sir John Marchbanks, where it was possible Rowland might still be. She added a word of explanation to the message

dictated by Eddy. "Don't be surprised to hear from me, from London," she wrote, without any recollection of the concise style necessary to a telegram, "all explanations when we meet, and I know you will approve." When she had sent this off, Evelyn was solaced and more or less restored to herself. She walked back more calmly to the hotel, beginning to feel a little the effect of the morning's exertions and excitement. But when she reached the shelter of her room, and felt herself alone, and under no restraint from other people's looks, she was incapable of keeping up any longer. A long fit of crying gave vent to the pent up trouble in her breast. She bent down her head upon her hands and wept like a child, helplessly. When one has been outraged, insulted, hurt in every fibre, and with no power to vindicate or avenge, which are momentary modes of relief—the mingled pain and shame and rage, quite justifiable, yet making up a passion which hurts almost as much as the cause which produced it, lay all one's defences low. Men even are wrought to tears by such means, how much more a woman, to whom that expression of suffering is always so painfully and inconveniently near.

When Evelyn had overcome this weakness and recovered her confusion, I cannot assert that her mind was easy or her thoughts comfortable. Was she so sure that her husband would approve? Had she not been imprudent and unguarded in what she had done? The thought had not

entered her mind before, but the light of a vile suggestion is one that makes the whitest innocence pause and shudder. Could any one else for a moment think—— She said to herself, No, no! with a high head and expanded nostril. But it made her unhappy in spite of herself. It was as if something filthy and festering had been thrown into her mind. She could not forget it, could not throw it forth again, felt its unutterable foulness like a burn or a wound. Rogers, perhaps the servants, might have thought—for servants have dreadful ways of thinking, dreadful back-stair ways, the ideas of minds which peep and watch, and hope to detect. He might have thought—and in that mysterious way in which such whispers fly, it might be communicated to some other privileged attendant, and so go forth upon the air, an evil breath. Was it possible! was it possible! Evelyn seemed to feel already the confusion, the bewilderment, the restless horror of a whispered scandal, an accusation that never could be met, because never openly made, one of those vile breathings which go through society. It is so strange to think that one may one's self be subject to such an insinuated wrong. Herself! the last person, the most unlikely, the most impossible! It was already a wrong to her that the vile idea should be put within the furthest range of things thought of. And thus Mrs. Rowland spent a very restless and miserable afternoon. She could neither eat nor rest. She

put up her "things," the few necessaries she had brought with her, to be ready for the night train, and tried to still herself, to keep quiet, to read, but without effect. There is nothing so difficult to get through as a day spent in waiting, and it was scarcely past twelve o'clock, when, after all she had gone through, she returned to the solitary empty hotel room, with its big stone balustrade against the window, and the crowd sweeping along below. She went out upon the balcony and watched for the coming of the telegraph boy with an answer to her message. There were dozens of telegraph boys coming and going, and at intervals she could see one below, mounting the very steps of the hotel. But hour after hour passed, and nothing came for her. On two or three occasions she ran to the door of her room, as if that could quicken the steps of the tardy messenger; but among the many people who passed up and down the stairs and looked at her curiously, there was no one bringing the reply upon which all the success of this painful mission hung.

And then it was five o'clock: but not soon, not till months of weary waiting seemed to have passed; and then ensued, to Evelyn perhaps the worst of all, a half-hour of excitement and expectation almost beyond bearing. Would Eddy come? Would he stand by his bargain, though she was not able to do so with hers. It was nothing that he did not appear at the hour. He had never been punctual. He was one of those

who do not know the value of time, nor what it is to others to keep to an hour. Nothing would ever convince Eddy that the rest of the world were not as easy in respect to time, as little bound by occupation as himself. He had no understanding of those who do a certain thing at a certain time every day of their lives. The waiter appeared bringing lights, uncalled for, for Evelyn, sitting in the partial dark, looking out upon the lamps outside, felt her heart beating too quick and fast to give her leisure to think of what was required or the hour demanded. He brought lights, he brought tea; he made an attempt, which she prevented, to draw the curtains, and shut out the gleaming world outside, the lights and sounds which still seemed to link her with the distance, and made it possible that some intelligence might still come, some answer to her prayer. And then suddenly, all at once, in the hush after the waiter had gone from the room, Eddy opened the door. Mrs. Rowland sprang from her seat as if she had not expected him at all, and his coming was the greatest surprise in the world.

"Eddy! you!"

"Did you not expect me?" he said, astonished.

She drew a chair near her, and made him sit down. "I feel as if I had brought you here on false pretences. I have got no answer to the telegram."

Eddy had taken a small pocket-book out of his breast pocket, and held it in his hand. He stopped

suddenly and looked at it, then at Mrs. Rowland, he was excited and pale, but yet his usual humorous look broke over his face. "No answer?" he said.

"Did I tell you my husband was from home? he ought to have returned to-day; but perhaps he has not done so. I ought also to have returned to-day. It means nothing but that he has not got home."

"There is no answer," Eddy said, as if explaining matters to himself, "and I will be giving myself away and no security acquired. Well, in for a penny, in for a pound," he said. "I have got it all here, Mrs. Rowland; but you ought to give me your word that I shall not be the worse for it."

She sat gazing at him with such uncomprehension, that he laughed aloud.

"She doesn't understand me," he said, "not a bit: it is not in her to understand; she has not an idea how serious it is."

Eddy's hands were unsteady, his little gray eyes were sparkling with a feverish fire. From his foot, which he kept shaking in nervous commotion, as he sat on the table with one leg suspended, to the mobile eyebrows, which quivered and twisted over his forehead, there was nothing still about him. He took a piece of paper on which something was written out of his pocket-book, and looked at it, holding it in his hand.

"Here it is," he said, and his voice shook a little though its tone was light enough. "The guilty

witness. When you put this into your husband's hands, Mrs. Rowland, he will know who forged his name. Have you a safe place to put it in, a purse or something? For, remember, I am placing my life in your hands."

"Eddy, Eddy, you frighten me! I can't imagine what you mean."

"No, I know you can't; perhaps not even when you see it will you know. But give him that, Mrs. Rowland, and he will understand."

He held the paper a moment more, and then gave it to her. There was not a particle of colour in his sallow, small face. He sat on the corner of the table, swinging one leg, at first not looking at her, a smile on his face, which grew every moment more grave.

Evelyn took the paper almost with alarm. She gazed at it with a look at first of intense surprise and disappointment. What did it mean? her husband's signature written two or three times on a piece of paper, as if he had been trying a pen. "James—James," twice or thrice repeated; then "Rowland." Then in full, "James Rowland," with a characteristic flourish at the end. She looked at the paper and then at Eddy, and then——

It was his look that forced conviction on her mind, not the guilty witness in her hand. She gave a great cry, "Eddy!" and put her hand over her eyes, as if to shut out some unwelcome sight.

"Yes," he said, swinging his foot, his head sunk

upon his breast; "that is just about what it is: and I am a—a—everything that is bad. But not such a cad as to let another man be ruined instead of me," he cried.

Evelyn got up to her feet, stumbling, not seeing where she went, her eyes blinded with tears. "Oh, my poor boy, my poor boy!" she cried, putting her arms round him, drawing him to her.

"Is that how you take it?" he said, with a sob. "I did not expect you to take it like that."

"Oh, Eddy!" she said, not able to find other words; "oh, my poor boy!"

He drew himself away from her a little, dashing off the tears that were in his eyes. "You know what that means, Mrs. Rowland," he said, "though you may be sorry for me, and he may forgive me for your sake; but it is separation for ever. I mustn't presume to let you be kind to me." He took her back to her chair and placed her in it, and kissed her hand. And then he took up his hat. "It could mean nothing else, and I should be too thankful that he takes no step. Of course, I shall never see any of you again." Then he suddenly laughed out, the colour coming back to his face. "And I was fond of that little Marion," he said; "I was, though you might not think it, and she did not deserve it any more than I do. I was—but all that's at an end now."

CHAPTER X

THESE movements of Evelyn's were watched, although she did not know it, and in the strangest way. Rowland left home leaving no address, nor any other indication of what he meant to do the evening after his return to Rosmore. He came back on the Wednesday, and on Friday morning he arrived in London, and followed his wife's steps to the hotel, where he felt sure she would go. When he arrived he was told that Mrs. Rowland was indeed there, but had just gone out. "She cannot be out of sight yet," the porter said, pointing the direction she had taken, and Rowland, without a word, followed his wife. He had no intention when he did so, no plan but to overtake her, to join her, to ask for an explanation of her conduct: but he had scarcely caught sight of the well-known figure walking before him along the thronged pavement before another idea struck him. He would not make himself known, he would watch what she was doing, and leave his eventual conduct to the guidance of the moment. One great motive which

induced him to come to this resolution was that the moment he caught sight of her, James Rowland, who had left home breathing flame and fire, shrank into himself, and felt that he no more dared approach his wife with an air of suspicion and demand an explanation her of conduct, than he dared invade the retirement of the Queen. The one thing was about as possible as the other. All his old reverence for his lady-wife, all his conviction of her absolute superiority to everybody he had ever known came back upon him like a flood. Who was he to demand an explanation from her? Was it likely that he could know better what was seemly and becoming than she did? Was it possible that she, the crowning glory of his life, could do anything against his honour, could commit or compromise him in any way? A hush fell upon his troubled, tempestuous mind the moment he perceived her before him, walking along with quiet dignity, unpretending, yet not, he said to himself in his pride, to be overlooked anywhere, moving among the common crowd as if she were in a presence chamber. He held his breath with a sort of horror at the thought that he might have been capable of going up to her, in his passion, asking her what she did there, whom she wanted, commanding her to return home at once. The sight of the sweep of her dark skirt, the carriage of her head, arrested him, temper and irritation and all in a moment. He fell back a step or two, with a vague inclination to turn tail altogether, turn back

homewards and humbly await her coming, which should be in her own time. But his heart was so sore that he could not do that. He followed her mechanically till she turned off the great thoroughfare to the smaller street, where he still followed, taking some precaution to keep himself out of her sight. He might have saved himself the trouble, for Evelyn saw nothing save the great object she had in view—the interview which was before her.

He watched her into Saumarez's house, divining whose house it was, with a pang at his heart. There was a convenient doorway opposite in which he could stand and wait for her return ; and there he placed himself, with the most curious shame of himself and his unwonted, unnatural position. Watching his wife ! which was only less intolerable than accusing her, disclosing to her that he was capable of suspecting her spotless meaning whatever it might be. No one who has not tried that undignified *metier* can have any idea how the watcher can divine what is going on inside a house from the minute signs which show outside. He saw a certain commotion in the upper story, a vague vision of her figure at the window, the blinds quickly drawn up in the next room, enough to make him, all his senses quickened with anxiety and eagerness, divine, more or less, what was taking place. He saw a man come to the window, looking moodily out as if in thought, turning round to speak to some one behind.

Whoever it was, it was not the crippled Saumarez, who, it had been so intolerable to him to think, was to be consulted on his affairs. Then he seemed to perceive by other movements below that the visitor was received in the lower room; and then she came hurriedly out, taking him by surprise, with no decorous attendance to the door, rushing forth almost as if escaping. He had to hurry after to keep up with her hasty excited steps. And then he followed her to the telegraph office, and then back to the hotel. He had got without difficulty a room close by, being anxious above measure not to betray to any one that he was not with her, that there was any separation between them—only not quite so anxious for that as that she should not see him, or divine that he had followed her. He sat with his door ajar all the afternoon, in the greatest excitement, watching her, making sure that she expected some one, listening to her enquiries at the servants if no telegram had come. She expected, then, a reply; was it from himself at home? Finally, Rowland saw Eddy, to his infinite surprise, arrive in the evening, and heard from where he watched the sound of a conversation, not without audible risings and fallings of tone, which marked some gamut of emotion in it. Eddy! what could his wife have to do with Eddy? Was it on that boy's business, in answer to any appeal from him, that she had come? Was it perhaps to ask help for Eddy that she had sent that useless telegram? James

Rowland had been deeply offended by the idea that his wife had come to consult another man upon his affairs; but it stung him again into even hotter momentary passion now, when the conviction came upon him that it was not his affairs, but something altogether unconnected with him that had brought her so suddenly to London away from her home. The first would have been an error of judgment almost unpardonable. The second was—it was a thing that could not bear thinking of. His wife consecrated to the sharing of all his sorrows, and who had shown every appearance of taking them up as her own, to leave her home and her husband in his trouble, and come here all this way in so strange and clandestine a manner at the call of Eddy—Eddy! He had himself been very favourable to Eddy, better than the boy deserved, who, however, had been generous about Archie, seeking an opportunity of making his obligations known: but that she, who had pretended to such interest in Archie, should suddenly be found to be thinking not of him but of another boy!

Rowland had scarcely gone through such a time of self-contention in all his life as during the hour or two that elapsed between Eddy's departure and the time of the train. Eddy went away with a sort of *faux air* of satisfaction, which imposed upon the unaccustomed, inexperienced detective. He at least seemed to be satisfied, whoever was distressed. He had his hat over his brows, but

he swung his stick lightly in his hand, and began to hum an opera air as he went down the stairs. She must have liberated him from some scrape, settled his affairs for him somehow—the young reprobate, who was always in trouble! Rowland would not have refused to help the boy himself: he would have treated Eddy very gently had he appealed to him; but that his wife should put herself so much out of the way for Eddy was intolerable to him. He sat there within his half-open door, angry, miserable, and heard her give her orders about her departure. She was going by the night train, and wanted some tea, and her bill and a cab got for her in time. "It is only six now," he heard her say with a sigh, as the waiter stood at the open door. She was longing to get home, was she? glad to be done with it, though she had come all this way to do it, whatever it was. He went down stairs then and got some dinner for himself, and arranged his own departure at the same hour. It was the strangest journey. She in one carriage, altogether unconscious of his vicinity, he in another, so deeply conscious of hers. He sprang out of his compartment at every station, to steal past the window of the other, to catch a passing glimpse of her. There was another lady in the corner nearest the door, but in the depths of the carriage he could see her profile, pale against the dark cushions, her eyes sometimes shut, and weariness and lassitude in every line of her figure and attitude as she lay

back in her corner. He did not think she was asleep. She would be thinking over what she had done for Eddy; thinking not of her husband and his trouble, but of that other—the other man's boy. And bitter and sore were Rowland's thoughts. The fury with which he had started was not so heavy as this; for then he had thought that she was fully occupied with his troubles, though so unwise, so little judicious as to confide them to the last man in the world whose sympathy he could have desired. But now to think that it was not his trouble at all that had occupied his wife, nothing about him, though, heaven knew, he had enough to bear—but the well-deserved discomfort of another, the needs of the trifling boy, ill-behaved and untrustworthy, for whom his own father had little to say. Less and less did James Rowland feel himself able to make himself known to his wife, to upbraid or reproach her. Why should he? he had no reason. She was spotless, if ever woman was. She had not even offended against him in the way he had feared. She had left home only to do a good action; to be kind. He was well aware of this; and to assail her, to take her to task, to accuse her even of carelessness towards him, was more than he could permit himself to do: it was impossible. But still it seemed to Rowland, as he travelled home, with unspeakable, suppressed anger and pain, that this was the most unsupportable of all, and that Eddy's shuffling, inconsiderable figure would stand between them

now for ever and ever. Not that he was jealous of Eddy: it was disappointment, disenchantment, the failure of his trust in her. To leave the boy, in whom she had professed so much interest, and whose well-being, greatly as he had sinned, involved his father's, without lifting a hand to help him, though she led her husband to believe that she would do something, work a miracle, bring him back; and go off to the end of the earth, secretly, without telling anybody, to the succour of Eddy! It was intolerable, though there might not be a word to say.

Then came the arrival, jaded and chilled, at Glasgow, in the cold gray of the morning, scarcely light. He kept about and watched what she would do, nothing doubting that her next step would be to the other railway which would take her to the banks of the loch, in time for the early boat to Rosmore. But Evelyn did not carry out this part of the programme, to his great surprise. She lingered at the station, performing such a toilet as was possible; waiting, it appeared, until the morning was a little more advanced. It was more and more difficult to keep out of her sight, yet keep her in sight in this familiar place where everybody knew him. He pulled up his greatcoat to his ears, his travelling cap down upon his forehead. He could not even copy her and add to his comfort by a wash, lest in that moment she should disappear. He could not even get a cup of coffee, and his outer man stood more in need of

restoratives and support than hers, and could ill bear the want of them. But at length the morning became sufficiently advanced, as it seemed, for her purpose, and she got into a cab with her small bag, which was all her baggage. He could not tell what orders she gave to the driver, but he ordered the man, into whose cab he jumped without more delay than he could help, to follow that in which Evelyn was. At this moment all the excitement of those bewildering twenty-four hours culminated. He felt as though he could scarcely breathe: he could not bear his travelling-cap on his head, though it was light enough, or his coat across his chest, though it was a cold morning to ordinary persons, people who felt cold and heat, and had no fiery furnace within them. He kept his uncovered head out of the window of his cab, watching the slow progress of the one before him. How slow it was, creeping along the dark streets as if she had told the man to go slowly to postpone some crisis, some climax of excitement to which she was bound! Rowland's heart thumped like a steam-engine against his labouring breast. Where was she going? Who could there be in Glasgow to whom it was of the slightest consequence what happened to Eddy Saumarez, who would even know of his existence? She must be deep in the boy's secrets indeed, he said to himself, with scornful wrath, to know in all this strange town who could have anything to do with him. He seemed to recognize the turns she was taking

with a bewildered perception of the unsuspected, of something that might be coming quite different to anything he had thought. Where was she going? The dingy streets are like each other everywhere, few features of difference to distinguish them, and yet he seemed to be going over ground he knew. That shop at the corner he had surely seen before—of course he must have seen it before! Where could a stranger go in Glasgow that he had not been before, he who was to the manner born, who had spent his childhood in Glasgow, and gone to his daily work by these very ways? Yes, of course, he knew it all very well, every turn, not only from the old times of his youth, but—Where was she going? His heart beat louder than ever, the veins on his temples set up independent pulses, something fluttered in his bosom like a bird, making him sick with wonder and expectancy. Where was she going? What, what could she mean? What did she want here?

The Sauchiehall Road—full of the grayness of the November morning; children playing on the pavement, women going about with their baskets to get their provisions, a lumbering costermonger's cart trundling along noisily over the stones, with a man crying "caller codfish prime; caller haddies!" all incised into this man's beating brain as if done with a knife. He stopped his cab hurriedly, jumped out, dismissed it, and walked slowly along, with his eyes upon the other lumbering vehicle in front. The buzzing in his brain was so

wild that everything was confused, both sound and sights, and he stumbled over the children on the pavement as he went along, not seeing where he went. At last it stopped, and his heart stopped too with one sudden great thump like a sledge-hammer. A flash of sudden light seemed to come from something, he knew not what, whether in his eyes or outside of them, showing like a gleam from a lantern the well-known house, the big elderberry bush, with its dusty, black clusters of fruit. And she came out of her cab and went quickly up to the door.

Rowland stood quite still in the midst of the passengers on the pavement, the children knocking against him as they hopped about on one foot, propelling the round piece of marble, with which they were playing, from one chalked compartment to another. It hit him on the shin, but did not startle him from his amazement, from his pause of wonder, and the blank of incapacity to understand. What was she doing here of all places in the world? What did she want there? What had that house to do with Eddy Saumarez! Eddy Saumarez—Eddy! It got into a sort of rhyme in his brain. What had that house to do with it? What did she want there? What—what was the meaning of it all?

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Archie left his father's house on the morning after the ball, unrefreshed by sleep, half mad with excitement, bewildered by that last interview with Mrs. Rowland, and the sensation of something supernatural which had come over him, in the half-lighted hall, with the chill of the desolate new day coming in, he was perhaps in as wretched plight as a boy of twenty ever found himself in: and that is saying much, for, but for the inalienable power of recovery in youth, how sharp would be the pang of many a scene, in which the boy, guilty or not guilty, has started up against parental wrath or reproof, and shaken the dust from off his feet and gone forth, perhaps to dismay and ruin, perhaps to new life and work. The sensation of turning the back upon home, in such circumstances, is not very rare in human consciousness, and must have left in many memories a poignant recollection, terrible, yet perhaps not altogether painful to realize, in the long series of good or evil fortune which has followed it. Archie, for the first hour or two, as he sped up the side of

the loch, like an arrow from a bow, walking five miles an hour in his excitement, scarcely feeling the fatigue of his condition, or any physical circumstances whatever, did not even know where he was going, or what he would do. The home of his childhood, the kind nurse and ruler of his docile youth, were not far off, it is true, and in that he was better off than most of the young prodigals among whom this guiltless boy found himself suddenly classed. But his aunt had been prepossessed against him, she had all but forbidden him to return the last time he left her door, and his heart was sore with injured pride and innocence, misconstrued in that quarter as well as every other. He had gone wildly out in the early gray of the morning and pursued the straight road before him rather because it was the straight road than from any other circumstance, unable to form any decision, or for a long time even to think of any conclusion to this forlorn walk out into the world. It was, of course, hours too early for the early boat, and had it not been so, Archie would not have exposed himself to question or remark as to his departure, from the people who knew him. The cottagers on the roadside who had noted with some surprise, on the previous night, the carriage from Maryport, far on the other side of the loch, which had driven rapidly by, coming and going, carrying the messenger from the bank, might have found themselves — had they divined who the pedestrian was who passed by their doors in the early morning treading the same long way—spectators

of one of those human dramas which take place in our midst every day, though we are seldom the wiser. At the smithy at Lochhead, one man did indeed ask the other, "Was that no young Rowland from Rosmore?" as Archie went by. But the powerful reply of the other, "Man, it's impossible!" quenched that one suspicion. He had tied his old comforter, of Aunt Jean's knitting, round his throat, as much for a disguise as for the warmth. He had put on his old clothes, with which he had first come to Rosmore, garments of which he only now knew the unloveliness—and was as unlike in appearance as in feeling to the millionaire's only son, the young master of everything in his father's luxurious house. Archie had never indeed felt his elevation very real: he scarcely ventured to accept and act upon it as if he were himself a person of importance; he, to his own consciousness, always Archie Rowland of the Westpark Football Club, and the Philosophers' Debating Society, and of Sauchiehall Road. It was true that already Sauchiehall Road had sustained the shock of disenchantment, and he had a shamed and subdued feeling of having somehow gone beyond the circle to which he had once been so pleased to belong, and being no longer at home in it. But still less was he really at home on the moors with his unaccustomed gun, or in the drawing-room with all its unfamiliar necessities. He was now more a nobody than ever, belonging neither to one life nor the other, cast out of both; and he walked along dreamily as the morning broadened into the day

and all the world awoke, and the family fires were lighted, and the family tables spread. He walked on, and on getting beyond the range in which young Mr. Rowland of Rosmore was known, faint, tired, without food or rest, an outcast who belonged to nobody, till his progress began to be almost mechanical, his limbs moving like those of an automaton, all volition gone, nothing possible but to put one foot beyond the other in sheer monotony of movement, like the wheels of a machine. He did not pause, because he felt that if the machine were stopped, being human, it might not be able to go on again. Wheels that are made of wood and iron have this great advantage over flesh and blood.

At last he got to the railway, and stumbled into a carriage, and felt the comparative well-being of rest, when he was able to begin to think a little what he ought to do. And then it came back to Archie that he had bound himself to a certain course of action. He had flung the intimation at his father in the height of their passionate encounter, that there should be no difficulty in finding him, that he would go to the old home and wait there to be arrested, to stand his trial. It brought the most curious quickening of feeling to remember that he had said that. To be arrested, to be brought to trial!—he seemed to see the scene, himself standing at the bar, his father giving evidence in the box, the forged cheque handed round, and all the wise heads bent over it, all

finding signs to prove that he had done it—he that scorned it, that cared nothing for money, that would have flung it all into the sea rather than take a pin unjustly from any man. The fire blazed up in his dim eyes, so dim with want of rest and excess of emotion. He accused of such a crime! He laughed within himself at the futility of it, the foolishness! Had it been anything else of which they had accused him—of murdering somebody, for instance. Archie knew that he had a high temper (he who had always been so docile and so gentle), and he thought it possible that, if much irritated and provoked, he might have lifted his hand and given a sudden blow. There would have been in that a possibility, a chance, that he might have done it but to forge a man's name, for the sake of money—money! The scorn with which he said the word over to himself in the noise of the railway, nobody hearing, was tremendous. He laughed aloud at the thought. But it decided him on one point, that there must be no question as to where he went. It must be to his aunt's house; the policeman could come to arrest him there, and therefore there he must go. It was true that it might be bringing shame upon her, innocent; but at all events he must go there first, tell her the whole, and if she desired that he should find another address, at least acquaint her with it, that she might give it to the policemen when they came. This did him good, as it settled the question, and brought him out of all uncertainty. It fortified

him even against Aunt Jean's possibly grim reception of him. He would go there, not for anything he wanted from her, but to answer the claim of honour, which was the first necessity of all.

Mrs. Brown saw him from her window when he came, sick and weary, up the little path under the shadow of the elderberry tree, and ran and opened the door to him with a cry of, "Archie! eh, my man, but you're welcome to me," which thawed his heart a little. He threw himself down wearily in the familiar parlour on one of the chairs, where he was always forbidden to sit lest he should discompose the antimacassar extended on its back. He remembered this as he sat down with a dreary laugh.

"This is one of the chairs I was never to sit upon," he said.

"Oh, my bonny man," cried Mrs. Brown, "sit where ye please; dight your feet upon the sofa, if you please; do anything you like! but eh, whatever you do, dinna leave me to one side, and cast me off as if I did not belong to you: for that is what I canna bear."

"I will not do that," said Archie; "far from that: for I am come to ask you to take me back, aunty, as if I had never been away."

Mrs. Brown gave a shriek of dismay. "Oh, dinna say that, dinna say that! for it looks as if things were going ill at the house at home."

"Things are going as ill as they can: at their very worst," he said. "I've come home, Aunt Jean,

because it's a well known place, where I've lived all my life, so that if the policemen should be sent after me——"

She interrupted him with another shriek. "The pollisman!" she cried.

"That is what it has come to," he answered, "in four months' time, no more. I was to be a gentleman, never to want, Mr. Rowland's son, the great man that everybody knows: and now I'm cast out, charged with a crime, with the thing flung in my face as if it were beyond doubt: and I'm to be brought up before the judges, and tried—and hanged, for anything I know. I promised," said Archie, throwing back his tired head, "that I would wait upon him here, that I would not stir a step but bide—the worst that he or any man could do. But, Aunty Jean, to shame you, an honest, upright woman, with policemen coming to your door, is what I will not do. So, what I want is, that you should find a lodging for me, any kind of a place, a little hole, what does it matter."

"To hide you; oh, to hide you, Archie?" cried Mrs. Brown, wringing her hands.

"To hide me!" he cried, with scorn; "it would be easy enough to do that."

"Oh, my laddie," cried Aunty Jean, "do you think I would let anybody but me do that? They shall never come at you but o'er my body; they shall never touch a hair of your head, if it was to cost me my last drop of blood. Oh, Archie! it's me that will hide you, my bonny man. There's

little means in this house, but I'll find a way. If it comes to heart's love and a woman's wit against your muckle pollisman——"

"Aunty!" cried Archie, rising to his feet.

"Oh, whist, whist, my bairn! Come up the stair an' we'll settle it a'. Ye'll have the air of going away when the evening comes: and you'll just creep back, and I'll make ye a hidin' hole, where a' the pollismen in Glesgow shall not find ye. Whist, we'll have to take Bell into our counsel; but she's just an excellent lass, baith true and sure."

"Aunty!" cried the young man, the tears bursting from his eyes, "Do you think I'm guilty, then: you! you think I did it—you! Oh, Lord! who will believe me, then?" he cried, stretching out despairing hands.

"Me?" cried Mrs. Brown; "me think ye did it, or any ill thing! I would as soon, oh, far sooner, believe it of mysel'!"

He burst into a low fit of hysterical laughter. "Then why should ye hide me?" he said.

The good woman was taken aback for a moment. "What were ye meaning, then, Archie, about the pollisman? and you to bide till he came? Ye shall bide as lang as you please, my bonny boy; and everything we can do to make you comfortable, Bell and me. Bless me! I'm speaking to my ain lad as if he was a strange gentleman, and didna ken. What ails ye, Archie? you are just as white as a sheet, and laughing and greeting like a lassie."

"I have had no breakfast," he said, "and I've walked——"

But here he was interrupted by another shout from Mrs. Brown, who rushed away to the kitchen, appearing again in a moment or two with a tray, upon which was piled everything she could think of, from cold beef to strawberry jam. He was not hungry: any such feeling had abandoned him some time ago, but he was faint from want of food. And it was only when he had eaten and rested, in the quiet of the afternoon, that he was able to tell his tale coherently, and that she was sufficiently composed to hear.

The exclamations with which that tale was accompanied and interrupted, her dismay, her wrath—her triumph in Archie's defiance of his father and resolution to shake the dust of Rosmore from off his feet, were endless; but when he came to his interview with Mrs. Rowland, Jean began to shake her head.

"It would be her wyte all through," she said. "Eh, I would not have you lippen to her! It is just her that has been at the bottom of it a' through."

Archie's momentary softness towards his stepmother was gone. He had begun to remember his griefs, real or imaginary, against her, and to persuade himself that her pity had been fictitious and theatrical. But he made a protest against this view.

"She could not have forged the cheque in order to get me into trouble," he said.

"Oh, how do we ken what the like of her would

do?" said Mrs. Brown; "a woman that makes a marriage like yon, is just set upon everything she can get out of the man. If he were to die, what would become of her? Oh, he would aye leave her something, enough to keep her; but there would be an awfu' difference between that and Rosmore, and a' her grand company and her horses and carriages. They," said Aunty Jean, cleverly changing her ground, so that it was not Mrs. Rowland alone whom she could be supposed to refer to, "will just do anything to get a little more siller to lay up for that time. And if they can persuade the poor man that his bairns, that are his natural kin, are no what he thinks them—eh, Archie, the objeck's just ower evident."

"She was very kind to me," he said. "She said she believed me."

"Oh ay; it's very easy to be kind when the harm's done. After she had got your father set against ye, and your life in her power, then was her time to speak ye fair, my poor laddie, and make him think her the kindest in the world. I've seen all that afore now," said Mrs. Brown. "It's no half so uncommon as ye think. Just the invention of the deevil to make their father think ill o' them, and then a purrin' and a phrasin' to pretend that she's on their side: that's just what I've seen a score o' times before."

Archie was only half convinced, but he allowed himself to be silenced at least. "Somebody must have done it," he said. "I have thought of it

a great deal since—somebody that knew my father's writing, and could get a cheque, and had the opportunity of getting the money, without suspicion."

Mrs. Brown nodded her head at each detail, and said "Just that, just that."

"You are making a mistake," he said. "She writes a little pretty hand, like a lady. She could not do it, even if she were capable of a thing which is a crime."

"I tell you," said Jean, "they are just capable of everything, to get them that's in their way out o' their way. And what about the writing? If they canna do a thing themselves, there's aye others they can get to do it. An ill person never missed an ill deed yet for want of a tool."

"You speak nonsense!" he cried angrily; but he could not argue with a woman strong in the panoply of ignorance and obstinacy. And by the oft repetition of such arguments, Archie came, if not to believe, at least to acquiesce, in that decision that Mrs. Rowland, somehow, was at the bottom of it all; that it was contrary to her interests that a good understanding should exist between Archie and his father, and that, whoever had actually done this thing, the conception and execution of it were in her hands. Sometimes he had a compunction, remembering her look, her tears, her blessing. Was she such a hypocrite that she could bid God bless him and not mean it—mean, indeed, the very reverse? And then that thrill which he could

never forget, that touch which came from no visible hand. What was it? some witchcraft of hers, or a sign from heaven, as he had thought it for a moment? He said nothing to Mrs. Brown of this, and he tried himself not to think of it. The recollection brought with it a pang of terror: he did not like to think of it at night when he was alone. If it should come again, if he should see, perhaps, his mother looking at him through the darkness—his mother, so long dead, whom he did not remember! He had not courage to desire such a visitor, and he tried to put this strange and wonderful sensation out of his mind.

But Archie did not spend happy days in his old home. He found it so changed, so unlike what it had once been: or was it only he who was changed? He had no heart to return to the old football team, to renew his acquaintance with the students, who were now returning daily to resume their work at the College. He would not go to the room where the Philosophers met. Had he become so low, so mean, he asked himself sometimes, that for a little want of refinement, a difference of clothes, he should shrink from his old friends? A want of refinement—as if he had any refinement, or ever would have; he, to whom Miss Saumarez had spoken so plainly, whom she had bidden not to be—such an ill-bred, low-bred fellow! That was what she had meant, though the words she used had been different. He never saw any one like Rosamond Saumarez now. There

were many nice good girls in the Sauchiehall Road, girls who looked up to him, no one who would take him to task and show him how inferior he was: there was none like her, none. And he never would meet any one like her again. He never would see her as he remembered her so well, sitting at the piano in the dim background of the great room, scarcely visible, playing music which he did not understand, which overawed him, and irritated and worried him, but never lost its spell—not that it had any spell, except in the hands that called it forth. And then suddenly the picture would change, and he would see her walk out of the gloom in her white dress, tall and slim, coming up to him, the fool, in his inaction, laying a hand upon his arm, like the dropping of a rose leaf, carrying him off, always in her composed, proud way, with her head high, after Eddy and Marion. These two were full of fun; they enjoyed it, as boys and girls enjoy dancing all the world over. But Archie did not enjoy it. It was far more than fun to him, it was as if some one lifted a curtain to him to reveal a new world. He never got beyond the threshold, but hovered there, looking in. Had the curtain fallen, and was the door closed now, for ever? Should he never see Rosamond again? Never, never, some echo seemed to say. All that was over. Rosmore had closed its doors, never to open them again. No, it had not closed its doors. The door was still open when

he turned his back upon his father's house—open, and with his father's wife standing in the doorway, crying, and bidding God bless him. Did she not mean that? Did she mean something quite the reverse? Was it she who had really turned him forth, instead of doing her best to keep him there, as had appeared? Archie never said a word of all this to his aunt. He had never mentioned Rosamond to her. Sometimes she asked him about Mr. Adie, the gentleman whom he had brought to see her, who seemed a fine lad, though not much to look at, and would not he do something to set things right. He of all people in the world! Eddy! who had accepted his money, and had stood by and seen him suffer for that, and had not even uttered a word of sympathy. He laughed when his aunt suggested this, and told her Mr. Adie was not a man who would do anything. But of Rosamond he never said a word.

And the days were more heavy than words could say. To have no companions but Mrs. Brown after that houseful of people, all of them more or less original and full of character—his father, who had so many experiences which came into his daily talk; Mrs. Rowland, one of the most wonderful of beings to an uneducated young man, with her easy knowledge of so many things which, to him, were a study and labour to know; and Rosamond, whose knowledge was of so different a kind, yet who, in her self-possession and youthful,

grave acquaintance with the world, was almost the most astonishing of all ; and Eddy, who was always so bright, always full of spirits, so perfectly aware of his own deficiencies, that they became qualities, and pleased the people about him more than if he had been ever so clever and instructed. To leave all these, and all the people who came and went, and talked and filled the world with variety of life, even old Rankine in his cottage and Roderick on the hill, and to have no companion but Aunty Jean ! She was more kind than words could say, but had so narrow a little round of being, and was so inveterate, so determined in those certainties which he was almost brought to believe, by dint of much talking, but which his spirit rebelled against all the same. When he received Evelyn's letters he carried them off to his room to read them. and would not expose them to her scrutiny : but he was too much influenced by her opinions and by the tacit agreement in them, to which, in his sore and wounded condition he had been brought, to reply. It would have been a certain disloyalty if, in Mrs. Brown's house, he had answered the appeal of the stepmother who, he had agreed, or almost agreed, with his aunt, must be at the bottom of it all. And what could he have replied ? He had said that he would abide whatever they chose to do to him—arrest, trial, whatever they pleased. He had represented to himself and to his aunt that he expected the policeman, and that from day to day they might come to take him. He had, in

fact, so simple was he, felt a tremor in his heart, when he saw in the road, as happened every day, the honest sturdy form of the policeman passing by. It was always possible that this simple functionary might be coming, armed with all the majesty of the law, to take him, though Archie had an internal conviction that, if it was to be done, it would be done more quietly than this, with more precaution than if he had been a housebreaker or stolen a watch. But such delicacies did not enter into Mrs. Brown's mind. She watched the policeman go past daily with his heavy tread, with a trembling certainty that he was coming to arrest her boy: and still more at midnight, when she heard his heavy tread, did she hold her breath, thinking that now the dreaded moment must have come, and on tiptoe of apprehension and anxiety waiting for the sound of his nearer approach, ready to thrust Archie into her bed or under, to conceal him till the danger was over. Mrs. Brown, though she had all the horror of the police common to respectable women of her class, was half disappointed when day after day passed, and no attempt at an arrest was ever made.

"They will have found nae proof," she said, "as how could they have found any proof, there being nane. And they will just be in a puzzle what to do—and yon leddy will either be concocting something, or else she will be working upon your father, poor misguided man. Eh, when I think what James Rowland might have been, with his bonnie

dochter to sit at the head of his table, and his son to stand for him before the world, and everything just good nature and peace! But he had to have a grand leddy to scare us a' with her grand ways, and that was thinking of nothing but how to get as much as she could out o' him, and his ain that were the right heirs, out of the way. Ye'll see the next thing will be trouble to Mey. She will not put up with Mey: now she's gotten you banished, the next thing in her head will be something against your sister, till baith the ane and the ither o' you is on the street. And just let her do her worst," said Mrs. Brown with a flush of war, "there will be aye room here. I'm no wanting to see her fall into worse and worse sin, but the sooner she lets out her plans the better for us. And we'll just have Mey back in her bonnie little room, and everything as it was before."

Would everything be as it was before? Alas, Archie feared not. They were not as they had been before. For himself everything was changed. It was in vain to think of returning to his old existence as it had been, when they were all so cheerful together in Sauchiehall Road. He thought of the old suppers, when he would bring in with him two or three of his Philosophers, whom Mrs. Brown would receive with a "Come away ben, come in to the fire. I'm just very glad to see you," and Marion would set herself to tease and provoke: and who would be delighted to reply to both the ladies, to meet Mrs. Brown with compliments upon

her supper, and to laugh with Marion to her heart's content. These little parties had been very pleasant. They had appeared to him sometimes, when anything had gone wrong at Rosmore, as happy examples of natural ease and enjoyment. But now he had ceased to have any taste for these gatherings. And Marion: perhaps Marion would be more at home than he was: for at Rosmore her social performances had been still a little in the same kind, personal encounters of laughter and sharp speeches, what Eddy called "chaff," and in which style he was himself a master. Perhaps she could still have made herself happy with the Philosophers. But Archie's day for that was over. The old home could never be what it had been before. He scorned himself for seeing all its little defects, and for feeling the disenchantment, even for the consciousness that Aunt Jean, who was so kind, was scarcely a companion who could make life sweet. She was as his mother. He had never known other care than hers. In the old days he had perhaps wished sometimes that she had not spoken the language of Glasgow in quite so broad a tone. But this was so small a defect; how he hated himself for perceiving much more than the broad Glasgow speech which jarred upon him! But it is a very hard ordeal for an old woman in any rank when she has to be the sole companion of a young man; especially when long knowledge makes him acquainted with every tale she has to tell, and all the experiences which might be in-

teresting to another, but have been familiar to him since ever he began to listen and to understand.

The only relief which Archie had was in attempts, not carried out with any energy, to get a situation in which he could earn his own living. Nothing could have been more false than his present position. He had scarcely any money left, and he had abandoned his father's house for ever. Yet he was supported by his aunt, who received her living from his father, and so it was still by James Rowland's money that his son was nourished, though that son had totally rebelled against him. What if he might cut short or take away altogether Jean Brown's allowance, on account of the rebel she was harbouring? What if he understood with contempt that his son was thus living upon him still? Sometimes at night these thoughts would so sting and madden Archie that he would jump out of bed in the morning, resolved before night came again to have got work, whatever it was, and to have made himself independent. But this was so much easier said and thought than done. One man to whom he applied, laughed in his face when he confessed that he was the son of the great Rowland, the Indian Railway Man. "No, no, Mr. Rowland," he said, "the like of you in my office would revolutionize everything. You have too much money to spend, you rich men's sons. You lead away the poor lads that cannot play fast and loose with life like you. Eh! you have no money? Well, then, I suppose

you have had a tiff with your father and mean to be independent. That's just as bad. You will be diligent for a while and then you will go off like a firework. I have known the sort of thing before. No, no, my young gentleman, the like of you is not for an office like mine." Then poor Archie tried the plan of giving no account of himself at all, except that he was in want of a situation, and could do a little book-keeping, and was acquainted with the axiom that two and two make four. And in this case he was asked for his testimonials, but had no testimonials to offer, no previous character or evidence as to what he could do. And again, but more roughly, he was re-conducted, as the French say, to the simplest door, and his hopes in that instance were over. He then began, as how many a much disappointed man has done, to study the advertisements in the newspapers, and to answer them sometimes half-a-dozen in the day. But the sprawling, large handwriting which was so fatally like his father's, did not find favour in the eyes of men who advertised for clerks. It was admired in Mr. Rowland, the great railway man, and said to mean originality, daring, and a strong will, but in the young would-be clerk it was sharply set down as a bad hand, and he was rejected on that and other reasons again and again. This dismal play went on from day to day. Perhaps he was not very earnest in it, perhaps he felt that in no combination of circumstances could it be a matter of life and death. If he was not arrested and brought to trial,

he would be provided for. The question was whether he would submit his pride to being supported by the man who had flung that cheque in his face. When he asked himself such a question, or rather, when it fluttered across his path, Archie would spring to his feet again with an emphatic "No!" and redouble his exertions.

But he was in a false position, crippled all round by disabilities. Mrs. Brown advised that he should go to the minister, who had known him so long, and could speak for him; but Archie knew what the minister would say: he would remind him of his duty to his father, and that to leave his father's house and bury himself in a position unbecoming Mr. Rowland's son, was ungrateful and unkind. And if he told all his story, and that of the forged cheque, what would the minister say? He would shake his head, he would grow grave, a cloud would gather over his face, he would make haste to end the interview. It would be impossible to believe that Mr. Rowland would make such an accusation without certain proof. Archie knew this was how it would happen, and he could not face such a reception.

Mrs. Brown went herself privately to the foundry, where her own connection with it as the widow of a foreman, and still more, her connection with Rowland, who had risen from it to such unexampled heights, made her still a person of consideration—to speak to the manager. But the manager of the foundry was still more decided.

"If he really wants to learn the work, and his father will say a single word, it will be easily managed."

"But oh, Mr. Blyth, ye must not ask that; for it's just in consequence of two-three unlucky words with his father that he's thinking of taking a situation."

"Then, Mrs. Brown, you should give the young man good advice. What does he think he'll gain by quarrelling with his father? He may be sure his father is twice the man that he is, however clever he may be."

"I was not saying he was very clever," said Mrs. Brown; "but ye see he has a stepmother, and that explains everything: for she just turns the father against them, as is a common occurrence."

"Well," said the manager, "all the same, the best thing he can do is to make it up with his father. Stepmothers are ill things, but they're not always as black as they're painted; and those that are subject to them must just put up with them."

This was all the comfort that Jean got, though she kept part of the report from her nephew.

"He says you will just have to make it up with your papaw: and then the foundry will be open to you, and everything you please."

"That means," said Archie, "that when you don't want a thing you can always have it."

"It's just something like that," Mrs. Brown said.

And thus it appeared there was nothing at all to be done. He went on reading the advertisements,

answering sometimes two or three in a day, but never getting any further on. Now and then he would have a letter asking for testimonials, but what testimonials could he obtain? Neither as his father's son, nor as nobody's son, could he make any advance. His father, in like circumstances, would have somehow forced the hand of fate, and made it serve him. He would not have been kept by the want of certificates, nothing would have stopped him in his career. But Archie was not like his father. He was proud and timid, and sensitive and easily discouraged; he was even indolent, poor boy—the worst of drawbacks—indolent in mind, though not in body, afraid of any great resolution, hesitating, and unable to resist the course of events.

Such a spirit goes down in the struggle for life. He might have been the most steady, careful, punctual of workmen, happy in the support of routine, fixed hours, and a certain understood something to do: but had it been he who had started in the foundry, instead of his father, then Archie would have ended a good man, much respected, but with only a few more shillings a week at the end of his life than at the beginning. And as was natural, his training had fostered all the weakness in him and none of the strength.

It was strange and ludicrous, yet heartbreaking, to remember that he had been invited by Lady Jean to the Castle, and urged by the Marchbanks, who were ambitious people, and thought Mr. Rowland's money might do very well to increase their own importance in the district, to go over to

their grand new mansion, which was much more splendid than Lord Clydesdale's shabby old castle. Would any of them recognize him, if they could see the shabby young man in search of a situation, who went up and down the Sauchiehall Road? Archie sometimes wondered what he should do if he met Lady Jean. He was more sure that she would see him and stop to speak to him, than he was of any of the others. And she would, no doubt, try to interfere and reconcile him with his father. He used to con little speeches in his mind to make to her, or any other benevolent meddler who might attempt this. He would say "No; he has accused me of a dreadful thing, without hearing me, without a doubt in his mind but that I did it. I will never make a step, nor hold out a finger to him!" Sometimes the words he put together were even stronger than this. "My father and I are parted for ever. He never cared a penny-piece that he had a son. He took no thought of us when we were children, and he has always been unjust to me. It is better that I should be no trouble to him, and I mean to be no more trouble to him, whatever happens," Archie would say. Sometimes, on the other hand, he thought that it was more dignified to make no complaint, and a finer thing altogether to say nothing that could injure Rowland in anybody's opinion. And then he would say, with a magnanimity which was a little hurtful to his self-esteem, poor boy, "The life was not one that suited me. I was brought up to think a great deal of work, and I have come back here to

do something for myself, as every man should. My father made his own way, and so shall I." Alas, it was very faltering, this proud declaration of independence: he had no heart in it. He was not one of the strenuous souls who make a gospel of work; on the contrary, Mrs. Brown's gospel had been all the other way, that to do nothing was far the finer thing, and marked the gentleman all the world over. But Archie had touched shoulders with the gentle folks long enough to be aware that this profession of independence, though it depressed and disappointed Mrs. Brown, was the kind of thing approved in higher circles, and it was the only way in which he could exempt his father from blame.

He had got up very sad upon that November morning. It was not yellow as in London, but gray with a leaden paleness, the houses and pavements and looks of the people all gray, and to a spirit already depressed and miserable, no spring, or elasticity anywhere in the dim prospect within, externally, or in the troubled mind. Had life come to an end altogether? he asked himself; was there to be nothing in it more than this impatient dulness, producing nothing? He was a little late for breakfast, as usually happened, Mrs. Brown indulging him in every inclination or disinclination, without the slightest sense of morality, or her old fear, that over-indulgence was not good for him. Poor Jean had no longer any thought of that. He was in trouble, poor fellow, and if he was more easy in his mind in the morning before he got up, why

disturb him? or if he took a little comfort in reading a book at night, why urge him to go to bed? If he was unpunctual for his meals, what did it matter? "There's naebody but me," Mrs. Brown said, "and if I get my dinner at one o'clock or at three wha's minding?" She had not shown this complacence in the old days, when their good training and manners and desire to give little trouble were her pride. Archie was dressing languidly, looking at the shabby clothes about the room with a sort of disgust, the outcome of the gray and miserable morning, and of his own heavy and troubled thoughts. How shabby they were! and yet not so shabby as common—just fit for a denizen of Sauchiehall Road, as he was. But he was a shabby denizen even for Sauchiehall Road, not up early and out to his cheerful work as was natural there, but, coming down late, with the habits that might not be amiss in the faultlessly clothed Eddy, the young man of society, but were disreputable, wretched in him, the Glasgow clerk—not even that—the poor friendless lad, trying to be a a Glasgow clerk. Poor Archie had come to a depth in which all that was fantastic in wretchedness was to be found. There seemed to be nothing good left in him. To be going down to breakfast at ten o'clock was as bad, almost worse, than the crime with which he had been charged.

He did not notice the cab which had stopped at the door, though Mrs. Brown did with an immense impulse of excitement; but Archie did hear quite suddenly, so that he felt as if in a dream, the sound

of a soft voice—such a voice as was seldom heard in that locality—so clearly toned, so correct in enunciation, so perfectly at the speaker's command—perhaps, however, not that so much as the rest, for there was a tremor in it. He had just opened his door to go down, and his room was exactly at the head of the staircase. He did not at first recognize this voice in the shock of hearing, without preparation, such an organ at all. It said all at once out of the silence, as Archie opened the door—but not to him, to some one down stairs, "Is Mr. Archibald Rowland here? May I come in? I think—" and here there seemed a pause—"you must be Mrs. Brown."

"And wha may ye be?" said Jean's harsh, rough, uncultured voice.

Oh!—it could be as gentle as a dove, that rude voice—there were tones in it sometimes of love and tenderness that music could not equal. Let us do the poor woman no injustice. But when she answered Evelyn's question, no coal-heaver ever spoke in tones more forbidding. Mrs. Brown divined, as she stood there with the door in her hand, who her visitor was, and all the worst side of her nature turned to meet this interloper, this stepmother, the woman who had secured James Rowland's love and his money, and was the enemy of his children. "She shall hear the truth from me if she never heard it in her life before," Jean said to herself. And the torrent of her wrath rose up in a moment like the waterspout of eastern seas.

CHAPTER XII

ARCHIE made, as he thought, but one step down the stairs: he fell into the little passage which led to the parlour, like a thunderbolt. "Aunt Jean, it is Mrs. Rowland," he cried.

"And if it is Mrs. Rowland," said Jean, "who is she to come here as if the place belonged to her? which it dis not, nor ever will, were she the queen o' the whole land."

"Archie," said the voice of Evelyn from beyond the stout, full form that stood like a solid barrier between him and his father's wife, "ask your aunt kindly to let me in. I have been travelling all night, and I bring you good news; but I am very tired. Please to let me in."

Mrs. Brown was rent by conflicting sentiments. To resist such an entreaty is as hard for a Scotswoman of her class as for an Arab in the desert. The claims of hospitality are as urgent with the one as with the other. She did not know how to refuse, to keep a tired woman, appealing to her, at arm's length. Further, thoughts of fresh tea to be

masked, and eggs to be boiled, flashed into her mind across the sullen background of enmity which made her stand fast in stubborn resistance. It was a sin against her house to close the door, to oppose the entrance of the stranger. She had never done such a thing, scarcely even to the gangrel body who was not to be trusted in the neighbourhood of a silver spoon, before, and the necessity hurt her. But to let in this fine lady, this proud woman, this stranger and alien person, who had (presumably) hunted Archie from his father's house—— Oh, no, no!

"There are plenty hotels in Glasgow where the leddy can go," she said, standing firm. "Ye can go with her, ye fool that ye are, and be beguiled by her flattering tongue, for anything I care."

"May not I come in?" said Evelyn, with great surprise. "I have been hoping all night for a little rest and a welcome. You surely will not refuse me half an hour's rest, if I promise to go away in half an hour?" She smiled and looked at Archie, whose anxious face appeared over Mrs. Brown's shoulder. "I did not know," she said, "that your aunt had any objection to me."

"Ainy objection!" cried Mrs. Brown, "when you have just made his life a burden to him, and ruined all his prospects, poor lad, and closed the doors o' his father's house!"

"But I have not done that," said Mrs. Rowland, surprised. "You are making a great mistake, surely. His prospects are not ruined, nor are his

father's doors closed against him, as he knows. But now," she said, tears of weakness coming into her eyes, "they are thrown open as if with the sound of a trumpet. Archie, thank God that it is all cleared up and found out. Will you not let me in to tell him how it has been discovered and his honour cleared? Don't you care for his honour and good name, you who have been a mother to him—more than for anything else in the world?"

"I never doubted either one or the other," said Mrs. Brown; "it will be nae discovery to me."

"Nor to me either," said Evelyn, "as he knows: but proofs are good things. If you will not let me in," she added, with a smile, which was very near the other manifestation of feeling—tears, "I must sit down on the steps, and he can hear my story here."

"You can come in," said Mrs. Brown, opening the door wide. "I will have nae play-acting on my doorsteps. Archie, ye can take this leddy into the parlour. It's easy for the like of such a woman to get over a laddie like you. Ye ken nothing of their wiles; how should ye?" She followed as she spoke into the parlour, where she pulled forward an easy-chair violently, talking all the time. "They just get ye back under their thumb when it pleases them, until the time comes when your downfa's doomed. Here's a footstool till ye. It'll no doubt be a great satisfaction to feel that Jean Brown's house is but a poor place, no a chair good enough for the like of you to sit down——"

"Indeed, it is very comfortable, and a great ease to sit down and be quiet for a moment. Thank you kindly," said Evelyn. "I have been travelling, I may say, for four days. On Tuesday night I went up to town—to London, I mean—and there I have been to and fro all the time, and came up again here during the night. So I have an excuse for being very tired."

"Lord bless us," said Mrs. Brown, with wide-open eyes, "and what was the need of that? I'm thinking with Jims Rowland's money in your pouch ye have little need to weary yourself in ainy way."

Going down to the Kyles of Bute for a day's holiday was the most exhausting experience Mrs. Brown had ever had, and she had not got the better of that fatigue for several days. She was a little overawed by this description, as indeed Evelyn, with pardonable guile, had intended her to be.

She darted out of the room as she spoke, perhaps that she might not yield more to the influence of this soft-spoken woman ("but they can speak soft enough, and sweet enough, when it's for their ain ends," she said to herself) leaving Evelyn alone with Archie. She held out her hand to him with a smile. "I am so tired," she said, "that I am scarcely capable of telling you my story. I feel the wheels going in my head, and a sort of perpetual movement. Now, some people travel by night constantly, and are never the worse."

She spoke thus, partly because she was indeed very tired, and partly to accustom Archie to the shock of seeing her, speaking with her, being thus brought back to all the stormy emotions of that last eventful night. She half understood him and the reluctance with which, now that his aunt's violent opposition was taken away, he touched her hand, and accepted her confidence. Archie was not amiable though he might be weak. At the sight of her seated there, and no longer held at bay, all the hard things that had been said, and which he himself had united in saying, against her and her power over his father, surged up into his mind. For anything he knew she might be the malign influence that Jean Brown believed her to be. She might be, for some occult reason of her own, trying to draw him again within her power, to represent herself as his benefactress, only that she might more fully and completely ruin him the next time. This had been suggested to him so often that he almost believed it: and it came back with all that force of hostility which replaces remorse, in the reaction from a momentary softness, which is in itself a reaction too. He had been ready to pluck his aunt away—to bid her stand aside for shame, while she held this woman at bay: but now that the woman was there enthroned, without opposition, holding out her hand to him, with that grace of profoundest, unapproachable superiority, all his rebellious feelings started forth again. He felt no curiosity to know what she had

been doing, or what was the result of which she seemed so proud. How could it affect him? He represented to himself that even to speak to him of being cleared was an insult, and her brag of her fatigue and exertion revolted him. What did it matter to him if she was tired or not? What did he care if the wheels were going in her head? He touched her hand because it would be uncivil, and show his bad breeding, if he refused it—and then he turned his back and stood looking out of the window. It was the same attitude as Eddy had assumed, though for a different reason, and Evelyn, in her exhaustion, smiled over the resemblance. She said to herself that boys of that age were very much alike, though so different, and that after all the most accomplished young man of the world had only the same ways of showing emotion as were patent to the simplest of his kind. She said after a moment: "You don't seem to have much curiosity as to what I have been doing, Archie?"

"No," he said curtly; "why should I? You were so polite as to say it had something to do with me: but I don't see what you could have to do with me."

"Come," she said, "you must not be cross, Archie. Your aunt is, but I excuse her—for she does not know, and perhaps may even think I don't know—that there is no virtue in being uncivil."

"She is not uncivil," he said, rudely. "She is the kindest woman in the world."

"The one, unfortunately, does not always make the other impossible," she said softly, and then she

sighed. "Is it necessary to begin all over again, Archie?" she said; "I thought we had passed the preliminary stage."

"I don't know what you call the preliminary stage."

"Well, well," she said with an impatient sigh.

And then it occurred to Archie that there was something ludicrous in the position, in his sullen stand in front of the window, while she sat, shut out from the light by his shadow, endeavouring to bring him to reason, behind. He felt, too, that the reason was on her side, and the obstinacy and folly on his, which did not make him more amiable, nor help to free him from his angry resistance. What roused him was the jar of a rush against the door, which presently was flung open, striking against the wall, by the rapid entrance of a tray, borne by Mrs. Brown herself in front of her, covered with a white cloth, and bearing all the materials of an excellent breakfast. Jean set it down with a dash upon the table, pushing aside the carefully arranged books, and almost breaking, in her vehemence, the shade which covered a group of wax water-lilies which filled the place of honour. "Lift off the flowers and the books, Archie," she cried; "you mauna let even your worst enemy hunger and thirst when ye bring him into your house."

"Thank you for your kindness," said Evelyn, with a faint laugh. "But why am I to be supposed his enemy? It is a little cruel, don't you think, without any proof?"

"What maitters that as long as ye get what you want?" said Jean; "and I'll allow that you want a cup of tea after your journey, whatever is your objeck, maudam. And ye had better go ben and get your breakfast, Archie. I will see that the leddy gets everything she wants."

"You treat me," said Evelyn, put on her mettle, "a little as Jael did her enemy. Butter in a lordly dish, but the nail and the hammer ready for use behind."

"There's neither nail nor hammer in my hands," said Mrs. Brown. "And I never liked the woman. It's true that she was commended by the prophetess, but I often thought yon was a slip o' the tongue in Deborah, carried away by her feelin's, as is rale common with women, and no thinking what she was saying. Na, I am nae Jael. Besides, he was weel kent for an enemy to Israel, and that's mair than ony individual. I hope ye find the tea to your taste; there is no pushon in it: and the eggs are our ain laying, for I've aye kept a wheen poultry. It was good for the bairns to have them caller and good—when I had the bairns with me."

"I have often thought of you," said Evelyn, "and of how you must have missed them. It was too abrupt at last. If you had but come with them to Rosmore——"

"Na, na, none o' that. And ye may spare me your peety, Mrs. Rowland: I'm no a woman that is fond o' peety. It was just done, and the thing is over, and there is no more to be said: if ye had kept them happy when ye had them!"

"That is always the hardest thing to do."

"Eh, woman," said Mrs. Brown, "if ye had been a woman like the women in the books! There's such arises from time to time—that does her duty to the man's bairns and puts her feelin's in her pocket, if she doesna like them; though how it was possible no to like them is mair than I can tell. She should have been up and tellt him, when there was suspicion thrown upon that lad, that it wasna true. If they had threepit it till they were black in the face, she would have said she didna believe a word. She would have cried out, 'Look at the lad,' (a more sullen, hangdog countenance than Archie's at this moment could scarcely have been conceived) 'and hear his ain saying aboon a' the world'!"

There was a little stir at the window, and a harsh voice broke out suddenly where Archie stood: "That's just what she did," he said.

"If it had been me," cried Jean, inspired with her theme, and noting no interruption, "though I'm nae pattern, I would have cried out, 'Oh, get away from me, ye ill-thinking man! will ye daur to say there's a lie in that laddie's bonny broo! I'm no his parent, like you (I would have said), but a woman with een in my head, and I ken the truth when I see it. My word for his! (I would have cried) yon's the truth and a' the rest is lies!' Woman! oh woman! I'm no a pattern; I'm no a grand and bonny leddy like you; but that's what I would have done—plain Jean Brown, standing here before ye—if it had been me!"

Jean plumped down into a seat at the end of this tirade, and burst, as was natural, into hot torrents of tears, to which she gave vent freely, rocking herself to and fro with the primitive usage of passion. Evelyn had not said a word. She had followed the wild eloquence of the other with a tremulous smile and tears in her eyes. She did not even look at Archie, to remind him. He, for his part, had not known how to contain himself while the scene went on. He caught at his aunt's arm, which she used in the free gesture of her class to emphasize her words, and at her dress: but it was not till Mrs. Brown's sobs began to grow less that the lad spoke.

"Aunt Jean," he said, "it is you at the end that has put all the clouds away. We've been slanderers, and evil speakers, you and me. We have just done our utmost, and all failed. We have wanted to lay the blame of it on her, and to think that it was her doing. But you've cleared up all that. Aunt Jean," he said, with a quick touch of his hand upon her shoulder, "everything you said you would have done, she did. Do you hear me?—all you said, she said. She has just done that and more. My father, if he were here, would tell you. You've shown me the truth anyway, whether you will see it yourself or not. She has done all that—and more!"

Archie turned away and made a round of the room like a blind man, and then he went up to Evelyn on the other side. "I humbly beg your

pardon with all my heart and soul," he said. "I'll maybe never enter my father's doors. I'll maybe never come to anything as long as I live. And what you have come to tell me is just like Hebrew and Greek to me, and I'm not caring what it is; but she's cleared my eyes, and I just beg your pardon with all my heart and soul."

"Hush, Archie, hush," said Mrs. Rowland, giving him her hand (which he shook awkwardly and dropped, poor boy, having no graceful suggestions in him, not knowing what to do with a lady's hand in such circumstances, as Eddy did); "there is no pardon needed: and, Mrs. Brown, shake hands with me, for we understand each other fully, and I agree in every word you say. If James did not do so, it was perhaps because he was a man, as you say, and wanted proof; and because, also, oh, believe it, Archie! you are dearer to your father than to any one, and to doubt you is more than he can bear."

"There is somebody at the door," cried Mrs. Brown, hastily drying her tears; "and we are all begritten, and will do nothing but expose ourselves. I'm no quick enough to follow a' you've said. And I canna tell what I've said to put ye baith in such a commotion; nothing but was very simple, for I'm not a person of edication, like you. But if Archie's pleased, I'm pleased: and you're a bonny woman, Mrs. Rowland, and I canna resist ye. If ye'll take it, I'll gi'e ye my hand. And Archie, lad, go out to the door, and see that no strange person is let in here."

Archie opened the door, and fell back with a cry of astonishment, and Rowland came in, looking round him upon all the signs of emotion which still were very apparent, with wondering eyes. He tried to veil his surprise in the sternness of aspect which was natural to a man whom all the persons present had bitterly offended. He was among a company, indeed, of offenders; all of them had sinned against him; and, perhaps, in present circumstances, his wife the most of all. He was still utterly perplexed as to the cause of her flight to London: and what connection there could be between that and her presence here, it was impossible to divine. He looked round upon them sternly, trying to suppress other sentiments. It was very strange to Evelyn to meet, for the first time in their life together, a look of disapproval in her husband's eyes. After the first shock and surprise of his appearance, she had sunk again into her chair, holding out her hand: but he made no response, either to the smile or to the stretched-out hand.

"I saw my wife," he said to Mrs. Brown briefly, with whom he had exchanged a silent greeting; "I saw my wife in the street, and followed her here. I know no business she could have here. I should apologize for the intrusion." He took no notice of his son, who had instinctively drawn aside. "It surprises me very greatly, Evelyn, to see you here."

"Oh, Jims! sae did it me; but your bonnie

leddy has none but a good motive for coming: I can see that noo."

"I do not wonder," said Evelyn calmly: she was not afraid of her husband; "but you will soon understand. I am surprised also to see you. Did you get my telegram, James?"

"I got no telegram," he cried angrily, "and I thought I had forbidden any intercourse with—with—"

"Oh, no," she said, "you could not have done that: first because you have too much respect for your wife to give her an order which was unworthy: and because you could not interfere with my own judgment. On the contrary, I came here—to bring our boy home."

"I gave no authority for any such mission," Rowland cried, "and I will not have it! I will not have it!" He was trembling behind his anger, which was like a veil thrown on to disguise the strange movements and agitations in his mind. What did she mean? She had not disturbed herself, except for a moment, and still lay back in the big chair pale with weariness, yet smiling in his face the more dark he looked. What had she in her mind to make her smile so? Why did she say she had come to bring the boy? She said *our* boy. What, oh what was the meaning of it all? Archie stood dark as a thundercloud, dumb, taking no more note of his father than his father did of him. (They both saw every movement of each other, every change of countenance, every

turn, had it been of a finger.) And Jean had evidently been crying, and was ready to burst out again at any moment. It was she that interposed now.

"Jims," she said, "your bonny leddy is just aff a journey; she's been travelling all night. I can't tell where ye have been yoursel', but you look very wearit too. You can see her cup o' tea standing by her that she hasna touched. I poured it out, but I hadna the grace to hold my tongue, and just was mad at her, and abused her sae that the darlin' creature, as she is, never swallowed a drop, and her faintin' for want. But I've been convicted out of my ain very mouth," cried Jean, "every word that I spoke has come back upon me: for I threepit up against her that I would have done this and that. Me! a bonnie person to set up for a pattern! and it turned out that everything I said she had done, and mair. And now you come bursting in, just as unreasonable. Say out, man, what ye would have her to do, and you'll find she has done it—and mair! But for ainy sake," cried Jean, sobbing, with her apron to her eyes, "let the bonny leddy get a moment's peace, and tak' her cup o' tea."

"Dear Mrs. Brown," cried Evelyn, between laughing and crying, "you're a good friend! and I do want a little tea. And I am not afraid of him nor any of you. If you have not been home, nor got my telegram, you will want a full account of me, James, for I have been in London by

myself, ever since you went away. Yes, it is true, I took advantage of your absence to go away. A wicked woman could not have done more. As soon as you had gone I set out. It would not be wonderful if you suspected me. But I do not know of what," she added, with a low laugh. There was something in her laugh that overcame altogether her middle-aged angry husband. He was not angry: all that was a pretence; nor did he know what he suspected her of. At this moment he suspected her justly of what she had done, of having found some way, he could not tell how, of making an end of the trouble which was growing at his heart. When he had left Rosmore there was something in her eye that had made him believe she would do this. He had given her no permission, yet he had a confidence that she would act somehow—he could not tell how—and clear everything up. It had been a horrible disappointment to him coming back with that confidence in his mind, to find that she was absent, to be told that she had gone to ask advice—on his affairs. And here he had been utterly perplexed, and had not known what to think. That was the history of his many changes. Suspect her? No, he did not know, any more than she did, of what. He had never suspected her—unless it was of failing to fulfil that wild hope of his suffering heart. But something told him now that she had not failed. He stood by as grave as a whole bench of judges, and watched with a solemn countenance while she

took her tea. There had been a little struggle with Mrs. Brown, who protested that it must be cold, and that she must make more. But Evelyn had been triumphant in this, and now sat eating and drinking before them all, while they looked on with solemnity. There was something of the highest comic absurdity in the aspect of the father and son, one more serious than the other, standing watching her at her simple meal. Mrs. Brown hovered about her, imploring her to take this and that—an egg, some scones, a chop that could be got in an instant, marmalade, that was considered very good, of her own making—and many things beside. But the two men stood in portentous silence, never moving a muscle, as grave as if her little piece of toast was a matter of life and death. Archie was agitated vaguely, he knew not how: but his father's mind was like a great flowing river, held by a thread of ice, which the first ray of sunshine would clear away. He bore the aspect of anger still; the cloud hung upon his brow; but all restraint was ready to be swept away, and the full tide to flow forth. He stood, however, black as night, and watched his wife at her breakfast. The strangest, humorous, nay comic sight.

And Evelyn was worn out with all her exertions. She was so weak, with her nerves all so relaxed after their long tension, that they were able to resist no temptation. She watched her husband and his son with a growing sense of the ludicrous.

They were so solemn, watching her like doctors over a case, as if the manner in which she set down her tea-cup or put her morsel of bread into her mouth, were symptoms of the gravest kind. She watched them as long as nature would hold out. It was not until she had finished her cup of tea, and ate her last morsel. She put her plate away with her hand, and they both moved slightly with the touch, as if it were the signal for some revelation. And this in her weak condition was too much for Evelyn. She burst out with a laugh of such hilarity that all the silent room echoed. She laughed till the tears flowed down her checks.

"Oh, James, forgive me," she cried, "you are like an owl, serious as midnight and the dark: and Archie is just like you, as like you as—what is the word? two peas. Archie, come here and give me your hand. Do you remember that I once told you I believed every word you said?"

A murmur came from Archie's throat. He was half affronted, half angry, offended by that laugh which had startled him in his unexpressed excitement. But yet he went and stood by her as she said.

"I was wrong to laugh," said Evelyn, "but I could not help it. If you had seen yourselves, you would have laughed too. James, I got a clue just before you left home, but I could not tell you of it, because of Sir John: and then you went away with him. I don't know that I should have told you: and I was glad you went away. It was the oppor-

tunity I wanted. I went up to town, and I saw the man who—James!—what is the matter? Do you know?"

He had lifted up his hands with a great exclamation of dismay. "Him!" he cried, and no more.

"I think," said Evelyn with sudden gravity, "your father knows—independent of me. Archie, go and get ready to come home. It is a very sad story. Your father has the best heart, he is more sorry for him that has sinned than glad for him that is saved. I repent of my silly laugh. For though you have not done it, another poor boy has done it. James! God bless you, you have the best heart of us all."

CHAPTER XIII

IT was a very curious breakfast party: for this of course was what had to follow, neither father nor son having yet had any breakfast, notwithstanding all the agitations of the morning. And Mr. Rowland and his son, their minds being relieved, had a very different idea of what was implied in the word breakfast from that entertained by Evelyn, whose cup of tea and morsel of "bap" had satisfied all her needs. They meant other things, and their meaning was more promptly understood by Mrs. Brown than anything that had gone before. It had gone to her heart to see the eggs, the marmalade, and the scones, all neglected upon the tray which she had brought for Mrs. Rowland with the hospitality of a savage woman to her enemy: but now the opportunity was within reach of distinguishing herself in the most lavish way. She was continually on the road between the kitchen and parlour, hurrying, with one dish after another, eggs, finnan haddocks, fried ham, everything that her substantial system of cooking

understood. It was Evelyn's turn to sit and watch the progress of a meal which was so very different from her own, which she did with mingled amusement and amazement, and something of that feminine mixture of pleasure and laughing disdain for the men whose appetites are not interfered with by emotion, which is so common. She liked to see them eat with a certain maternal satisfaction in their well-being, though not so marked as that of Mrs. Brown, who ran to and fro supplying them, with tears of delight in her eyes—but with little jibes and jests at the ease of the transition from all their excitement to that excellent meal, which Archie, always afraid of being laughed at, was uncertain how to accept, though satisfied by seeing that they did not affect his father's equanimity. Presently, however, these little jests began to slacken, the tone of her voice changed, and when, after a moment or two of silence, Rowland looked up to say something, he perceived, with the most unexpected sudden rush of emotion to his own eyes, and feeling to his heart, that his wife had fallen asleep. He had not understood Jean's signals, who stood by with her finger on her lip, and who was drying her eyes with the big white apron which she had slipped on to save her gown, as she ran to and fro with the dishes which Bell in the kitchen was fully occupied in preparing.

"She's just wearit to death," Jean whispered with a small sob, "and vexed wi' the contradictions o' sinners, after a' she's done for you. Just hold

your tongues now, and let her get a little peace, ye twa greedy men." The elaborate pantomime in which the rest of the meal was carried on; the care of both to subdue the sound of their knives and forks, and suppress the little jar of the cups and saucers; and the super-careful clearing away, performed on tiptoe by Bell, as being less heavy in her movements than her mistress, aided by Archie, would have been very amusing to Evelyn could she have seen through her closed eyelids what was going on: but her sleep was very sincere, the involuntary and profound slumber of exhaustion, from which relief of mind, and the delightful ease of success, took every sting. When she came to herself it was in the quiet of a room given up to her repose, the blind drawn down, every sound hushed, and a large shawl—Mrs. Brown's best, a real Indian shawl sent by Rowland in former days, of which the good woman was more proud than of anything she possessed —carefully arranged over her. Her husband sat near, not moving a finger, watching over her repose. Evelyn woke with a slight start, and it was a minute or two before she realized that she was not in the corner of a railway carriage nor the forlorn solitude of the London hotel, but that her mission was accomplished, and all hostilities vanquished. It was perhaps Jean's shawl that made this most clearly apparent to her. It was a beautiful shawl, the colours like nothing but those fine tints of Cashmere with which her Indian

experiences had made her fully acquainted, the texture so soft, the work so delicate. The first intimation that Rowland had of his wife's waking, were the words, said to herself with a little sigh of pleasure, "He must have sent her this."

"What did you say, my darling?" he said, getting up quickly.

"Oh, you are there, James! I said you must have sent it to her, and I meant she must approve of me at last, or she would not have covered me with her beautiful shawl."

"Do you care for her approval, Evelyn?"

"Care!" she said, "of course I care;" then added with a laugh, "A woman can never bear to be disapproved of. I suppose I must have been asleep."

"Like a baby," said her husband, with his laugh of emotion, "and very nice you looked, my dear, but utterly tired out."

"Yes, I was very tired," she acknowledged. "I have done nothing but run about, and then wait, which was still worse. And then—" She sat up suddenly throwing off her coverings. "James! you know—how did you know?"

"Tell me first," he said. "It is very little I know—and then I will tell you."

"That is a bargain," she answered smiling, and then with many interruptions of remark and commentary, she told him her story: Rankine's hint, and Marion's first of all.

"Marion! Marion told you that?" he cried in amazement.

"She told me nothing. I do not for a moment suppose that she knew anything," cried Evelyn, scenting another danger, "but she is very keen-witted, and must have felt that if there was a mystery—"

"A great deal too keen-witted, the little—" The substantive intended to come in here was a profane one, and Rowland felt on his side a danger too.

"And then I had all the trouble in the world to see him. I almost forced an entrance at last, and by the threat of invading him in his own room—indeed," said Evelyn, "it was not a threat only, I should have gone to his room, as I could find him no other where. But the threat sufficed and he came. James! the boy has committed a great crime, but oh! my heart is sore for Eddy. He has no mother."

"You think you might have been his mother, Evelyn?"

"I don't know how you should have divined it—but I do: thank God that I am not! but sometimes I cannot help thinking what a terrible fate I might have had, but for the goodness of God—"

"Working through the wickedness of man."

"Don't raise such questions, James! Don't make me think of it at all. I have been spared that fate, thank God, and saved for a very different one. It is very fantastic, but it gives me a feeling to the children—"

She had put out her hand to him, and he held

it in his own. He gave it a grip, now, more loving than tender. "It gives me," he said, "a feeling too."

"Not of—dislike—not of——"

"What do you take me for, Evelyn? A man like me is often very fantastic, I allow, though nobody would think it. I am so touched by the thought that they might have been your children, and so glad of the escape we have had that they aren't; and so sorry for them, poor things, for losing the best chance they could have had."

At this curiously mixed statement of what was so real and true to the speakers, Evelyn laughed, with tears in her voice, pressing her husband's hand. And then she said, "Now tell me, James, how you know?"

This was not so easy as her task. The middle-aged man of business blushed as youths and maidens are alone considered capable of doing. "Is it not enough that I might have guessed like Marion, or that Marion might have communicated her guess to me?"

"Anything is enough that you tell me," she said."

"That drives all fiction out of my mouth. The reason I knew, Evelyn, was that I was there."

"There!" she cried in amazement, raising herself upright.

"There; more or less. I thought you must have seen me when you came out as you did, with a bounce not like you. I was, I am ashamed to

tell you, like a wretched spy, on the other side of the road, watching where you had gone."

She turned her face to him with such a look of wide-eyed astonishment that his countenance fell. "I have to beg your pardon, Evelyn. Hear my story first, and then you can say what you please. I was just wild with disappointment and misery when I found you gone. Then—it was on a hint—I guessed where you were. I got up to London on Friday morning—was it only yesterday?—and they told me at the hotel you had just gone out, that if I followed you—— I did follow you, and came up to you. But I couldn't speak to you. How could I ask an account from my wife of where she was going, or tell her I had followed her? I just followed still, and then I saw that you went in, and guessed that you had an interview up stairs, and then an interview down stairs. And then—Well, when we both got back to the hotel I was more certain than ever that I could not show that I was spying upon you, Evelyn, and was ashamed even to say that I wondered what you were doing I knew whose house it was, by instinct I suppose. And then, Eddy came to you in the afternoon. And I could think of nothing else but that—when I thought you had been occupied about my boy, it was this other boy that was filling your mind. And then you came back, and I with you in the next carriage, though you never saw me. And then to my wonder and astonishment I watched you come here. So that

when you said you had seen the man who—committed that forgery—I knew at once who it was."

Rowland concluded his narrative with his head bent down, the words coming slowly from his lips. He did not meet the eyes which he felt sure must be full of wrath, and every moment he feared that the hand which held his (his own had become too limp with alarm to hold anything) should drop it, or fling it away in indignation. Evelyn held it tight, giving it a fierce little pressure from time to time. No doubt presently she would fling it from her. And there was a silence which was awful to the penitent.

"I never," she said at last, "could have recognized you in the *rôle* of a detective, James."

"No," he said, with a furtive glance at her, slightly encouraged by the sound of her voice, though doubtful that the tightness with which she held his hand was preliminary to the sudden tossing away from her, which he expected and feared. "No, it is not exactly my kind of way."

"But I recognize you," she said, "very well, when you were not able to say to your wife that you suspected her, when you were ashamed to let me know that you wondered what I was doing. Of what did you suspect me, James?"

She did not loose his hand, but he freed it unconsciously, rising to his feet in overwhelming agitation at this question. Of what did he suspect her? Good heavens! Rowland's forehead grew

cold and wet, his eyes rose, troubled, to meet those with which she was regarding him—large, clear, wide open. It was cruel of Evelyn: the man was so intimidated that he could scarcely reply, though indeed he had been all the time *dans son droit.*

"I—did not suspect you of anything. Tut!" he said, recovering himself, "why shouldn't I say the worst? I suspected you of going to consult that man about your husband's affairs."

"Did you indeed, James? You supposed I was going to consult a man—of whom I have a right to think everything that is worst in a woman's eyes, whom I neither trust, nor esteem, nor believe a word that he says—upon the concerns of my honourable husband, which are my concerns, and more than mine, just so much more than mine that I am trusted with them? You could suppose that James?"

"No," said the unfortunate man, moving from one leg to the other in the extremity of his perplexity and distress. "No, you're right, Evelyn, I didn't. I suspected nothing. I was ashamed, bitterly ashamed of the whole affair. It was nothing but the suggestion of that little—I mean it was the madness of my disappointment at finding you not there. What I meant to say," he added, taking a little courage, "was that perhaps if it had been anybody but you—"

"No," she said. "No sophistry, James: whoever it had been, it would have been the same thing. You would have been ashamed to ask an

honest woman any such question. You are not the kind of man to believe in any shameful thing. Most men believe in every shameful thing—that man, for instance, whom you thought I was going to consult."

He hung his head a little under this taunt, but then he said in a certain self-justificatory tone, "You saw him after all."

"I saw him," she said, a slight flush for the first time rising on her face, "against my will. I was not aware he was there. I had heard from Rosamond that he was still abroad: not that I mean you to think," she added at once, "that it would have made the least difference had I known he was there. I should have gone—to throw light upon this trouble—anywhere in the world—had the devil himself and not Edward Saumarez been there. I don't know which is the worst," she said impulsively. "I think the other one's perhaps belied, but not he."

Evelyn's strong speech made her falter for a moment and be silent, which encouraged Rowland to say, putting out his hand again, "Devil he may be, but I'm cutting a poor enough figure. Do you think you will be able to forgive me, Evelyn? I will never do it again."

The rueful humility of the tone restored Mrs. Rowland to herself. She laughed, putting her hand in his. "Yes, do it again," she said, "for there never was anything so delightful in the world as a man who follows his wife off to London, where

she is perhaps going astray, and is ashamed to ask her what she is doing when he finds her there. You make me proud of my Othello: for he is quite a new one, better than Shakespeare's. Oh, James! what a difference, what a difference! To think you should both be men of the same race, that hideous satyr, and you!"

To say that good James Rowland had any very clear idea what she was raving about would be untrue. He knew no resemblance he could possibly have to Othello, nor what Shakespeare had to do with it. Neither was he clear who was the hideous satyr. But he knew that this trust on Evelyn's part was to his own credit and praise, and he was pleased, as the best of men may be.

"Well," he said, recovering himself entirely, "we will consider that incident over, Evelyn, and me the most happy man in Scotland, be the other who he may. I owe Archie some amends for suspecting him, but you will allow—"

"I will allow nothing," said Evelyn. "Had you treated him as you treat me, and been ashamed to suggest such a thing to your son as you own you were to your wife, we might all have been spared a great deal of pain. But now it's all over, thank God, and you will know better another time."

"Don't fall upon me and slay me on another ground after you've forgiven me on your own," he said. And then he grew suddenly grave and asked, "Did he give you any details—did he tell you why he did it, the unhappy boy?"

"He asked me only that the cheque might be destroyed. I thought you would think Archie's exculpation cheaply purchased at that cost."

"Of course, of course," he said with a wave of his hand.

"And gave me this, which he said would to you be proof enough."

Mr. Rowland took the scrap of paper, with his own name written upon it, in different degrees of perfection. He looked at it intently for a minute, then threw it into the smouldering fire, where it made a momentary blaze and flickered away.

"If the thing could be destroyed like that!" he said. Then after a pause, "The question is, what is to be done with that unhappy boy?"

"James! I promised him exemption, safety. He was never to hear of it again."

"Tut, tut!" he said. "It's you now, Evelyn, that shows a want of understanding. Do you think anything in the world would make me bring to disgrace and ruin that boy! The creature's not of age," he cried. "What are we to do with him, to make it still possible that he should live his life?"

"James," cried Evelyn, after a pause, "I must tell you. There are such curious differences. I don't think that Eddy is—very unhappy. He has his moments of seriousness, but generally he takes it lightly enough."

"I don't see that that makes it any better. Are we to leave him among his debts and his follies, to

be tempted to do such a thing again? He should be separated from that horrible,—what do you call it—society life of his, and set to work."

"I don't think you would ever get him to work, James!"

"He should be taken, anyhow, out of that whirl of wretched life."

"He could not live out of it, James!"

"Yet he managed to exist for a whole month at Rosmore."

"Oh, my dear James, he was born in it, and he will die in it. He could not manage to exist out of that atmosphere of society."

"I have a great mind to try," Rowland said, walking about the room. "What is the good of saving a man from drowning with one hand, if ye pitch him back into the water with the other? I like radical measures. I would send him right away to some sort of work."

She said nothing but shook her head.

"By George, I will try!" cried her husband, "if you were to shake your head off, my dear. I won't let the laddie perish without a try to save him. He's saved me, and the peace of my house. You may say he put it in jeopardy first: but it took some pluck, Evelyn, to put that, and his life, so to speak, in your hands. He must have good meanings in him. I will send for the lad—I will—"

"I must tell you something first, James, and then you shall act as you please. He said to me, 'This means that I shall never see any of you

again. And I was fond of little Marion—though she doesn't deserve it any more than I do.' It was a curious thing to say."

Rowland gave a long whistle, and a twinkle of fun arose in his eye. "She doesn't deserve it any more than he does!" he said. The speech did not make him angry, as Evelyn had feared. It made him laugh, and his laugh was not ungenial. "By Jove!" he said to himself: but he did not explain to Evelyn the idea which was veiled by that exclamation. There was, indeed, no need that there should be any meaning at all.

CHAPTER XIV

THE return of the united family to Rosmore was, it is scarcely necessary to say, scrutinized by many keen and eager eyes, all aware that there had been something wrong, all, or almost all, glad to see that the something had so soon come to nothing. Except that Archie was exceptionally shabby in his old clothes, and that he was deeply conscious of this fact, and accordingly kept as much as possible in the background, there was nothing to show that the party was anything more than the most ordinary party returning from some joint expedition. The people in the steamboat, however, allowed their knowledge to be revealed by effusive and unnecessary expressions of satisfaction in the return of Mr. Rowland and his wife and son, which were quite uncalled for, in view of the fact that neither of the former had been gone for more than a few days. "I can scarcely express to you the satisfaction I feel in seeing you back," the minister said, with a significant grip of his wealthy parishioner's hand; and Miss Eliza, who happened to be coming

by the same boat, fell upon Evelyn with a shriek of joy. "I've not seen so delightful a sight for years as the sight of your bonny face, with all your belongings round you," Miss Eliza said, holding out her left hand and a beaming smile to Archie. These signs of popular satisfaction were received by Mrs. Rowland not exactly with offence, but a little coldly, in view of the fact that nobody had any right, even by inference, to remark upon what was so entirely a family matter. But her husband, who was in great spirits, and inclined to make friends with all the world, received these effusive salutations with pleasure, and without inquiring how much they knew of the circumstances which made this home-coming remarkable. He was perhaps more used to the warmth of Scotch neighbours, and understood it better. At the pier the two girls were waiting, both of them curious and a little excited. Marion's eyes were glittering like beads with a desire to know, and Rosamond, though she held up her head with her accustomed calm, and repressed all consciousness of anything unusual, betrayed in a slight dilatation of her nostril, and momentary quiver of her lip, her share of the general excitement. She slipped aside from the carriage in order to leave the family undisturbed in their reunion, which was indeed a thing very little desired by any of its members: but was joined by Archie before she had gone far. He was too glad to escape from the sensation of the prodigal's return, although more and more

conscious of what he felt to be the chief feature about him—his exceedingly shabby coat.

"I am glad you have come home," said Rosamond.

"So am I, more or less," said Archie.

"I suppose you like the freedom of being away. But the more you are free to go, the more endurable the dulness should be. When one knows one can get quit of it at any moment, one does not mind."

"I was not thinking of the dulness," said Archie; "it has been the other way round with me. I suppose it's contradiction. When you are shut out from your home, you take a longing for it. It's through your brother somehow, I can't tell how, that I've come back now."

"Through Eddy!"

"I don't know how; he has cleared up something. It is queer, isn't it," said Archie, with a laugh, "that a little beggar like that—I beg your pardon, Miss Saumarez, I forgot for the moment——"

"It is true enough," said Rosamond, gravely. "He must look a little beggar to you. I beg to remark, however, Mr. Rowland, that you are not yourself very tall, nor perhaps of a commanding aspect, by nature."

Archie could not accept this jibe as Eddy would have done. He grew graver still than Rosamond and became crimson. "It's just a silly phrase," he said, "that means nothing. Eddy's far more com-

manding, as you say, than I am. I know the difference well enough: but it's a little hard all the same to think that a man's own father should take the word of a stranger rather than——"

"Oh, do you think there's anything in that?" said Rosamond. "I don't; in the first place, if you must speak for yourself, you're a prejudiced witness, that's what they say. And again, you know a man's father—or a woman's father either for that matter—does always believe other people sooner than you. It has something to do with the constitution of human nature, I suppose," she added with philosophical calm. "And then, perhaps, if you will allow me to say it, Eddy might know more than you."

"About myself?" said Archie.

"About other people. Eddy knows a great deal about some kinds of life. I don't say it is the best kinds. He knows the ways of a bad set. So that if it was anything wrong, he might be able to throw a light—It is a pity, but that is the turn he has taken," said Rosamond. "He seems to find scamps more amusing than others. Perhaps they are, for anything I know. I have thought myself, that if you didn't mind about being respectable and that sort of thing, which of course a girl must mind, that it might be perhaps more amusing. One never knows. Certainly society men are not amusing at all."

"I should have thought," said Archie, "you would have liked them best."

"No," said Rosamond dubiously, "the worst is, people are so hideously like each other. That's why one longs after what's disreputable or—anything out of the way. One hopes to light upon a new species somewhere. So far as I can see, however," she added, "Eddy's people are just as dull as the rest."

Archie was quite unable to keep up the ball of this conversation. It flustered and made him uncomfortable. He was very certain that whatever could be said for himself (and he did not think that much could be said for him), nobody would venture to assert that he was amusing.

"I should have thought," he said hesitating, "that a fellow you could trust to, that was of the kind that would never fail you whatever you wanted, and thought more of you a great deal than of himself, however awkward he might be, or uncouth, or that—"

"Oh," said Rosamond, "if it's moral qualities you are thinking of, the best thing perhaps to do would be to pick up the nearest curate and make a model of him." Which perplexed Archie more and more: for though he knew little of curates, he had been brought up with a wholesome respect for the minister, yet did not perhaps think that dignitary exactly the person "to please a damsel's eye." He expressed the difficulty he had in carrying on the conversation by a hesitating and puzzled "O-oh!" but said little more. And those young persons walked the rest of the way to Rosmore in

partial silence, broken by an occasional monologue from Rosamond, who did not dislike a good listener. And there is no doubt that Archie was admirable in this way.

The rest of the party were less happy, for it must be said, that though the conversation did not flourish, there was to Archie, and possibly also, more or less sympathetically, to Rosamond, a sort of vague pleasure in moving along by the side of a person so interesting, which, though quite vague, was wonderfully seductive, and made the woodland roads into enchanted ways, and gave every moment wings. The lad found himself in a charmed atmosphere when he was by her side. During the tremendous internal conflict through which he had passed, he had thought of Rosamond, not according to her own formula, as amusing, but as the opposite extreme to that lowest kind of existence, the highest point of interest, variety and stimulation. which life contained. And now he had stepped at once from the depths to the height. He did not mind what it was she was saying, nor even that he could not reply to her. As he walked along by her side, Archie was buoyed up as by heavenly airs. He trod not on common earth, but on something elastic and inspiring that made every step light. And though Rosamond would have been greatly surprised had she been accused of any such feeling for Archie, yet perhaps the sympathy of the exquisite elation in his being affected her more than she knew. But, as has been said, the rest of

the party were less happy. Marion sat with her back to the horses, partly from choice, in order to have the others more at her mercy, and partly in supposed deference to Rowland, who liked to have his face turned in the direction in which he was going, like many other energetic persons. She surveyed her father and his wife as from an eminence, commanding every look and movement. There is not a better point of vantage than the front seat of a carriage when you mean to cross-examine and reduce to helplessness the people opposite to you, who cannot escape.

"I am very glad, papa," said Marion, "that you have got over your little tiff, and all come so nice and friendly home. I knew quite well that you and mamma would very soon make it up, but I was very anxious about Archie, who is a different question. And have you got any light about that cheque, or is it just the father falling on his neck, and the prodigal coming home?"

"The cheque?" said Rowland, in a low tone of astonishment, with an anxious glance at his wife.

"Oh, yes," said Marion, in her clear notes, "you need not speak low, papa, as if that would do any good: for everybody knows just quite well what it all was about."

"You seem to know more than I do, Marion," said Rowland; "therefore, perhaps, you will be good enough to expound the matter to those, who have given you the information, in your own way."

"Yes, papa," said Marion, with charming docility: "but I could do that better," she added, "if you would answer my question: for if it's just your kindness, like the man in the parable, that's one thing: but if it's cleared up, that's another—and I would like to know."

"I am sure it will please Marion, James," said Mrs. Rowland, "to be assured that it has been cleared up, and that both her hints to me and to you have been of use. I am not sure," she said, with a laugh, "that Eddy was very grateful to you for suggesting that he would know."

"Oh, you told him it was me!" said Marion. Her eyes, which were dancing in their sockets with curiosity and excitement, were clouded for a moment. "Well!" she said, after a pause, "I am not minding. It was quite true." She put her hand on Mrs. Rowland's knee, and leant forward eagerly. "Was it yon man?" she asked.

"What have you to do with it," cried her father, "you little——! You never lifted a finger for your brother, so far as I know."

"It would not have been becoming," said Marion, with dignity, "if I had put myself forward. And how did I know that you would have liked it, papa? I just was determined that I would not commit myself: for if he had never come back it would always have been a comfort to you that you had one that made no fuss. But when mamma consulted me, I gave her the best advice I could, and when you consulted me, I just told you what

I thought. And it appears," said Marion, taking them in with an expressive glance, "that it has all been for the best."

"It has been entirely for the best," said Evelyn, "and you could not have done better for us if you had meant it." Mrs. Rowland was but a woman, and she did not forgive her step-daughter for the suggestion which had cost her husband so many troubled hours. They drew up to the door at this moment to the general relief, but Evelyn could not refrain from a final arrow. "You will be glad to know that nobody has come to any harm," she said.

But Marion was not sensitive to that amiable dart. She clutched her stepmother's dress to hold her back. "Was it yon man?" she said; "and did he get clear away after all?"

Evelyn stepped quickly out of the carriage and made no reply; but, as it happened, Marion's unanswered question was of the greatest importance and advantage to the anxious household and deeply interested country-side. For, dropping into Saunders's thirsty ears, like the proverbial water in the desert, it was by him shaped into the most satisfactory of conclusions to the much debated story. "It was that fellow in the bad coat," he said, in the housekeeper's room, as soon as he had superintended the taking in of tea. "I knew yon was the man." Saunders was a little breathless, being a portly person, and having hurried in at the top of his speed to convey the

news. "I must say Miss Marion has a great consideration for us in the other part of the house," he added. "She asked the question just as I stood there, though I make no doubt she had 'ad it all out afore that." Mr. Saunders was a Scotsman by birth, but he had been in the best families, and slipped an h now and then just to show that he knew as well as any one how fine English was spoke.

And the news ran far and wide—to Rankine's cottage, and to the Manse, and up the loch to the innumerable neighbours who had taken the profoundest interest in the story. A great many people, it turned out, had seen "yon man." He had been observed on the lochside walking back with an ulster that was much too big for him, covering his badly-made evening coat. And all the inhabitants of the little cluster of cottages in one of which he had lived, had given Johnson up as the malefactor long ago—for had he not come in from the ball in the middle of the night, and thrown his things into his bag, and struggled off again in the ulster which was not his, over the hill to Kilrossie before it was light? At the head of the loch there was the most unfeigned satisfaction that it had proved to be "yon man." And Archie was the subject of one prolonged ovation wherever he appeared. "I am as glad to see you back as if I had gotten a legacy," Miss Eliza said, patting him on the back. "When I thought of the noise we were all making that night of the ball, and

you, poor lad, with such trouble hanging over you, and nobody to know! But it's all blown over now, and justice done, the Lord be praised." The reader, better informed, knows that poor Johnson had met with anything but justice, but the opinion of the loch had happily no effect upon his equanimity, and indeed, if it could have been supposed to have had any effect, no doubt he deserved all the obloquy for something else, if not for that.

And it surprised nobody when Eddy Saumarez arrived one evening to finish his visit, as was said —that visit having been painfully cut short by the family trouble and false accusation of Archie, which his friend had been too sensitive to bear. Eddy had been a general favourite, and everybody was glad to see him, even Rankine, who received him very graciously, though with a flush upon his face, probably caused by too hot a fire. "I could accommodate you *now* with a puppy, if you were still in want of one," Rankine said, fishing up a sprawling specimen of the Roy section from that nest in which he kept his nurslings warm; and he added, "I'm real glad to see you without *yon* spark. Ye'll learn anither time not to try to get your fun out o' me with a ficteetious philosopher: for I wadna be worth my salt as a philologist, not to say an observer o' human nature, if I didna see through an ill-spoken ignoramus like yon."

"Everybody is not like you, Rankine," said Eddy; "all the rest swallowed him like gospel."

"It is true," said Rankine, "that everybody is no like me. I have maybe had advantages that are not of a common kind; but ye shouldna abuse the confidence o' the weaker vessels. And ye never can tell at what corner ye may fall in with a man that is enlightened and that will see through your devices—at least in this country. I'm tauld there's far less advanced intelligence in Southland pairts. Ay, that's a fine little beast. I havena had a better since the one that went to the Princess, ye will maybe have heard o' that—a real beauty, but he wasna appreciated. I hope you have mair sense than ever to have such a thing said of you."

Thus Eddy's absolution was sealed by his very accuser, and his reputation vindicated.

The scene in Rowland's study was perhaps more difficult to get through. It was in answer to a telegram sent from Glasgow that Eddy, with some excitement, made up his mind to return to Rosmore. "Come and finish visit. Have much to say to you," was Rowland's message, which set Eddy's pulses beating. For a moment a horrible thought gleamed through his mind that his confession was to be used against him, but this he soon dismissed as impossible. It was bad enough without that, and demanded an amount of courage which Eddy, though full of that quality, scarcely felt that he possessed. He was dumb when he found himself at last in the dreaded room where Archie had suffered for his fault. Eddy was a

trifler born, and had the habit of taking everything lightly; his most tragic moment came between two jests—he could not have been serious for five minutes to save his life. But when he was ushered into Rowland's room, and found himself face to face with the man whose name he had forged, whose money he had appropriated, whose heart, tough and middle-aged as it was, he had nearly broken, Eddy had not a word to say. He stood dumb before the judge who had voluntarily laid aside all power to punish him. Something rose in his throat which took away his voice. He could not have spoken had all the hopes of his life depended upon it. Happily this inability to articulate had more effect upon Rowland than the most voluble excuses could have had.

"Eddy," he said, "I've sent for you, thinking I had a right. I have a grievance against you, and then, again, I have received a favour at your hands."

Eddy made a gesture of deprecation, and tried to utter something, but could not.

"Yes," said Rowland, gravely; "I'm not a man to make little of what you did. But when you put your life in my wife's hands to save my son, you did me a greater service than any other man on earth could do: and you did in the circumstances all that a man could do."

"It's not capital now, sir," said Eddy, finding his voice as his spirit began to come back to him.

"No, it's not hanging," said Rowland, with a slight smile; "but it's ruin all the same. Now, look here." He took the cheque from the envelope in which he had put it away. "Put that in the fire, and destroy it, and then we can talk."

Eddy did what he was told with what scrupulous care it is unnecessary to describe, and poked the very films of the burned paper into the bottom of the fire. Then he turned to Mr. Rowland, his face reddened with the blaze, his eyes hot and scorched, his features working. He took the rich man's hand and held it fast between his. "Tell me to do anything in the world," he said, "whatever you please, and I'll do it. I am your bond-slave, and will not call my soul my own unless you say I may."

"Sit down, boy, and don't talk nonsense," said Rowland, himself considerably moved. "I am going to tell you to do several things, and I hope you will obey. But first, Eddy, if you were in such a terrible scrape, why were you such a little fool, when you had a man like me close at hand, not to come and ask for it. Would not that have been the wise way?"

"It would have been a very cheeky thing to do to come and ask a man, because he's been kind to you, to give you a th— though, of course," Eddy interrupted himself, in a low voice, "less might have done then."

"A cheeky thing is better than a bad thing," said Rowland sententiously. "Perhaps I might

have been surprised: but now, my lad, let us get to the bottom of all this. If I take you in hand, I'll have no half measures. How much do you want to clear you altogether, so that you shall be your own master when you come into your estate?"

"To clear me?" Eddy's eyebrows went up altogether into his hair. "Well, sir," he said, "that is a confusing question for, you see, unlimited tick, that is to say, credit——"

"Don't be a humbug, Eddy!"

"Well, I suppose you know what tick means," the young man said, with a laugh, "not unlimited by any means; though, to tell the truth, except for—I'm very nearly cleared."

"Very nearly won't do for me, neither will I have any exceptions; put them all down, every one, without any exceptions and bring them to me. I'll see you cleared: and now for what I want you to do."

"Yes, sir," said Eddy, putting his hands by his side with the air of a docile little schoolboy eager to obey.

It was all Rowland could do not to laugh, but he was scandalized at himself for his levity and forbore.

"There is a choice of two or three things," said Rowland. "You might go out to my overseer in India, and try what you can do on the railways. There is nothing succeeds so well there as a man who knows how to manage men."

Eddy produced a little sickly smile, but he did not make any response.

"Or you might try ranching out in Canada or the Wild West: or the same kind of thing, though they only call it stock-keeping, in Australia: or——It really does not matter what it is, if it's good hard work. I make a stand upon that. Good, hard work," said Mr. Rowland; "it's the way of salvation for you spendthrift young men."

"Yes, sir," said Eddy again, with his schoolboy air, but in rueful tones.

"Man alive!" cried Rowland, "can't you see what a grand thing it would be for you? your thoughts taken off all your follies and vanities, your hands full of something wholesome to do, yourself removed out of the way of temptation? What could you desire more?"

"Ah!" said Eddy, "I'm afraid I'd desire a different body and a different soul, only such trifles as these. I'm a product of corrupt civilization, I am not the thing that lives and thrives that way. Probably out there I should gravitate to a gambling saloon or a drinking bar."

"You don't drink, Eddy?" cried Rowland, with an alarmed countenance.

"No, I don't drink—not now," said Eddy, with sudden gravity; "but what I might do after six months of a cow-boy's life I don't know."

Rowland looked at him for some time with a baffled air. Then he tried his last *coup*. "My wife told me," he said—"I hope she did not betray

your confidence—that there was something about Marion."

A sudden flush of colour went over Eddy's face, and he began to move his foot nervously, as he did when he was excited.

"And that you had," Rowland said, with an inflection of laughter in his voice not to be concealed, "a very just appreciation of her. Now, my man, without some such probation there could be no thought of my daughter, you must know."

Eddy sat with his head bent, swinging his foot, and for a moment made no reply. At last he said, "How long, sir, do you mean the probation to last?"

"Let us say at a venture three years."

"Three years!" said Eddy, with comic despair. "Mr. Rowland, I am very fond of Marion, though —and I shouldn't wonder if she could fancy me. She has a poor opinion of me, but that needn't matter. We could always get on together. But do you think, from what you know, that if somebody with a handle to his name turned up after the Drawing-room, that Marion would wait for me out ranching in California for three years?"

In spite of himself, Rowland laughed. "I never could take upon myself to say, Eddy, what love might do."

"No?" said Eddy, with his head on one side, and a look of interrogation. "I think I could take it upon myself," he added. "We might be very fond of each other: and I, of course, would be out of the way of temptation out there;

besides, I'm not the kind of man that falls much in love. But Marion: excuse me for talking so freely, sir, but you've put it to me. I should find Marion Lady Something-or-other, when I came back at the end of my three years."

"Then you don't think it worth your while?" Rowland said.

"I did not say that: whatever you say is worth the while. I'll go if you press it; and if I don't come back at all, it will be the less matter. But if you ask me, sir, frankly, I don't think it's good enough so far as Marion is concerned. She would never wait for a fellow out ranching. I don't see why she should, for my part."

"You are a cool loon," said Rowland, half offended. "Perhaps you do not wish she should."

"Well, she wouldn't like it," said Eddy. "I can't help thinking of her as well as of myself. She'd take the young duke, if he turned up, in any case. There isn't an eligible young duke, I believe, now," he said thoughtfully, "but the next best. And she wouldn't wait three years for me, oh no, though she might like me well enough. The three years' system would make an end of that. I am very much obliged to you for holding out the chance; and I'll take your advice for myself, Mr. Rowland, and go—wherever you decide. But we're bound to think what's best for her first, don't you see? And I couldn't give my consent to asking her to wait for three years. Dear me, no! not for me, as if I were a great catch or good for anything. It would

scarcely be worth her while to stoop and pick me up if I were lying in her road. Why should she wait three years for me?"

"Eddy, you are a very queer fellow," said Rowland; "I don't know what to make of you. Tell me, now, if you were left entirely to yourself, what would you like to do?"

"I!" he said. Eddy swung his foot more and more, and sat reflecting for a minute or two. Then he burst into a laugh. "I suppose she enjoys her life as much as we do," he said, "poor old soul! I was going to say there's an old aunt of the governor's, that must die some time. If she would be so obliging as to do it now, and leave me her money, as she says she means to!—Then the governor would hand me over Gilston, which he hates, and Marion and I—— But it's all absurdity and a dream. The old aunt won't die, why should she? and we—why, there's no we, that's the best of it! and we are discussing a thing that will never be."

Rowland walked about the room from end to end, as he sometimes did when he was forming a resolution. "So you think there's nothing but Gilston for you, Eddy?" he said.

"I should be out of harm's way," said the lad, "and a place to fill—it might answer, but again it might not. But why should my old aunt die to please me? or Marion give up her duke—or you take all this trouble—I am not worth it," Eddy said.

CHAPTER XV

"YOU put Mrs. Rowland on my traces," said Eddy; "why did you do so, you little witch? Wait till I find out some bad trick I can play you."

"It has all turned out very well," said Marion sedately. "I am not at all sorry I did it. I knew that man was about something wrong. And you should not know such people, Mr. Saumarez. I was bound to tell them anything I knew."

"Miss Rowland," said Eddy, "your father is going to pay all my debts, and send me out to California, or somewhere, to a ranch, to expiate all my sins; and when I come back in three years or so, as a reward, if you are not the Duchess of So-and-so, we may, if we please, marry."

"Who may marry?" said Marion astonished.

"The only people whom I know who really suit each other," said Eddy calmly. "You and I."

"You and—me," cried Marion in great wrath. "You are just very impudent to say so. Me marry you!—without ever being asked—without a word! In three years or so! I just tell you I will do nothing of the kind."

"That is exactly what I said. I said, 'If you think Marion will wait three years for me! She will take the first duke that offers, and she will be one of the ornaments of Queen Victoria's court long before I come home.'"

"I was not saying exactly that," said Marion. "Where am I to get the duke? There are none but old bald-headed men."

"An earl then," said Eddy. "There are always lively young earls or viscounts in hand, more to be counted on than plain Eddy Saumarez, who is nobody. That's what I said to your father, Miss May. Why should you wait for me? I told him I saw no reason."

"Especially when I was never asked," Marion said.

"Yes," said Eddy. "You see how good I am at bottom, after all that has happened. I said I would play you a nasty trick if I could find one, but I haven't. You should be grateful to me. I haven't asked you—so far as words go."

"I don't know," said Marion with a little quiver in her lip, "how a person can be asked except in words."

"Don't you?" he said, and then they gave each other a look, and burst into mutual laughter of the emotional kind.

They were walking down the slope of the bank towards the Clyde, under trees now bare with the surly winds of winter. It was a dull November afternoon, and everything was done in tints of

gray; the skies in long bands, here darker, there lighter, as the vapours were more or less heavy, the opposite shore a tinge more solid than the long weltering line of the water which had the ghost of a reflection in it, the points standing out like black specks upon the gray, the wreaths of smoke half-suspended in the still air over the town of Clydeside, putting in an intermediate tone between the two. The edge of the great stream grew a little lighter as it crept to their feet over the shallows, and broke on the beach with a faint white line of foam.

"I will always maintain," said Eddy, "that there never were two people so fit to go together as you and I. We haven't any wild admiration of each other; we know each other's deficiencies exactly; we don't go in for perfection, do we? But we suit, my little May, we suit down to the ground. You would know what you had to expect in me, and I could keep you in order."

"You are just very impudent," she said. "I never gave you any encouragement, Mr. Saumarez, to think that I was willing to be—to do—I mean anything of that kind."

"Ah, Marion," he said, "you may be as stern as you like, but I know I would suit you better than that duke. You would get dreadfully tired of being called your grace, and having him, a stupid fellow, always stuck there opposite to you; but you would not get tired of me."

"How do you know that? I am often just very

tired of you," said Marion. "You think too much of yourself. We would not agree, not for two days without a fight."

"That is just what I say. There would be no *géne* between us, we know each other so well. Don't you think, after all, you would perhaps wait for me, Marion, supposing the duke did not come? I never could pretend to stand against him. Say you will, and I'll do what your father says, and go ranching, though most likely I shall break my neck the first year, and then you will be free of your promise, May."

"Why should you go ranching, as you call it, and what does it mean?"

"That's what I don't know. It means riding about after cows, but why I can't tell you. I know nothing in the world about cows. I scarcely know one when I see it, but your father thinks it's the right thing. I'll go if you'll wait for me, May."

"And what would you do, Eddy," she said, stealing a little closer to him, "if you didn't go?"

"That's more than I can tell you. But I'll tell you what I'd do, May, if old Aunt Sarah would only die. I'd settle with the governor about Gilston, and we'd furbish it up and live there. In the spring we'd have a little turn in town, and in winter we'd hunt, and have the house full. We should be as jolly as the day's long, and nobody to interfere with us. And I promise you, you'd go out of the room before Mrs. James Rowland, though he is the great railway man. I could do

that for you, Marion, though I couldn't make you Her Grace, you know."

"Oh, be quiet, Eddy! and if your Aunt Sarah doesn't die?"

"Ah, there you pose me, May. I must either go back where the bad boys go, to town, and sink or swim as I can, and farewell to my pretty Marion; or else I must go and ranch, or whatever you call it, as your father says."

"It is strange," said Marion very seriously, "that old people should make such a point of going on living, when there are young ones that want their money so very much—and when they know they have had their day."

"One may say it is inconsiderate," said Eddy with a twinkle in his eye, "but then the thing is, why should she take all that trouble for us? I am sure we would take none for her: and here we are just back again, Marion, where the four roads meet—Gilston or California, the ranch or the—devil: that's about what it is."

"You had, perhaps, better go to the ranch, Eddy."

"And you'll wait for me, May!"

"Perhaps," said the girl, with tears which were honest enough, in her eyes. "If I don't see somebody I like better," she added with a laugh.

"Most likely," said Eddy philosophically, "I shall break my neck the first year—and then you need not hold to your promise. But don't marry any one under the rank of a marquis, for my credit, if you love me, May."

"Oh, we'll see about that," Marion said. It was after she had come in from this conversation, and had thought it all over in her own room, and made several calculations, that Marion walked very sedately down stairs, and knocked at her father's door. She was slightly disconcerted when she saw that Mrs. Rowland was with him, but, having quite distinctly made up her mind what she was going to do, her confusion was slight and soon passed away. She did not sit down, but stood by the writing table at which he was seated, leaning her hand upon it, which was a token that she meant business, and did not intend to waste words.

"Can I speak a word to you, papa?"

"As many as you please," said Rowland. "Sit down, May; but if you are coming to ask explanations——"

"Explanations?" she said with some surprise. "Oh, you will perhaps be meaning about Archie? There is no occasion. I was always very clear about that; and it was me that gave mamma the first hint, as she will perhaps mind. I was coming to speak to you, papa, about what may perhaps be my own affairs."

"Shall I go away, Marion, and leave you alone with your father?"

"Oh, no, there is no need. You will be better here: for sometimes there are times when a woman has more sense—I will not beat about the bush. Why is it, papa, that Mr. Saumarez has to go away?"

"Oh, he has been telling you, has he? And do you mean to wait for him, Marion?" said her father.

"That is a different question," said Marion, with a toss of her head, which was perhaps intended to toss away a little heat that had come to her cheeks. "I would like to know, in the first place just as his friend, papa, what end is going to be served by sending him away?"

"And what would your wisdom suggest instead?" said Mr. Rowland. "The end to be served is to take him away from ill friends, and connections, and make him work—which is the best thing I know——"

"Work!" said Marion with a certain contempt; "and how would Eddy work that does not know the way? Work is maybe very grand, and I am not sure but I could do it myself if there was any need. And Archie might maybe do it. And perhaps it would do *him* good. But not Eddy; I've read in books about that: if the half of the men out there work, the other half just go all wrong. Boys are not all alike," said Marion, with a little wave of her hand, as if delivering a lecture on the subject; "the boys at the Burn have that in them that they can just never be quiet—they're on the hill or out in the boat, or wrestling and throwing things at each other, if there's nothing else to do. But Eddy is not of that kind. He would no more work out there than he would work here. He will go if you make him, though I cannot tell

why he should do what you say. But he will go just helpless, with no use of his hands, and he will fall into the first net that's spread for him. Oh, he's clever enough!" cried the girl, some angry moisture springing to her eyes; "he will see it is a net: but he will go into it all the same: for what is he to do? He has just about as much work in him as Roy and Dhu."

"Then he'd better disappear off the face of the earth!" cried Rowland angrily, "with other cumberers of the soil. A man like that has no right to live."

"His Maker would maybe know that best," retorted Marion undismayed; "and me, I'm willing to take him as he is. But I will not be a consenting party," the girl cried raising her voice, "to sending any person away to his ruin. You think one way is just good for everybody all the same, as if we were not made dark and fair, and big and little, to show the difference! And I will not say I will wait for him, papa," Marion added more calmly, after a pause for breath. For I might miss a very good match in the time, and never get such a chance again; and he might never come back, as I think most likely, and I would have nobody at all. So I will not promise, for it would be bad for us both,—both him and me."

"You little calculating cutty," cried her father; "is this what you call being in love with a man?"

"I never said a word on that subject," said Marion. "I said I was willing to take him as he is. And I,"

she said, coming down suddenly from her oratorical platform to the calm tone of ordinary affairs, "I suppose you will be meaning to give me some kind of a fortune, more or less, when I'm married and go away."

"I suppose so—to get rid of you," said her father with a laugh.

"That was just what I meant," said Marion seriously; "then what would ail you, papa, to settle about Gilston, and just let him take up the way of nature there? He could do what was wanted there."

Rowland sprang from his seat in wrath and high indignation. "Preserve the game and shoot it in the season, and play your idiotic games all the summer——"

("No, papa," said Marion demurely, "we would be May and June in town.")

"And hunt in the winter, and play the fool all the year round—on my money, that I've worked hard for, every penny! I will see him—and you—far enough first!"

"Papa," said Marion, "I have been talking to Rosamond upon that subject, and she thinks that men like you are under a great delusion. For she says you are not an old man now, but just in your prime, and you're neither worn out nor a bit the worse. And she says she knows men that have worked far, far harder and actually have worn themselves out, and never made any money at all. So that it's not hard work, as you suppose, but just

that you're awfully clever, and have had tremendous luck. Oh, you can ask Rosamond what she means. It is not me; but that's my opinion too."

To imagine a man more bewildered than Rowland, thus assailed in his very stronghold by two "brats of girls," as he himself said, who could know nothing about the matter: yet subtly flattered all the same by the statement that he was still in his prime and awfully clever, things which no man, especially when he is *sur le retour*, objects to hear —would have been impossible. He glared upon his little daughter, standing dauntless, purling forth her iconoclastic remarks, and then he gave a short laugh or snort of angry contempt, and smote her lightly (yet enough to make her shake from head to foot) on the shoulder, and bade her stick to her own plea and her lad's, and let other people speak for themselves.

"Well," said Marion, "I will just call her in, for she is in the hall, and she will tell you herself: for I have said my say; and I hope you will think it over, and come to a better judgment, papa."

All this time Evelyn had been sitting silent by, supporting her head on her hand. But, truth to tell, it was not the self-denial of a supporter leaving her principal to fight for himself, but simple incompetence which silenced Evelyn. With her head bent down, she had been doing her best to master and conceal the laughter which was almost too much for her. Mrs. Rowland was for once on Marion's side; and the composure of the little girl's attack,

and its radical character, startled the elder woman. When Rowland sat down again by her side, with that snort of dissipating and modified fury she put her hand upon his arm, and raised her face to him for a moment. And the good man was more bewildered than ever to see the fun that was dancing in his wife's eyes.

"James!" said Evelyn, her laugh bursting forth in spite of her, "she had you there."

"The little witch!" cried the bewildered man. He began to laugh too, though he could scarcely have told why. And then Rowland raised his head to find quite a different figure standing in front of him in the same position which Marion had occupied a moment before, but half as tall again as Marion, with head held high, and a slim, long hand leant upon his table. She stood like Portia about to make her speech, a simile which, it need not be said, did not occur to Rowland, but to Evelyn by his side.

"You called me, Mr. Rowland," Rosamond said.

"You are to tell him," said Marion's voice behind, "what you said about work, Rosamond: for I'm only his own daughter, and he will not listen to it from me."

"You little cutty!" Rowland said again, under his breath.

"What did I say about work? it is the thing I wish for most," said Rosamond. "As soon as ever I am of age I am going in for it. My father and

people won't let me now. I do not think they have any right to interfere, but they do. Madeline Leighton, who is my dearest friend, is going in for medicine ; but I have no distinct turn, I am sorry to say. But we think that something is certain to turn up."

"So you are wanting to work, are you, Miss Rosamond ? If it had been your brother, it would have been more to the purpose : for women's work is but poorly paid. I never heard yet of one that made a fortune by her own exertions," Rowland said.

"A fortune ?" said Rosamond. "No, we never thought of that. We thought we could live on very little, two girls together. And Madeline has something of her own, and we hoped that grandmamma, as she is all for work, might make me a small allowance if she saw that I was in earnest. Lodgings are not dear, if you don't insist upon a fashionable quarter, and as we shouldn't care for meat, or anything expensive in the way of living——"

"Eh ?" said Rowland surprised. "And do you think, my dear, you could make money by saving off your meat ?"

"Money ! oh, we never thought of money, so long as we could get on, and work."

"And what would you work for, if I may inquire, if you had no thought of money ?" Rowland asked, almost dumb in face of this enigma, which was beyond all his powers.

"I have said," she exclaimed with a little impatience, "that unfortunately I have no distinct vocation. Madeline is medical, luckily for her. She has no difficulty. But there is always as much work as one can set one's face to in the East End."

"But for what, for what? Give me an answer."

"I allow," said Rosamond, faltering slightly, "that it is a difficult question. To be of a little use, we hope: though people say that the results are not always so satisfactory as——But at all events," she added, more cheerfully, "it is WORK. And that must always be the best thing, whatever one may do."

Rowland sat listening to all this, aghast. The lines of his ruddy countenance grew limp, his lips fell a little apart. "I thought I was a great one for work," he said. But the words fell in a sort of apologetic manner from his lips, and he did not add anything about a change of opinion, which might have been supposed to be implied.

"Ah!" said Rosamond, "I know! in a different way: which chiefly means, I believe, getting other people to work for you, and directing them, and planning everything, and making money—like you, Mr. Rowland! who, in a few years, without hurting yourself in the least, have got so much money that you don't know what to do with it. One sees that in the world. I have heard of men—not like you, who are a great engineer and a genius, everybody

says—but mere nobodies, with shops and things, people one would not like to touch—" Rosamond made a slight gesture of disgust, as if she had drawn the folds of her dress away from contact with some millionaire. "But that is not WORK," said the girl, throwing back her head. "I know people in society—well, perhaps not quite in society—who have gone on working for a whole lifetime, gentlemen, yes, and women too, working from morning to night, and even have been successful, yet have never made money. So it is clear that work is not the thing to make a fortune by. But I am of opinion that it is the first thing in the world."

Rowland once more blew forth with a snort from his nostrils the angry breath. He felt sure there were arguments somewhere with which he could confound this silly girl, and show her that to work was to rise in the world, and make a fortune, and surround yourself with luxury, with the certainty of a mathematical axiom. But he could not find them: and he found himself instead saying in his mind, "If you have ordinary luck, if you don't play the fool," and so forth, evidently adding the conditional case from his own point of view. And the result was that he contented himself with that snort and a strong expression of his opinion that girls should marry, and look after their men's houses, and not trouble their heads about what was never intended for them.

He broke up the discussion after this, and led his wife forth by the arm, taking her off to look at

the view—Clyde coming in softly on the beach, and all the world clad in those sober coats of gray. And standing there an hour after, when the talk might have been supposed to have evaporated, and the day was dying off into evening, he cried suddenly, "Where would I have been without work? Not here with my lady-wife upon the terrace at Rosmore!"

Evelyn did not say, what perhaps rose to her mind, "You might have been, with a great deal harder work, a respectable foreman in the foundry, as good a man, and as admirable an example of what labour and honest zeal can do." She did not say it, but her historian does for her. Mrs. Rowland only pressed her husband's arm, and said, "The young ones, perhaps, are not without reason too."

At all events, Mr. Rowland said no more of the ranch for Eddy, and in due time, when the young pair were old enough, they married, and settled at Gilston, which was relieved and rescued by Marion's money, and restored to its dignity as one of the finest places in the county, where, if they did not perhaps live happy ever after, they were at least a great deal better off than they deserved, and fulfilled all their own prophecies, and suited each other—"down to the ground," as Eddy said. Old Aunt Sarah died in the course of time, and completed their prosperity. And there was not a livelier house in England, nor a couple who enjoyed their life more.

As for Archie, his complete development into a man, on a different level from his father, with other aims, and an ambition which grew slowly with his powers, cannot be here entered into. It would exceed the limits permitted in these pages, and might touch upon graver problems than are open to the historian of domestic life.

Rosamond has not yet married any more than he, and has had full opportunities of testing the power of work and its results. Madeline Leighton, of course, was soon drawn off from that eccentric career, and is now a mother of children, much like what her own mother was before her. But the further history of those two, if it is ever written, will demand a new beginning and an extended page.

THE END.

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